JANET FRAME

BETWEEN MY FATHER AND THE KING

New and Uncollected Stories
Janet Paterson Frame (1924–2004) is New Zealand’s most internationally acclaimed and distinguished author. She received numerous awards, prizes, grants, fellowships and scholarships in New Zealand and abroad, including honorary doctorates from the universities of Otago and Waikato. In 1983 she was awarded a CBE for services to literature, and in 1990 was made a Member of the Order of New Zealand, the country’s highest civil honour.

In her lifetime Janet Frame published eleven novels, four collections of short stories, a book of poetry, a children’s book and three volumes of autobiography. Another novel, a poetry collection and a compilation of selected stories have since been published posthumously. Janet Frame’s *The Goose Bath*, a collection of poems, was published by Wilkins Farago in 2009.
Between My Father and the King includes some of the best stories Janet Frame ever wrote. More than half of the twenty-eight stories in this volume have never been published before. Of the rest, seven were individually published in Janet Frame’s lifetime but were never included by her in a collection; and another five have been published since her death in 2004. The new stories span almost the entire breadth of Frame’s publishing career, from ‘University Entrance’ (1946), the very first story she published as an adult, to ‘A Distance from Mrs Tiggy-winkle’, written forty years later. They extend the themes and characters of the seventy-one stories that appear in the five previous collections: The Lagoon, The Reservoir, Snowman Snowman, You are Now Entering the Human Heart and Prizes (also known as The Daylight and the Dust).

There are several reasons why these stories have not previously been published. First, we know from Frame’s autobiography
that the rejection of the story ‘Gorse is Not People’ by Charles Brasch in 1954 had crushed her: ‘I felt myself sinking into empty despair. What could I do if I couldn’t write? Writing was to be my rescue. I felt as if my hands had been uncurled from their clinging place on the rim of the lifeboat.’ Similarly, just one year later — when she had rallied from the previous year’s setback, had moved to Auckland and was making yet more headway in her career — she proudly showed her latest achievement, ‘An Electric Blanket’, to Frank Sargeson; but after his nitpicking criticism she never offered that story for publication. Taking the experience as a lesson in learning to trust her own judgement about her writing, she also never showed any further work to Sargeson.

Second, at times Frame was so prolific that she found she had a backlog of manuscripts. For instance in 1965 and 1966, when she held first an official and then an ‘unofficial’ Burns Fellowship, her working conditions were so favourable that as well as completing a book of poems, finishing one novel, writing another and starting a third, she also worked on a new collection of about thirty stories. In May 1966 she reported to Professor Horsman at the University of Otago: ‘I’m ahead of myself in publication of my work.’ The planned collection never appeared, but Frame did publish individual stories from it such as ‘The Bath’, ‘A Boy’s Will’ and ‘In Alco Hall’. She was scandalised by the knowledge that stories published in prestigious magazines such as *The New Yorker, Vogue, Mademoiselle or Harper’s Bazaar* earned her more than some of her publishers offered as an advance for a whole book.

Frame withheld other work because it was based too closely on living people. ‘The Silkworms’ is an example of a story she called back from an editor for fear of causing offence to its lampooned subject. Some recognisable events from Janet Frame’s life recur in her short fiction and her long fiction and even her poetry, and it’s
interesting to have the opportunity now to compare the way she transforms the same source material for different literary ends. Several of the stories in this volume share their subject matter — and sometimes also their title — with a chapter or passage in her autobiography, although the material is always treated in a much different way. Frame distinguished clearly between writing fiction inspired by her life and writing autobiography: ‘It is harder to write in the autobiographical form. Actually it’s awful. All those sticky facts to work in. In fiction, one can just go to town.’ The story ‘Dot’ is a good example of the way Frame was able to start with a true life experience and shape and twist it to make fiction, so that it was impossible to tell what was fact and what was imagination.

Later in her life Frame occasionally drew up a proposed table of contents for a new selection of stories; and her lists included the abandoned older typescripts. But once she had moved on from earlier work, she was reluctant to revisit it. It is also true that once she had financial security she was less willing to subject herself to the rigours of publication and the inevitable public attention, for good or otherwise. She had been very disillusioned by the initially hostile reception to her last book The Carpathians (1988), even though the critical tide on that novel subsequently turned so much in its favour that it won not only the New Zealand Book Award for Fiction but also the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best Book.

Whatever the motivation, we know that Frame deliberately left work unpublished during her lifetime. She often remarked of this decision, ‘. . . I think posthumous publication is the only form of literary decency left.’

Pamela Gordon & Denis Harold
Trustees
Janet Frame Literary Trust
OTHER TITLES BY JANET FRAME

For further information on Janet Frame’s work, visit www.janetframe.org.nz

Novels
Owls Do Cry (1957)
Faces in the Water (1961)
The Edge of the Alphabet (1962)
Scented Gardens for the Blind (1963)
The Adaptable Man (1965)
A State of Siege (1966)
The Rainbirds aka Yellow Flowers in the Antipodean Room (1968)
Intensive Care (1970)
Daughter Buffalo (1972)
Living in the Maniototo (1979)
The Carpathians (1988)
Towards Another Summer (2007)
In the Memorial Room (2013)

Short stories
The Lagoon and Other Stories (1952)
Snowman Snowman: Fables and Fantasies (1963)
The Reservoir: Stories and Sketches (1963)
The Reservoir and Other Stories (1966)
You Are Now Entering the Human Heart (1983)
Prizes: Selected Short Stories aka The Daylight and the Dust:
Selected Short Stories (2009)

Poems
The Pocket Mirror (1967)
The Goose Bath (2006)
Storms Will Tell: Selected Poems (2008)

Children’s book
Mona Minim and the Smell of the Sun (1969)

Non-fiction
To The Is-Land (1982)
An Angel at My Table (1984)
The Envoy from Mirror City (1985)
Janet Frame In Her Own Words (2011)