

in Maori music today. Other chapters introduce successful women rhythm-and-blues singers and discuss the importance of the New Zealand Pacific Music Awards. An excellent chapter by Jennifer Cattermole (and the only one which actually analyses any music – this book is basically sociological) investigates the rise of reggae in New Zealand, and can be contrasted with a fascinating article by Kirsten Zemke on hip hop, and compared with another on TrinityRoots and jazz-dub-reggae in Wellington by Norman Meehan. There appears to be an ongoing argument as to the legitimacy of reggae and rap, given their roots in the United States/Jamaica, but there is no doubt that each has been successfully localized and also accepted globally as New Zealand achievements.

The studies of more experimental music all grapple with a number of themes that seem common to those operating outside commercial popular music. Foremost among these is a pride in being born of a DIY (do-it-yourself) culture, or even DIT (do-it-together). The famous no. 8 wire is constantly evoked. The TEAC 4-track recorder, the use of cassettes, the pride in self-recording, promotion and distribution, the use of cheap and constantly changing venues, the feeling of living in an isolated country, of being experimental yet plugged into an underground worldwide network: these themes are constantly explored. Andrew Clifford, for instance, raises a standard for a pioneer, Len Lye, in his chapter on experimental sound-making. Another chapter on the Cuba Street Carnival in Wellington (by Shelley D. Brunt) amusingly and rather unwittingly throws up the problems which arise when the DIY culture butts up against the need for services of the 'real' world, in the shape of Wellington City Council's rules on traffic management and rubbish collection. It should be noted that the carnival was restored in 2013, and that Dunedin's Lines of Flight experimental festival is also continuing.

The one chapter on classical art music, by Glenda Kean, concentrates on another main theme, referred to in the title of the book and discussed in the introduction, that of the relationship between New Zealand musicians and composers and the landscape. It is easy to isolate titles, lyrics or composers' statements to show an attachment to place, but not so easy to work out how the music does so. It is interesting to see Alfred Hill more than once (135, 209, 281) resurrected as a forebear, but despite his well-meant cross-cultural thematic attempts, his music remains stubbornly nineteenth century European. Douglas Lilburn is rightly lauded as the founding father both of New Zealand's art music (Kean) and of electroacoustic music (Dougal McKinnon) and his writings, now more easily available, as well as his music, provide scope for arguments about a national musical character based on attachment to land and seascape. Kean selects an assortment of composers, both older and younger, who evoke land, sea, mountains or birdsong, while others throughout the book also track the New Zealand soundscape: the use of Maori *taonga puoro*; the lyrics and sound of Pasifika music and rap and reggae; the dark, southern Gothic punk of Christchurch; the Dunedin sound; the music of From Scratch. Lilburn's national characteristics are newly articulated particularly by Meehan: humility; use of Maori language and gesture; use of the New Zealand vernacular, no longer ironically an eclectism; and a sense of location (135ff.).

Many of these articles discuss the legitimacy of New Zealand's music, whether it is over-influenced from abroad or whether it should be protected from overseas influence, while expressing pride when the music is successful globally. With modern means of instant dissemination it is far easier for

outside trends to come in, but also far easier for New Zealand music to get out. It can be recognized for the laid-back, relaxed, warmly-coloured, methodically and rhythmically different sound it has, as this reviewer living in the northern hemisphere has found, whether listening to the art music of Gareth Farr or Gillian Whitehead, or hearing rap on mainstream New Zealand radio, or recognizing instantly the raucous Dunedin sound performed by a school band in 2012. One welcomes this combative multifaceted book, which offers an opening to ongoing research into just what really is New Zealand music.

### **THE FRAME FUNCTION: AN INSIDE-OUT GUIDE TO THE NOVELS OF**

**JANET FRAME, JAN CRONIN (2011)**

Auckland: Auckland University Press, 222 pp.,  
ISBN 978 1 86940 486 4 (pbk), £23.95

*Reviewed by Marc Dehez, University of Liège*

*The Frame Function* is the first monograph on Janet Frame by Jan Cronin, whose voice in the critical chorus on the subject has become quite distinctive, even outstanding, over the last decade. Cronin is known to Frame scholars for her astute descriptions of a *modus operandi* specific to novels seen to rehearse (or enact), again and again, some theoretical premise on which they are centrally articulated. The present study capitalizes on this approach, which is now applied, with remarkable consistency, to the entire novelistic corpus, including the posthumously published *Towards Another Summer*. Here, each of Frame's novels is submitted to the sort of scrutiny that allows Cronin to identify a theoretical (usually a philosophical) kernel folded at the heart of each work, and then to show how this 'conceptual scheme' (123) is serially staged through the operations of the text in question. A consequence of this rigorously followed method is that Frame's oeuvre is found to be conversant with a number of thinkers – Plato, Husserl, Kant, Freud, Jung – or, alternatively, writers – Rainer Maria Rilke. This does not mean that the resulting exchange is necessarily idea-driven, for Cronin suggests that the author's 'theoretically inclined narratives' (99) seek less to explore the ramifications or the implications of their own foundational theory than to include a series of punctual enactments (or illustrations) thereof. For example, a novel like *The Rainbirds* comes across as 'a theoretically driven enterprise without the depth of a philosophical treatise' (60). Because the conceptual scheme attributed to Frame is frequently linked to issues of reading, interpretation or meaning-making, its verification at the hand of the text gives the latter an important self-reflexive depth, whilst also conferring on Cronin's argument a rather formalist tenor. As she puts it in the first chapter, 'the enactment of a particular scheme seems to take primacy over an inquiry into its subject matter, leaving us with the sense that the privileging we find in Frame's texts may be particularly directed at how the text unfolds' (13).

In contrast, it would be reductive to claim that Cronin (or, for that matter, Frame) sets no store by *what* the text may have to say, though this

more thematic dimension is typically subordinated to an overriding preoccupation with form. Thus, for example, the subject matter of *The Edge of the Alphabet* is found to be inseparable from its characters' identity deficit and related search for existential plenitude, evident in their attempts to match 'the inward pattern of identity' (107) with a sense of shape or purpose intuited in the universe at large. However, the metaphysical potential implicit in this material, which appears to be gesturing towards riddling questions about the meaning of life and the guarantee thereof possibly afforded by some 'higher agency [...] in the cosmos' (106), tends to be abrogated by the text's own stratification in narrative layers pointing to the ultimate authority of Thora Pattern, the character-cum-narrator officiating as Frame's writer-in-residence within the book. All this seems to argue in favour of a view of metafiction whereby 'the quest for meaning itself registers as a contrivance' (115). Such a conclusion, one that privileges the constructed and provisional nature of any bid for meaning, is consistent with the fascination with the workings of a text that unremittingly revises itself, and is encoded in the frequent reminder that the intricacy of Frame's compositional processes pulls towards 'sabotaging the stalwart humanist agenda of her oeuvre' (128). In this connection, it must be noted that Cronin tends to sound defensive when she hails the demise of any 'humanist, content-based, account of the text' (134) in consequence of the 'anti-interpretative stance' (50) that she herself derives from her reading of Frame; this is why she repeats that, for all the scupperping of meaning effected in the novels, 'there remains that spectre of humanist Frame and her associated interests to contend with' (165); or else that 'Frame's humanist interests seem to complement rather than compete with her specifically pattern-oriented interest (*how things fit together*)' (192).

By her own admission, Cronin positions her reflection within the long-standing debate surrounding nomenclature – i.e. about whether Frame should be considered a liberal humanist or a postmodern writer, notably in view of the 'transcendental streak' (193) sometimes manifest in her work. The emphasis on compositional tensions which neutralize the ostensible meaning of isolated passages, along with the insistent reference to a form of textual elusiveness seen to depend on 'a prescriptive authorial presence' (158) orchestrating the work's centrifugal qualities, seem to argue in favour of a postmodern Frame obsessively concerned with the paradoxes of the writerly function. However, the most fascinating developments of *The Frame Function* happen to be those which provide a detailed exegesis of selected aspects of the work seen to have referential purchase and to make sense after all – such as, among many other strong readings equally worth mentioning, that of the mirror motif in *The Adaptable Man*, the weaving metaphor in *The Edge of the Alphabet*, or the intertextual link between *The Carpathians* and *Dynaula*. Some awareness of this is acknowledged through the recognition that certain sections of Frame's work display a 'potential to transcend their status as enactments and assume more literal lives of their own as genuine subjects of exploration' (104–05). In all, Cronin manages to have her cake and eat it, as it were, by subscribing to a view of metafiction à la Linda Hutcheon (see 95), one that is characterized by epistemological ambivalence and the twin tendency to both undermine and exploit the truth-value of its own assertions. This makes for a dichotomization of the argument, or at least for uncomfortable tensions which tend to find a release, in true dialectic fashion, in the concluding chapter (with its focus on *Living in the Marrioto*) where writing and life are seen to partake of the same 'negotiation of reality' (189). Here, by allowing the emergence of 'a model

of relationality' (194) whereby the realist and the more experimental dimensions of Frame's work are seen to be linked in a continuum of transformative practices, Cronin shows that it is possible to reconcile her sensitivity to Frame's metafictional orientation and the more traditional view of the author as amenable to interpretation.

**SWEET AS: JOURNEYS IN A NEW ZEALAND SUMMER, GARTH CARTWRIGHT (2011)**

Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 306 pp., ISBN 978 1 87750508 9 (pbk), NZ\$39.99

Reviewed by Peter Barrer, Comenius University in Bratislava

Garth Cartwright's book *Sweet As: Journeys in a New Zealand Summer* is a personal account of his travelling around the country after twenty years spent abroad. Seeking the past, Cartwright returns to find a country remarkably changed: New Zealand has better food, coffee and race relations, and is a more multicultural society. In contrast, it suffers from a higher cost of living, increased social inequality and has become a country beholden to powerful business interests.

Why do so many Kiwis choose to live abroad? Given New Zealand's international image as a 'quarter-acre paradise' or 'nature's playground', many foreigners are perplexed upon meeting a Kiwi who has made their home elsewhere. However, the reasons for leaving New Zealand, both temporarily and permanently, are real and sometimes quite profound. In addition to family reasons, employment opportunities and a very real need to explore the rest of the planet, many Kiwis are eager to simply 'escape' and realize their ambitions without bearing the weight of local expectations. Of course, some Kiwis return, eager to apply their enriched world-view to their homeland.

Regardless of where Kiwis make their home, they invariably define themselves as New Zealanders. Identification with New Zealand is intensified when one is abroad regardless of one's reasons for moving in the first place. The Kiwi ex-pat is a patriotic New Zealander, and ultimately such a perspective is apparent throughout Cartwright's book. Cartwright reacquaints himself with his homeland with eager curiosity; his prose is peppered with short utterances capturing a particular moment, be that eating fish 'n' chips (after all, no one does them like New Zealand), admiring parts of the country not yet ruined by developers or catching up with family and friends.

This book is clearly personal, with accounts of visits to family, friends and occasional interviews with New Zealand musicians and artists. Cartwright displays impressive literacy in popular music and the arts, and he has impeccable New Zealand connections. His frank assessments of New Zealand cultural practitioners are noteworthy and go against local conventions. His criticism of those cultural icons who are 'world famous' in New Zealand yet bombed internationally is particularly piercing. One can only agree with most of his judgements; what is so great about Colin McCahon, Tim Finn or The