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Article

Title: Review of Jan Cronin, 'Contexts of exploration: Janet Frame's The Rainbirds', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 40:1, January 2005: 5-19

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Example citation: Kimber, G. (2008) Review of Jan Cronin, 'Contexts of exploration: Janet Frame's The Rainbirds', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 40:1, January 2005: 5-19. *Annotated Bibliography of English Studies*.

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Version: Accepted version

Official URL: <http://www.routledgeabes.com>

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Jan Cronin Annotation

In this complex article, Cronin explores New Zealand writer Janet Frame's 1968 novel, *The Rainbirds*, attempting an elucidation of 'the *modus operandi* of a neglected novel' (8), discussing both the internal context as well as contextualising the external significance (5). Godfrey the protagonist, is knocked down in a traffic accident, pronounced clinically dead, but miraculously comes out of his coma after three days, in an obviously allegorical illusion to Christ and the story of the Resurrection. For Cronin, '*The Rainbirds* is one of the few cases of genuine philosophical exploration in Frame's oeuvre' (8) and although claiming that the mythical frameworks in the book are obvious (6), neglects to mention much of the important symbology. In the endnotes she quotes Mercer's 'Dunedin: Done Eden' (19), whilst ignoring the fact that in a book immersed in biblical allusion, Godfrey can be read as God-Free and that Godfrey was also Frame's mother's maiden name. Godfrey talks of finding his paradise (11), but his wife, Beatrice, does not lead him through an ethereal other-world as does her namesake in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but rather, tries to draw him back from his own self-made purgatory, the irony being that in the attempt, she ends by taking her own life. The symbolic contexts of *The Rainbirds*, together with the serious discussion of religion, agnosticism and atheism, are thus sidelined in an otherwise interesting article. Cronin feels that the characters are 'the principal sacrifice to the philosophical exploration of the text' (18) and that the novel is ultimately 'a successful failure' (18).