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Intangible Gifts

a novel

with accompanying exegesis

'Japan, the Love Story and Myself'

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Abstract

The major work of my PhD thesis is a novel, *Intangible Gifts*, which explores such themes as reverse culture shock, the complexity of cultural identity and perceptions and misconceptions of cultures transplanted and displaced. The protagonist of the novel is a young woman poet. Her belief in 'the life of art' and the potential of poetry, beauty and love to transcend boundaries is what propels the narrative.

The story is set in a small Australian city where there are strong undercurrents of religious and racial discrimination. Rosanna, the protagonist, narrates her life through fragments of memory, drawing upon her experience as a child and young woman in Australia and Japan. Her understanding of home is a major theme in the novel.

A number of significant events driven by issues of sex, race, culture, money and power, are represented in the novel through Rosanna's conversations with others. In the small city she meets a man on the tram and falls in love with him. However, *Intangible Gifts* is not just a love story between two people; rather it is a multi-stranded story where love hangs in the air.

The exegesis considers my own evolution as a writer and the creation process of my novel, *Intangible Gifts*. It acknowledges that my novel is a Künstlerroman or 'artist-novel', representing the growth of a poet to the extent that she recognises her artistic destiny. My exegesis discusses the influence of Japan on my own life and work. It also discusses the influence of Japanese literature on Western literature, and how that informs my novel. A significant model for my novel is Leonard Cohen's *The Favourite Game*, the influence of which is discussed in the context of Japanese-influenced Western literature.