In general, *Joseph Conrad: The Short Fiction* is a first-rate collection of essays, which is to the credit of its editors. Still, it would have been better if it had a longer introductory overview instead of Erdinast-Vulcan's two-and-half-page Foreword, especially if its target includes the general reader. The fact that this book is actually an issue of *The Conradian* — the journal of Joseph Conrad Society of UK — published in a book form partly explains its lack of long introduction, as well as its simple appearance with brownish paper cover. The publisher, Rodopi, in the past published *Conrad and Theory* and *Conrad and Gender*, both of which are also good collections, as book versions of issues of *The Conradian*. What is regrettable to me is that, to my knowledge, no institution in Japan has *The Conradian* in their library while many have *Conradiana* — the American journal published by Texas Tech University. Both journals are valuable for the study of Conrad, as one can see from the fact that the bibliographies of essays in *Joseph Conrad: The Short Fiction* contain many articles from these journals.

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Michael King, *Wrestling with the Angel: A Life of Janet Frame*

Picador: London, 2002. 583 pp. + 24 plates.

Reviewed by Raquel Hill, Kanagawa University

Last year saw New Zealand bid farewell to two cultural icons it could ill afford to lose: in January, the final chapter was closed in the extraordinary life of Janet Frame (1924–2004), arguably Aotearoa New Zealand's most celebrated post-war writer, and the subject of the biography under review here. Diagnosed with leukaemia in August of 2003, the same month in which she was tipped as a nominee for the Nobel Prize for Literature, Frame's dramatic life story often

seemed to outshine her fiction: two sisters drowned to death ten years apart, a violent epileptic brother, and her own misdiagnosis of schizophrenia which resulted in approximately eight years spent in and out of psychiatric hospitals. Frame left a legacy of over 20 books, including the Commonwealth Writers Prize winning *The Carpathians* (1988), and although her novels remain untranslated here in Japan, readers may be familiar with Frame's life through director Jane Campion's 1990 feature film *An Angel at My Table* which screened to worldwide acclaim.

Frame's passing was a blow to New Zealand letters; then, in March 2004, just two months after delivering a moving eulogy at Frame's memorial service held in her hometown of Dunedin,[1] her biographer Michael King, known affectionately as "the people's historian,"[2] was tragically killed in a car crash near Auckland. Frame and King shared a fateful bond: in 2003, King had also been diagnosed with cancer, while on a more positive note the same year they both received the inaugural Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement, and were described, along with Maori poet Hone Tuwhare, as "giant kauri" of New Zealand literature.[3]

These recent events make it all the more meaningful to reexamine *Wrestling with the Angel*, which became a literary sensation in New Zealand when it was released in 2000 and went on to claim the 2001 Montana Medal for Non-Fiction. Such success may be surprising, given that Frame had already written an engrossing account of her life in her three volume autobiography, *To the Is-land* (1982), *An Angel at My Table* (1983), and *The Envoy From Mirror City* (1985),[4] which traced the writer's poverty-stricken beginnings in the rural South Island provinces of Otago and Southland through to the paralyzing sense of shame and shyness she experienced as a teenager and her ultimate incarceration in mental hospitals where she endured over 200 sessions of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). These best-selling memoirs captured the hearts of general readers, especially in her home country, for despite her popularity overseas (and particularly in America where she was made a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in

[1] King is reported as saying that "A writer died and it seemed as if the whole country held its breath and let out a collective sigh." Mike Scott, "Frame's Life and Stories Draw Tribute from Leaders," *Otago Daily Times* 16 Feb. 2004: 1.

[2] *New Zealand Listener* (10 Apr. 2004) featured King on the cover with the headline "We celebrate the life of the people's historian." The reason for this honour is in part due to the phenomenal sales of King's *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, which was released in October 2003 and topped the best-seller list for ten weeks.

[3] "Kauri" refers to the largest species of tree in New Zealand, renowned for its enormous size and strength. Joanna Norris, "Awards for Otago Writers and Poets," *Otago Daily Times* 7 Oct. 2003: 1.

[4] Frame's autobiography has been translated into Japanese by Masami Nakao and Naoko Toraiwa (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 1994).

1986), the perceived difficulty of allegorical and imaginative novels such as *Scented Gardens for the Blind* (1963) and *Intensive Care* (1970) meant that she long occupied a somewhat ambiguous space on a New Zealand literary scene that was dominated by a tradition of social realism.[5]

Why then, the alert reader may ask, do we need another account of Frame's life, given that we have the story straight from the pen of the author herself? What could King's version possibly reveal, given that his project was subject to, as he explains in the Author's Note, two "preferences" expressed by Frame: firstly, that the work not be a critical analysis of her novels and secondly, that he not quote directly from interviews with her? The answer is that King does indeed offer fresh insights, particularly in regard to Frame's life from the mid-1960s onwards, the point at which her autobiography leaves off.

King's achievement in gaining Frame's permission to write her biography is better appreciated when understood in the context of her intense Salinger-like desire for privacy.[6] After all, this was a writer who, frustrated by the flurry of publicity that surrounded the release of her novels and conjecture about her "real life," stated that "posthumous publication is one of the few forms of literary decency left" (331).[7] The appearance of her debut novel *Owls Do Cry* (1957), which followed four siblings and their impoverished existence in a small South Island town where they search through the local rubbish dump for "treasure," sparked speculation about the connection between Frame's fiction and how much of it was drawn from her own life. The ambiguous border between fact and fiction is a topic of heated debate amongst Frame researchers, with the writer's comments only serving to add fuel to the fire: in an interview she claimed that she wrote her autobiography in order to convince everyone that "my fiction is genuinely fiction. And I do invent things," and then proceeded to state that "I am always in fictional mode, and autobiography is found fiction."[8] Academics such as Patrick Evans (1977) pieced together an account of Frame's life but the author herself took offence at such attempts to invade her privacy. Yet despite being notoriously publicity-shy, Frame opened up to King, a former journalist who cut his teeth in the 1970s writing on Maori issues. He turned his hand to literary biography in the

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[5] For a discussion of social realism in New Zealand literature, see Mark Williams, *Leaving the Highway: Six Contemporary New Zealand Novelists* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990) 16, 20–29.

[6] As King notes, however, it is rather ironic in that Janet Frame must be one of the few writers to publish under her real name, and live under a fictional name, Nene Janet Paterson Clutha, which she changed by deed poll in 1958.

[7] Page references in brackets in the text refer to *Wrestling with the Angel* unless otherwise stated.

[8] Elizabeth Alley, "'An Honest Record': An Interview with Janet Frame," *Landfall* 178 (June 1991): 155, 161.

1990s and it was in 1995, when Frame was helping King with the background for his biography on the "father" of New Zealand literature Frank Sargeson that the idea for her biography came about.[9] Five long years later, he released *Wrestling with the Angel*.[10]

With the blessing of the author, King gained unlimited access to letters to and from mentors (including John Money, the charismatic young psychology lecturer who counselled Frame when she was a student at the University of Otago and who first added the word "schizophrenia" to her vocabulary; Frank Sargeson, who gave Frame a "room of her own" — albeit an army hut in the backyard of his Auckland home — to write *Owls Do Cry* and made "the dream called overseas" a reality; and English psychiatrist Robert Cawley — the "RHC" of the dedications in so many of her novels) and friends (Peter Dawson, an upper-class English woman who became a mother figure to Frame in both New Zealand and England; Bill Brown, the gay Californian artist who was the love of Frame's life; and Audrey Scrivener, a fellow patient at Seacliff mental hospital who underwent a frontal leucotomy, a fate Frame narrowly escaped only because her first collection of short stories won the prestigious Hubert Church Award in 1952). These enviable primary sources allow King to present a different angle on the angst-ridden hard done by Frame that inhabits our popular imagination. For example, it emerges that Frame travelled extensively in the last four decades of her life and was supported by and enjoyed the company of a wide circle of influential friends, both in New Zealand and overseas but particularly in America, who looked out for both her mental and financial well-being. The reader also meets the adaptable Frame who got her motorcycle licence, single-handedly built a six-foot-high fence around her property, and fixed the plumbing in her house.

Aside from personal correspondence, King's scrupulous examination of medical records reveals a rather surprising fact: his subject was not adverse to using psychiatric hospitals as an "escape mechanism" (110) when the going got tough — that is, when she could not handle family arguments, or was worried about living arrangements. Popular legend tells us that Frame was held against her will and suffered at the brutal hands of the antiquated New Zealand mental health system; while it is true that Frame was initially committed, King reveals that throughout her life she often checked herself into such facilities as a voluntary patient. Thus, the picture that emerges is not one of Frame as a schizophrenic genius unwilling

[9] Denis Welch, "A Biographer at Her Table," rev. of *Wrestling with the Angel*, *New Zealand Listener* 12 Aug. 2000: 21.

[10] The title was provided by Frank Sargeson (521); "angel" no doubt alludes to the beliefs of Frame's Christadelphian mother Lottie, who was apparently unable to turn beggars away at the door in case they were "an angel in disguise" (21).

incarcerated but rather as a creative and shy young woman wanting to escape from the burden of living in a conservative society where she was expected to become, if not a wife, then a teacher "like Cousin Peg." Frame did not wish to follow either of these paths: she wanted to be a *writer*. Of course, there is an irony in that King's intense scrutiny of mental records means that he is paying attention to the area that Frame most wanted everyone to forget — the stigma and speculation attached to her "personal history."

This rather sticky spot aside, there are so many nuggets of information that help to flesh out Frame's character in this hefty volume (it contains a whopping 2296 footnotes according to Lawrence Jones),[11] that it is hard for the reviewer to decide which to single out. To give just one example, King managed to obtain from John Money one of Frame's lost "Ardenue" diaries; in her autobiography she writes of how, in her mid-teens, she kept a diary addressed to the bearded ruler of an imaginary valley-world that she created called the Land of Ardenue (one is reminded of the Brontes, and indeed, Frame wrote that "We felt close to the self-contained family with the 'wild' brother, the far-off parents going about their daily tasks, the Brontes with their moors, us with our hill and gully and pine plantations").[12] Unfortunately Frame, who emerges in the biography as an enthusiastic arsonist when it came to disposing of "embarrassing" papers, burned all of the diaries before going off to university; however, one miraculously survived which she passed on to Money during their therapy sessions. King quotes from the diary, which paints a painfully vivid picture of just how lonely Frame was in the early 1940s, as well as of her desire to write: "Mr. Ardenue, I want to write and write and imagine. I can imagine and imagine. God, kill me if I cannot write . . . I want to make something beautiful. (. . .) I shall not rest until I write something that affects me as the earth — her trees and stars affect me" (47); "Why need books have so much influence over me? I think I am too impressionable. Today I lived in dreams — I recited strange poetry to myself . . . If it were not for a feverish control I should at this very moment leap from my bed . . . and shout aloud to Eden Street — all the beautiful poetry I have read" (47). *Wrestling* whets our appetite for more Frame by throwing us tantalising tidbits of unpublished manuscripts: for example, a novella entitled 'Towards Another Summer' based on the theme of travelling and returning and inspired by a poem of Charles Brasch (the founder of New Zealand's most influential literary journal *Landfall*) which "later she would call (. . .) 'embarrassingly personal'. It was put away with other unpublished — and she believed, unpublishable — manuscripts" (245). We can

[11] Lawrence Jones, "King Offers Rich Mine of Frame Facts," rev. of *Wrestling with the Angel, Otago Daily Times* 26 Aug. 2000: H34.

[12] Janet Frame, *An Autobiography* (New York: George Braziller, 1989) 95.

only sigh with regret at the thought of all the manuscripts that did not survive Frame's critical eye.

It is interesting that the structure of *Wrestling with the Angel* echoes an important theme in Frame's writings as a whole — that of place. King begins many chapters with geographical signposts: for example, Chapter One commences with Mark Twain's 1895 comment about Dunedin (in Otago) that "The people are Scotch" (11). This serves as an introduction to the Scottish ancestry of Frame and, for an author obsessed with myth and myth-making, these roots are important. King progressively paints a canvas of the major places in Frame's life, from Glenham and Wyndham (in Southland, where Frame spent part of her childhood), to Oamaru, the "kingdom by the sea" where she grew up and the basis of Waimaru in *Owls Do Cry*, and Auckland, where Frank Sargeson led by example and taught her the discipline necessary to be a writer. King carefully describes the houses in which Frame lived, and given that she always seemed to be searching for a place to call her own,[13] both physically and spiritually, throughout her life — as shown in her 14 relocations in 28 years — such attention to place is not the whim of King as social historian, nor does it simply serve to fill in the gaps for the reader not familiar with the intricacies of New Zealand geography. Rather, these geographical signposts echo the importance that the landscape of New Zealand, and in particular southern New Zealand, exercised on Frame's imagination.

It emerges that Otago and Southland were a land of myth to Frame — place names like Inchclutha, Middlemarch and Maniototo (which found its way to the title of her 1979 novel *Living in the Maniototo*) had an exotic quality; "up Central" (Otago) was always imagined by Frame as "a tall ladder on narrow rungs on which her relatives climbed into the clouds for the weekend or longer" (17). She made her first journey to Central Otago (to go fruit-picking, a popular part-time job for students) in the summer of 1943/44, where she fell in love with the hills, "with their changing shades of gold, and the sky born blue each morning with no trace of cloud, retiring in the evening to its depth of purple."[14] King describes her encounter with the Clutha river — Frame was to later adopt the surname Clutha (the Gaelic name for Clyde) in homage to the second largest river in New Zealand that begins in Central Otago and ends its journey into the Pacific, and relates how Money told him that "On one occasion [Janet] tossed a manuka stick into its flow and was thrilled and chilled to see it simply disappear, as if the black force of the water were a fiend that swallowed foreign objects without trace" (56). In another

[13] King quotes a letter from Frame to Elizabeth Alley in which she wrote that "I think my own extra desire to write was prompted by a need to have 'my place' — an escape if you like — undisturbed by outward pressure and expectations" (453).

[14] Frame, *An Autobiography*, 166.

interview with one of Frame's fellow workers, King reports that "So strongly did this powerful current fascinate and attract her that her fruit-picking companions came upon her one night, prone on the edge of the river and in what they described as a 'trance-like' state. She was lifted and carried rigid to a vehicle, which returned her to the sleeping quarters" (56).

Such insights, while losing in poetic quality to Frame's own descriptions, add to our understanding of how Frame was moved by the landscape. She writes in her autobiography of "my beloved South Island rivers" (192) and her desire to express her feelings for the scenery around her in language from her own hemisphere: "As a child (. . .) when I longed for my surroundings — the hill, the pine plantations, Fifty-six Eden Street, Oamaru, the foreshore and the sea to waken to imaginative life, all I could do was populate them with characters and dreams from the poetic world of another hemisphere and with my own imaginings" (192). When Frame finally chanced upon an anthology of New Zealand verse, she recalls with a sense of wonder that "Here (. . .) I could read in Allen Curnow's poems about Canterbury and the plains, about 'dust and distance,' about our land having its share of time and not having to borrow from a northern Shakespearian wallet. (. . .) And there was Charles Brasch confiding in the sea as I had confided, without words, in the Clutha, 'Speak for us, great sea'" (192–193).

After a few years overseas, Frame, like compatriot Katherine Mansfield, felt an increasing longing for New Zealand: King reveals her "roots crisis" in London where she wrote to John Money that "I sit here . . . dreaming of snowgrass and snowberries and tussock . . . of the Southern Alps, and of rivers — where's the Rakaia, the Waitaki, the Maheno? Good God, I've kept asking myself, what am I doing on this side of the world?"(243). When she finally returned to New Zealand in 1963, she wrote in a letter to Peter Dawson "by Holy Holy I'm homesick for the northern hemisphere! At the same time I'm bursting with gratitude for the sun, the sea, the pohutukawas, and I want to stay in NZ permanently . . . You're the only one I know who has undergone this ambivalence, with a heart really in each hand . . . [I think] that my home is in the northern hemisphere, but this is the land I want to write about" (264).[15] Given the importance of place and displacement to Frame, these letters provide useful thematic leads to explore in her fiction.

As mentioned above, Frame's autobiography covers her life only up until her return to New Zealand after seven years overseas. The second half of *Wrestling* picks up where Frame left off, detailing her publishing successes, arguments with

[15] "Pohutukawa" is a native flower of New Zealand; Frame believed Dawson understood her dilemma because Dawson was born in England but resided in New Zealand for four decades, before returning to her birth-place to live out her final years.

publishers over royalties and accompanying tax problems, friendships with fellow Otago and Southland-born writers James K. Baxter and Ruth Dallas, visits to the American artists colonies Yaddo and MacDowell, her fortuitous befriending by wealthy American patrons such as the Marquands, and a complicated affair with Bill Brown, although King holds back on its exact nature, perhaps a sign of deference for his subject but rather frustrating for the reader.[16] America emerges as a powerful and energizing metaphor in Frame's writing, an aspect which has been largely ignored by critics even though Frame herself wrote in her oft-quoted early biographical essay "Beginnings" that "Much has been written of the English background to the life of a New Zealander; little has been said of the North American influence."[17] Wrestling reveals the extent to which American culture, literature, and friendships enriched Frame's life: after her first visit to the States in 1965 King writes she was hooked on American society and culture to an extent she had not anticipated, as expressed in a letter to John Money: "Well man I miss the scene in the States and Baltimore. (. . .) I done thought of it often with pleasure. (. . .) Man have I blistered my feet walkin' on smokin' memries with words growin' green between the weeds they are" (281). She was to return to America many times in ensuing years, seeming to enjoy the liberty with which Americans led their lives in comparison to "prim" New Zealanders: in 1970 she wrote to Frank Sargeson that "one can deplore . . . almost everything happening in America except that apparent ability — or freedom — of people to live the kind of moral life they chose" (349).

Yet strangely, despite this abundance of new information, *Wrestling* loses its grip on the reader in the latter half, perhaps because King lacks the lyrical quotes from Frame's autobiography which he used so effectively in the first half to supplement his own more methodically factual account. Or it may simply be because readers love a story of triumph over hardship — success against the odds — of which Frame's early life provides such a painfully mesmerizing example. From King's account emerges a surprisingly confident and fortunate Frame (perhaps her mother's angels were watching over her after all), and thus one which this reader found it harder to empathize with.

When *Wrestling* was first released, King stressed how cooperative Frame was: "I would draft two or three chapters, (. . .) leave them with her for about a fortnight while she read and thought about them and sometimes annotated them. (. . .) Sometimes she suggested to me that some episodes were too raw or too intensely

[16] Damien Wilkins criticizes King's lack of interrogation throughout the biography, claiming that he cements Frame's place as a New Zealand cultural icon. See "In the Lock-Up," rev. of *Wrestling with the Angel, Landfall* 201 (May 2001): 26–36.

[17] Janet Frame, "Beginnings," *Landfall* 73 (Mar 1965): 41.

private to permit publication, and I would either modify my account of them or remove them altogether."[18] This highlights the delicate business of biography writing, which King said should be guided by the principle of "compassionate truth," that is, "working from the record and following evidence to whatever conclusions it indicates; but having at the same time regard for the sensibilities of living people, including the biographee, who may be characters in the narrative."[19] These comments hint that there is indeed more to Frame's story than *Wrestling* reveals; King did in fact intend to pen a second book on Frame, an addition he said he could only write after she had died.[20] Interestingly, King tells us that Frame also had more of her story to tell in the form of a fourth volume of autobiography for posthumous publication and a fifth, "for publication in her lifetime" (457). The latter never appeared and it remains a great loss to New Zealand, and the world, that both Frame and King are now gone forever, and thus their stories with them. While we may never have the opportunity to read either of these final chapters, we must be thankful for King's thorough and enlightening account which adds to our understanding of the woman behind the legend. For the Frame critic, the biography provides invaluable primary resources which give insights into the writer's motivation; however, perhaps King's greatest achievement is that *Wrestling with the Angel* makes the reader want to return to Frame's autobiography and appreciate first-hand once again her painful, humourous, and magically lyrical world.

Zhaoming Qian (ed.): *Ezra Pound and China*

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Reviewed by Eiichi Hishikawa, Kobe University

The volume under review is a collection of ten papers originally prepared for the Eighteenth International Ezra Pound Conference held in Beijing, China, July 16–19, 1999. It was the first occasion for an international colloquium on Pound to take place outside Europe and America. With "Ezra Pound and the Orient" as its theme, the conference gathered ninety participants from fifteen countries including Japan.

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[18] Michael King, "Biography and Compassionate Truth: Writing a Life of Janet Frame," *Australian Humanities Review* (Dec 2001). 16 July 2004 <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-December-2001/king.html>.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Tim Watkin, "The People's Historian," *New Zealand Listener* 10 Apr. 2004: 21.