

S. M. Wills

THE ANSWERS (working title)

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Creative Writing (MCW)

2010

School of Communications Studies / Faculty of Applied Humanities

Primary Supervisor: John Cranna

Thesis component: 65,272 words  
Exegesis component: 4248 words

## Table of Contents

1. Attestation of Authorship	c
2. Acknowledgements	d
3. Abstract	e
4. Exegesis: <i>Questing and Questioning</i>	i-xiv
5. Thesis: <i>The Answers</i> (working title)	1-160

## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

.....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have received no substantial assistance from any source or person in the preparation of this exegesis as regards sponsorship, collection and processing of data, interpretation of results, and editing and word processing.

I acknowledge the use of a portion of Bertolt Brecht's poem, 'Questions From a Worker Who Reads,' as part of the funeral scene.

## ABSTRACT

This is a two-part submission. The first, an exegesis, sets my creative work in a literary, social, temporal and stylistic context. The second, main part of this submission is a draft of the first twenty-eight chapters of a thirty-five-chapter novel, with the working title *The Answers*, which I have written over the last year. The exegesis explores issues such as genre, important authorial influences, such as the expatriate experience, along with authorial intention and how this intention differs from the resulting manuscript.

The novel is set in London, from the point-of-view of Ernest Shaw, a twenty-nine year old man with a somewhat dysfunctional and naive personality, who sets out to leave London in search of a new life.

It is a story about truth, memory and connections, having nothing and having everything, and the elusive happiness that lies somewhere in between.

## **‘Questing and Questioning’**

### **Introduction**

The objective of this thesis was to write the first draft of a novel manuscript, with the working title *The Answers*. The novel was originally conceived as a subverted Bildungsroman-type text, or novel of development, with a contemporary focus. The novel idea was conceived in London, and indeed is set there; however the story includes universal themes and motifs, therefore has relevance to other locations. This exegesis outlines the theoretical basis of *The Answers*.

In particular, I will focus on how my novel fits the genre to which I originally conceived it to have relevance, including the ways and reasons it diverges from that genre. I will also discuss my authorial intention and explore reasons that this changed during the writing of the novel, along with the authorial influences that contributed to the novel’s content. Among these influences was my experience as an expatriate New Zealander in London, to which I attribute the novel’s themes of alienation and exile. A further influence was the atmosphere in London during the lead-up to the global recession, where there appeared to be growing criticism of consumerism – something that I was particularly aware of in my work as a marketing copywriter. I will lastly explore two key features of the novel, these being character range and the protagonist’s passivity, and discuss the challenges I encountered with voice, style and setting.

### **Genre**

Above all, my novel was conceived as a short journey in a dysfunctional young man’s life – his search for meaning and a place to belong – which broadly put it in the realm of the Bildungsroman genre. Most novels in that literary genre are historic rather than contemporary works, yet there are commonalities that lead me to identify my novel as within the genre, although I acknowledge that my novel contains differences from the “standard” Bildungsroman. The original form of the genre featured plots in which the individual’s economic and social advancement were linked to his (and it was invariably a ‘him’) moral, spiritual and psychological development, with Goethe’s *The Sorrows of the Young Werther* (1774). generally considered to be the definitive work. Later, the genre developed so that a state of inner cultivation was considered to be disconnected

from any social and materialistic progression, with English writers such as Gissing, Hardy, Bennett and Lawrence significantly reworking the Bildungsroman to a form which questioned the role of society and class. This had the effect of creating a more individualistic focus in the typical Bildungsroman and was most obvious in the sub-genre of the Künstlerroman, which typically featured an artist protagonist, and is often considered to have an autobiographical leaning. Alden suggests:

...these writers find only the possibility of self-betrayal which leads to disintegration of the self, an overwhelming sense of the powerlessness of the individual to effect his development, and a complete rupture between self and society.<sup>1</sup>

This approach has its parallels in *The Answers* where the protagonist Ernest discovers that in seeking the approval of others, he loses his own way, and in the end betrays himself. His aspiration to improve himself is his motivator to leave London, the geographical distance being an analogue for the social distance that he feels unable to overcome. Though much of this is due to his overwhelmingly passive, sensitive temperament, his difficulties are also complicated by material obstacles, which is another characteristic of Künstlerromane. In particular, Ernest, similarly to with protagonists in earlier works in this genre, has “limited opportunities for education, a precarious economic situation which obliges him to take up unsatisfying work at an early age; contemptuous rejection by people with power and prestige.”<sup>2</sup>

Kontje ascribes the Künstlerromane to be “evidence of the continuing disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere and the attendant loss of the emancipatory potential that had been ascribed to art during the classical period.”<sup>3</sup> Their relevance to that era is clear, yet in relation to *The Answers*, the question must be posed: why refer to this same genre in contemporary fiction? The most recent years of Western civilisation have seen a new focus on questioning the approaches of consumerism and capitalism, notably in the focus on the excesses of the financial industry, and alongside a related disintegration of the rational public sphere (for example, in the increasing tabloidisation of the mainstream media). In a similar way to previous eras, then, the Western world is

---

<sup>1</sup> Alden, Patricia. *Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman: Gissing, Hardy, Bennett and Lawrence*. Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1986, p4.

<sup>2</sup> Kontje, Todd. “Private lives in the Public Sphere: The German Bildungsroman as Metafiction.” Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. p.12

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p.12

undergoing a societal shift – this time with the disintegration of trust in financial institutions and the questioning of the belief that consumerism is a marker of quality of life. For instance, in *The Answers* Violet states in respect of Ernest's brother Reece, "He's a banker. What do you expect?"

Further, Kontje suggests that although the various Bildungsromane are a "supposedly exhausted genre...recent additions suggest we view [it] as a series of continuing transformation of a constant problematic, rather than the record of a progressive decline."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the genre is constantly evolving, rather than static, and its developing forms continue to have relevance today. Buckley (1974), in regards to his examination of classic Bildungsroman, considered that no novel that ignores more than two or three of its principal elements – 'childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy' – satisfies the requirements of the genre.<sup>5</sup> All these are potentially timeless concerns, and *The Answers* touches on all of these in some way, bar provinciality. With this in mind, I have positioned my novel as a loose type of Künstlerroman.

My consideration of the Bildungsroman genre would not be complete without the recognition of trends in Künstlerromane by women writers. DuPleiss states that often with women writers "the love plot and Bildung plot are fused in a particular narrative strategy, a figure emerging in a range of narratives from Elizabeth Barratt Browning to Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*."<sup>6</sup> *The Answers* shares a version of this double Bildung plot and love plot, though does not have the female protagonist typical of women writers. However Ernest does exhibit qualities which are described by Fraiman as typically gendered female: "contemplative, unworldly, too earnestly spiritual."<sup>7</sup> In addition, his 'dysfunctional' personality positions him as a minority in an environment that is overwhelmingly geared towards a 'normally' functioning majority – be they

---

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* p.17

<sup>5</sup> Buckley, Jerome Hamilton (1974.) *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. Harvard University Press, Carbonridge Massachusetts. p.18

<sup>6</sup> DuPleiss, Rachel. (1985.) *To bear my mother's name: Künstlerromane by Women Writers*. In *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. p84.

<sup>7</sup> Fraiman, Susan. (1993) *Is there a Female Bildungsroman?* In *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*. Columbia University Press, New York. p.63



women or men. Sceats suggests in relation to Rose Tremain that this focus on a marginal or outsider figure may constitute a ‘psychological rather than political feminism.’<sup>8</sup>

Other differences between my novel and the classic nineteenth century *Künstlerromane* are due to my reflections on contemporary society. First, rather than aspire to be an artist of some form, Ernest chooses an art termed more a ‘craft,’ the practice of gardening or landscape, which reflects his innate tendencies towards the earthy, the honest, the unadorned. In fact, rather than seek ‘high art’, both main characters aspire to a merger between their creativity and practicality, rather than take risks to pursuing art in its more pure form; for example: painting, literature, music. The dimension of time, too, differs. My narrative takes place over a short period of time, rather than over several years. A primary reason for this was to be able to address more of the interior mind of the character, and have a cast of fewer characters and employ greater depth. In addition, the use of back-story enabled me to depict my protagonist’s difficulties in childhood without the need to document them in linear time. Rather than consider these differences to be outside of the genre, they fall within the ‘continuing transformation’ previously cited that one would expect of a format readapted for modern use.

### **Authorial Influences**

A particular influence on the writing of this novel was the time I spent living in London as an expatriate. I originally questioned the relevance of writing a manuscript set in London, about Londoners, when I had chosen to return to New Zealand to live. Only one character, Tiff, was born outside London, however her decision to reside in London makes her a true Londoner – London being that true metropolis where, to an expatriate, most people seem to be from somewhere else. (In fact, according to Wikipedia’s London article, the 2001 census showed that 27.1% of Greater London’s residents were born outside the UK.<sup>9</sup> There were no statistics to show how many residents were born outside London, yet anecdotal evidence from my residence there indicates that even UK-born citizens who live in London have migrated there from other locales in the UK.) Yet as Morris (2009) states “...the expatriate experience and point of view, like the immigrant

---

<sup>8</sup> Sceats, Sarah. (2005) *Appetite, Desire and Belonging in the Novels of Rose Tremain*. In *The Contemporary British Novel since 1960*. Eds: Acheson, James, and Ross, Sarah C. E. Edinburgh University Press, Great Britain. p. 174

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London#Ethnic\\_groups](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London#Ethnic_groups)

or indigenous experience, continues to inform our culture.”<sup>10</sup> Morris is not necessarily referring to writing books about elsewhere, but to the broader context that those of us who have been expatriates bring back home when (if) we return. Therefore, despite now residing in New Zealand, the story I have chosen to tell has relevance here, filtered as it is through an expatriate’s point of view.

An expatriate’s experience is multi-faceted and – whether one chooses to recognise it or not – vastly influential upon their work. I recognised comparatively late that my expatriate status in London had directly influenced the themes of the novel. Adler Papayamis (2005), writes, ‘ the category of place...is never a simple ‘objective’ rendering of expatriate destination, but rather a complex and unstable interweaving of desire, promise, expectation and materiality.’ <sup>11</sup> Therefore London itself was always going to be more of a ‘character’ than a setting, and my characters themselves are responses to the expatriate state. Even Ernest, despite being a Londoner born and bred, has characteristics and experiences which clearly mimic those of an expatriate in the city. Again, Papayamis (2005) considers that typically, expatriate protagonists:

“‘live out their lives in a condition of lack, submission, and self-loss...(they) tend not to be married, and if they are, their marital relations are unorthodox by bourgeois standards...expatriate domiciles resist identification with domestic space; they are often hotels or single-occupancy’ dwellings’.”<sup>12</sup>

In *The Answers* Ernest not only experiences homelessness, poverty and submission to family and societal groups, he also has an unorthodox relationship with Violet and spends a significant portion of the story living in a hostel.

Acheson writes of the “discontented and alienated sensibility of the expatriate, the exile’s longing for home”<sup>13</sup>. Themes of alienation and exile come through strongly in *The Answers*, echoed by each character in turn and most obviously by Ernest himself, whose history of not fitting in marks him as a serial outsider, someone who has never really integrated with society through both psychological inability and circumstance. His

---

<sup>10</sup> Morris, Paula ed. (2009) Penguin book of Contemporary New Zealand Short Stories (introduction), Penguin Group, Auckland. p.8

<sup>11</sup> Adler Papayamis, Marilyn. (2005.) *Writing in the Margins. The Ethics of Expatriation from Lawrence to Ondaatjie*. Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville. p.70

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Higdon, David Leon. Unconfessed Confessions: the narrators of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes.” In *The British and Irish Novel since 1960*. Acheson, James (ed) p. 121

fondest remembrances are of when he was a child, when “everything had its place”, before his youngest sister was abducted and “everything went wrong.” While then the safety of the family was a refuge for him, once out on his own he struggles to find his way in the impersonal environment of a large city. This could be construed as translating directly to the experience of a New Zealander coming to live in London for the first time with no support network. Ernest’s nature, which bears similarities to someone suffering Asperger’s or an autistic spectrum disorder, is clearly not ‘ordinary’. Yet Madeleine describes him as ordinary, a nobody – not intended as an insult, but rather a way of comforting him, offering him some solace. In a sense, he is the archetypal fool, and his actions are sometimes characteristic of someone from another time, another era, not suited to a city. Alternatively, he could represent someone from a less-developed country. An encounter I had in my first year of being in London may have some bearing on this: I spoke with a conservative and titled older English woman, who, on hearing I planned to stay a few more years in London, said “Yes, once you’ve been to the city, it’s hard to go back to the farm.” This comment echoes that of Samuel Johnson’s “When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life,” a pervasive attitude in the city. Exposure to this is likely to have contributed to the design of Ernest as a character who is, in effect, somewhat of an innocent. He doesn’t believe he is okay as he is (the first step to the loss of his innocence and also the first toward his downfall), and allows himself to be moulded by others. He desires acceptance, release from his psychological exile. All these characteristics could be said to echo, in some respect, the culture shock – the initial ‘fish out of water’ sense that an expatriate may experience in a new environment.

The exile does not finish with Ernest. Violet claims to be well-adjusted, comfortable and happy with her place in life. However, she has chosen a profession which alienates her socially and restricts her making real and honest friends. She has also exiled her emotions, regarding them only from a distance and only at the last giving in to them. In contrast, Amanda has chosen a ‘safe’ conservative role as a wife and mother. Yet she lives in a street in which she is patently not comfortable, and feels that she deserves more. She describes her neighbours disparagingly, in mocking sports terms, as having ‘nothing but net’ in their windows. Her domestic role defines her, yet she clearly resents this position and the loss of her previous expectations as being the ‘clever one’ of the family. She also mothers Ernest in a stifling way, as if hoping to see him

achieve something that she is unable to, while at the same time being unable/unwilling to let him do things on his own. Familial and societal pressure has exiled her from her ambitions.

In many cases, characters confuse exile with escape. Ernest naively wishes to escape to Vanuatu, seeing it as a simple way of life that would release him from his difficulties in being a citizen of the city, not realising that succeeding in his goal would result in a different kind of exile – that from his family and friends. Madeline appears at first glance to be well adjusted, an inspirational influence on Ernest. She speaks of having escaped to Vanuatu to do what she wanted, although does not see this as a form of self-exile – perhaps because she did not actually experience it, but imagined it instead. She does not speak of the daughter from whom she is estranged, and who Ernest becomes aware of only after her death. Tiff is the classic expatriate, embracing London and adopting a brave mask, while struggling underneath to cope with the isolation she is experiencing. She too confuses the idea of escape from a ‘small, restrictive’ New Zealand, with her new life in a large impersonal metropolis. She reminds herself that she is enjoying herself, has ‘unlimited options’ and ‘so much to do’, yet craves her lost support network.

Closely bound to this is the related theme of freedom. Each character is trapped in their own way, and freedom represents something different for each. Tiff has ‘escaped’ to London from New Zealand and now hankers for home without openly acknowledging it. She remains ‘addicted’ to Oddfellows as a quick fix, her way of ‘having a taste’ of New Zealand without leaving London – a Proustian sensory connection to her country of birth, asserting her loyalty without actually having to return, as to leave would be to admit that her ‘escape’ to London was an empty pursuit. For Ernest, it is undefined. All he is aware of is that he is trapped; he lacks the ability to reason his way out, and this feeling stifles his ability to think and reason. He is in effect imprisoned by his inarticulacy. Likewise, Amanda is trapped in a stifling marriage, unable – or unwilling – to leave the security she feels it provides. For Ernest and Amanda’s parents, their freedom is ironic; they choose to live abroad to be free of the foreigners in London. Meanwhile, Violet is stuck in a profession that, despite her claims to enjoy it, does not fulfil her. Madeline is trapped in an aging body, unable to turn back her life and do the things she always wishes she had done, now living in her imagination

or attempting to live vicariously through others. All are ensnared by big city life in one way or another, by their own behaviours and the expectations of what it means to be a citizen of the metropolis – a pawn in the game of success.

Alain de Botton criticises contemporary ideals of success leading to society viewing people as purely their own self-creation. Responsibility is total. De Botton in a talk on Ted.com<sup>14</sup>, echoes his previous book, *Status Anxiety*, in suggesting that this perception leaves no room for accidents – ‘the shit that happens’ – of either a positive or negative nature. We are self-made, whether we are successful entrepreneurs or part-time checkout operators. He contrasts the current attitude to the seventeenth century, when those at on the lowest level of the class structure were labelled ‘unfortunates’. Today those who are unable to attain the expected level of success are ‘losers’. De Botton suggests that this poses potentially greater levels of harm for one’s self esteem than if some events could instead be written off as unlucky twists of fate. In support of this is the proliferation of self-help books, which has created a society where there is no excuse for failure. Characters in *The Answers* are not immune to this, particularly Amanda. “His sister’s bookshelf ached under innumerable such books”. Tiff is the only one who really wishes Ernest to be successful and a valid member of society, yet is too overworked and isolated herself to be in a real position to make a difference to him.

De Botton’s position relates to the authorial intention I had for the novel, in that I aimed to create the story of ‘a pure soul in a corrupted (commercial) city’. While the novel as it now stands bears less resemblance to my original intention, there are still echoes of this in the text. This is a natural progression for the novel, with Krook distinguishing authorial intention from two other kinds, enacted and psychological intentions. She notes that ‘though the three might sometimes connect, they are commonly different.’<sup>15</sup> Therefore, despite my original intentions, London has become more of an insidious character than a dramatic setting. Understandably, according to Nicholl, who writes, “modern London (is) a setting less riveting for inhabitants than that (which) impressed previous writers who set their work in the city.”<sup>16</sup> The metropolis is

---

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/alain\\_de\\_botton\\_a\\_kinder\\_gentler\\_philosophy\\_of\\_success.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/alain_de_botton_a_kinder_gentler_philosophy_of_success.html)

<sup>15</sup> Krook, Dorothea. (1974.) *Intentions and intending: The problem of intention*. In *The Theory of the Novel: New essays*. Halperin, John (ed). Oxford University Press, Toronto, p 355

<sup>16</sup> Nicholl, Lawrence (2005) *Facticity: the novels of James Kelman*. In *The Contemporary British Novel since 1960*. Eds: Acheson, James and Ross, Sarah C. E. Edinburgh University Press, Great Britain, p.

increasingly seen less as a place to find yourself, than as a place to supersede others in the battleground of commerce.

Material wealth and the related ability to purchase goods is only one definition of success, but one that is challenged most obviously by the novel. As a marketing copywriter in London, I spent my working days encouraging consumers to purchase a variety of consumer goods, including travel, a product that is unnecessary to survival and, moreover, damaging to the planet. However, in *The Answers* several of the characters exhibit a clear anti-consumerist bent. For example, Amanda defines herself by comparing what others have and she has not, coveting Tiff's Volkswagen Polo and envying others' material possessions. She is aware of brands and their cost, identifying Violet's bag as expensive, and spends her time looking back, or looking forward, not existing in the present – always regretting what has happened or worrying about what will come. Violet too, uses consumption as a means to validate her work (although she does state this to begin with, but when questioned is more forthcoming about her aspirations). Madeline appears to be without any of these concerns, speaking scornfully of 'Somebodies,' yet her family claim, and she does not deny, that she lived a very materialistic existence in a professional capacity for most of her life. Her stories of living in Vanuatu appear to be nothing but a fabrication to cover the fact that she has lived her life in self-denial. Ernest seems to be the antithesis of these material desires, proud of existing with nothing- indeed, comfortable with fewer possessions, "touching the earth lightly." He is at first bereft of any ambition, a drifter, almost not even worthy of being a protagonist, and seeks a simplistic escape – a fantasy that seems ludicrous, a projected utopia in opposition to London's dystopia . Yet ultimately the escapes that everyone else seeks become harder to attain. In the end, Ernest is the only one who gets his goal, though it comes at a price.

### **Form and Style**

I chose to use the third person limited omniscient point of view, otherwise known as free indirect style<sup>17</sup> for the characteristics of it allowing 'omniscience and partiality at once.'<sup>18</sup> Writing from this point of view also allowed me to occasionally write in the

---

<sup>17</sup> Wood, James. (2008) *How Fiction Works*. p.10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.11

second person, such as someone might do naturally now and again. For instance, when Ernest says ‘up the stupid angular steps that made you feel drunk at any time of day’. A particularly challenging aspect was to keep this narrative style consistent – true to Ernest’s character – and there are some consistency issues within the manuscript. However, *The Answers* is a first draft, so issues of style will take further drafts to resolve. Smiley states ‘the more that one writes, the more it is possible to refine one’s own style.’<sup>19</sup> And further, ‘it may take draft after draft to achieve a perfectly natural style.’<sup>20</sup> Therefore I do not claim that I have resolved this issue, but instead, it is an aspect of the existing manuscript that I will address in future drafts.

A further challenge was in the ethnographic distribution of the characters. Ernest is contrasted against a number of other characters who typify a cross-section of English subcultures, yet main characters are mostly from a similar, narrow, background: either working-class or middle-class with liberal leanings. In addition, despite London’s diverse ethnic landscape, main characters are either white or mixed race. Minority characters do appear but do not have major roles. I chose to do this primarily due to the observations I made while living in London. Though London is perceived to be a melting pot of people from many countries and backgrounds, the old class stratifications remain, and in general racial groups do not commonly mix outside work and educational groups, the exception being in the more creative professions. Whether Bengalis, Somalis, Antipodeans or Western Europeans other than British, most gravitate more easily to those from their own or neighbouring countries. There is also a wide mistrust of immigrants, particularly among the working class, as evidenced by the recent rise of the British National Party in typically working class parts of London.<sup>21</sup>

My remoteness from London in writing about it was additionally a problem, especially as I had been based close to the centre of the city, in the inner South-East. Though in one sense distance makes it easier to engage the imagination, it has been difficult to evoke the atmosphere of a wintry London while writing in a warm climate with the sounds of cicadas and tuis instead of sirens, football songs and crows.

---

<sup>19</sup> Smiley, Jane (2005). *13 ways of looking at the novel*. Knopf, New York, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* p 135

<sup>21</sup> In the 2006 local elections, the BNP more than doubled its number of councillors, increasing the number to 49. The biggest gain was in Barking and Dagenham where the BNP won 11 of the 13 seats it contested, gaining 17% of the vote. More information can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_National\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_National_Party)

Finally, a further difficulty that arose as the manuscript draft neared entirety was the complexity of the plot; various subplots remain incomplete. Daldry, echoing D.H Lawrence, suggests that there are two functions of the novel: ‘to represent human experience directly... and to structure that experience.’<sup>22</sup> He notes that the two are in opposition, due to the ‘threat that narrative holds out to fiction of forcible control.’<sup>23</sup> Daldry goes on to write that a fictive voice “must abstain from the search for unity.”<sup>24</sup> In regards to *The Answers*, the fictional ideas threaten to be too much for the narrative to structure. The most significant two sub-plots are: (1) Ernest’s flashbacks (or flash-forwards) when he attempts suicide at the novel’s outset, which are relevant to his condition, and were intended as glimpses of triggers to memories he regains that provide some insight into his state of mind and (2); Ernest’s reading of *In Search of Lost Time* links with the previous event, but is not sufficiently meshed with the main plot. There is also potential to work in the possible repercussions of Ernest’s head injury from the accident – which can in itself provide delusions, and loss of episodic memory. These will take more analysis and work to resolve in a successive draft, and is why I have chosen to submit this thesis without the final seven chapters, which require more reworking to accommodate the subplots. My point here is simply that a year, while seeming a considerable length of time at the outset, has proved not enough time to do justice to the novel I aim to write.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Answers* is positioned as a contemporary Bildungsroman-type text, roughly using the Bildungsroman framework but subverting it in denial of the neat and tidy ending common to the genre. While not overtly political, the novel’s sub-text does raise issues such as the value placed on material success, the place of family, the notion of individuality, and the relationship between truth and memory. The novel is a product of various influences, yet I recognise that my expatriate experience has been a key formative – inescapable even – aspect of its production. As one author writes “Although every novel is not an autobiography, autobiographies and fiction are both acts of

---

<sup>22</sup> Daldry, Graham, (1987.) *Charles Dickens and the Form of the Novel*. Croom Helm, London.p.12

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p.74



imagination behind which can be traced the residue of consciousness and unconscious choices whose integration forms a personality.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Tracey, Laura. (1988.) *Catching the Drift: Authority, Gender and Narrative Strategy in Fiction*. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey.

## References

- Alden, Patricia. (1984.) *Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman: Gissing, Hardy, Bennett and Lawrence*. UMI Research Press, Michigan.
- Buckley, Jerome Hamilton (1974.) *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. Harvard University Press, Carbonridge Massachusetts.
- Daldry, Graham (1987.) *Charles Dickens and the Form of the Novel*. Croom Helm, London.
- De Botton, Alain. (2009) *A kinder, gentler, philosophy of success*. Ted.com talks.  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/alain\\_de\\_botton\\_a\\_kinder\\_gentler\\_philosophy\\_of\\_success.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/alain_de_botton_a_kinder_gentler_philosophy_of_success.html) Accessed 3:14pm on 20/02/2010
- De Botton, Alain. (2004) *Status Anxiety*. Penguin Group, London.
- DuPleiss, Rachel (1985.) *To bear my mother's name: Kunstleromane by Women Writers*. In *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Fraiman, Susan. (1993) *Is there a Female Bildungsroman?* In *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Higdon, David Leon. *Unconfessed Confessions: the narrators of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes.* In *The British and Irish Novel since 1960*. Acheson, James (ed)
- Kontje, Todd. (1992.) *Private lives in the Public Sphere: The German Bildungsroman as Metafiction*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania.
- Krook, Dorothea. (1974.) *Intentions and intending: The problem of intention*. In *The Theory of the Novel: New essays*. Halperin, John (ed). Oxford University Press, Toronto
- Morris, Paula. (2009.) *Penguin book of Contemporary New Zealand Short Stories* (introduction to). Penguin Group, Auckland.
- Nicholl, Lawrence (2005) *Facticity: the novels of James Kelman*. *Appetite, Desire and Belonging in the Novels of Rose Tremain and Sarah Sceats*. In *The Contemporary British Novel since 1960*. Eds: Acheson, James and Ross, Sarah C. E. Edinburgh University Press, Great Britain.

- Papayamis, Marilyn Adler. (2005.) *Writing in the Margins. The Ethics of Expatriation from Lawrence to Ondaatjie*. Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville.
- Sceats, Sarah. (2005). *Appetite, Desire and Belonging in the Novels of Rose Tremain*. In *The Contemporary British Novel since 1960*. Eds: Acheson, James and Ross, Sarah C. E. Edinburgh University Press, Great Britain.
- Smiley, Jane (2005). *13 Ways of Looking at the Novel*. Knopf, New York.
- Tracey, Laura. (1988.) *Catching the Drift: Authority, Gender and Narrative Strategy in Fiction*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.
- Wood, James. (2008.) *How Fiction Works*. Jonathan Cape, London.

