

Annotation of Marc Delrez's "The Missing Chapter in Janet Frame's *Living in the Maniototo*", *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 24.1 (2006), pp. 73-93.

Daria Tunca, University of Liège

Marc Delrez's article offers a thought-provoking analysis of *Living in the Maniototo* (1979), the tenth novel by New Zealand author Janet Frame. The article challenges the idea that the book's postmodern features merely reflect the writer's acceptance of the meaninglessness of the contemporary human condition, and suggests that the narrative instead engages with postmodernism only to hint at the existence of visionary alternatives. Delrez further argues that, while the subversive undertones of Frame's project may point to the novel's postcolonial allegiances, the text does not lend itself to an examination based on the well-known "Empire writes back" paradigm. Therefore, the critic proposes to outline a model likely to yield a wider-ranging interpretation of Frame's book by focusing on the symbolic meaning of the novel's missing twenty-second chapter.

The article's persuasive line of argument highlights the multiple implications behind the absence of section twenty-two, which may for instance be read as a meta-fictional comment on the selectivity involved in any fiction-writing process, or on the incompleteness of the utopian view intimated by the book. It then proceeds to unveil the political ramifications of the missing section by assessing the significance of the themes of history and culture in the novel. This cogent analysis provides the basis for additional explications, whereby the lost chapter may represent the violent European colonisation of New Zealand (and the subsequent Maori suffering ignored by official sources), and may hint at the desirability of a bicultural model of national identity. Textual evidence also allows Delrez to lend Frame's concerns further resonance in time and space, and to put forward the idea that

the narrative both encourages the recognition of histories of violence across the globe, and advocates the obliteration of all existing racial and social barriers.

This stimulating interpretation of *Living in the Maniototo* testifies to the incisiveness of Delrez's article. Undeniably, this elegantly written piece constitutes essential reading for any critic of Frame's work.