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Woman, wife and (m)other: post-colonial metaphors for negation

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POST-COLONIAL METAPHORS FOR
NEGATION

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Synopsis

An examination will be carried out into different aspects of possession and exploitation of the female within a colonial/post-colonial context. This thesis will be constructed in 'parts' that highlight the influences that construct, define, subvert [and shape] female identity in colonial/post-colonial literature. For women at least, negation, fragmentation and alienation continue long after the physical process of colonisation has ended. It is from this background that women have to rise in order to assert their independence. Women writers like Atwood, Steinem and Munro write with sensitivity of woman's wrongful possession and manipulation by men whilst making the point that woman's journey towards self-definition doesn't automatically have to lead to man's downfall. Male writers like Rushdie and Murnane acknowledge gender inequities that pervert human relationships.

Woman's 'rite of passage' towards self-definition is something which is either ignored or absorbed into the mythologies of the dominant culture, whether colonial or post-colonial and becomes little more than an extension of masculine fantasy irrespective of the political-historical context.

Masculine reflections and projections have a regular propensity to force women into the wearing of ultimately alienating masks. The fragmentation of the female body is implanted into the female psyche by the dominant (patriarchal) culture, to distort
women's sense of self-worth and capacity for independence and guilt-free self-actualisation.

Writers such as Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Patricia Grace, Salman Rushdie and Gerald Murnane assert, through their texts, that oppression can be inherited; passed down from father to son, mother to daughter. Its face is that of the dominant culture which adapts but doesn't willingly let go of the minds of men and women. This is a thematic preoccupation of many of the texts discussed within this thesis.

Despite their attention to liberationist projects of race, class and nationhood, post-colonial literatures too often suggest that women's options are restricted to marvellous, monstrous motherhood. The project of textural liberation can be advanced by resisting recuperation within such images, in particular, in moving beyond a quest narrative of fulfilment towards postmodernist forms that critique the mythical foundations of nation and gender.
Introduction.

*The Empire Writes Back* comments that the history and concerns of feminist theory have strong parallels with post-colonial theory. Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalised in the face of the dominant.¹

This highlights the central dilemma for many of the female characters who appear in the texts discussed within this thesis. Many of these women, in attempting to break out of the large and small prisons of the mind that have been constructed for them, find themselves caught up in a labyrinth of unknown possibilities:

Here they are, returning, arriving over and again, because the unconscious is impregnable. They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they've been given a deadly brainwashing. You can incarcerate them, slow them down, get away with the old Apartheid routine, but for a time only. As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they're taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalised this horror of the dark.²

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Africa's dark continent is a metaphor for women of any colour who fail to reflect the dominant ideology's fantasy of what a woman should be. The entities arriving over and over again are those who have existed on the periphery of the dominant culture. This group comprises those who have been colonised and are now able to question the peculiar phenomena of imperialism.

Women find themselves in a double-bind. Women, forced in the past to accept the dominant culture's authority to name them and subvert their sense of self-identity, are faced with having to assert their common humanity in the present, just as former colonies have to resist re-indoctrination in the rediscovery of their own identity:

The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable. It is still unexplored only because we've been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want us to believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. That would be enough to set half the world laughing, except that it's still going on. For the phallogocentric sublation is with us, and it's militant, regenerating the old patterns, anchored to the dogma of castration. They haven't changed a thing: they've theorised their desire for reality.³

It is interesting that the Medusa, usually one of man's most hated and feared mythological figures, is used as a sign of male oppression. The Medusa, capable of turning men into stone, is linked with Marion Campbell's spectacular mother⁴ and Shame's

³ Cixous, pp.341,342.
outraged (devouring) wife. They are all monstrous because they do not reflect man's image back to him. 'Women', as metaphor, threatens notions of masculine superiority and female inferiority:

Metaphor declares the similarity of the different. It unites them in one figure. It's basically monstrous—like a mother's body. Take a category like masculinity: as soon as that becomes a theme in narrative, 'a tool for thought', a motif for art, it has to be tested and reassured by what it thinks it isn't. It has to look in the mirror for endorsement, not just by its opposite but by what troubles the very standard of the opposition, by the kind of loopy thinking that contests any duality. The monstrous is the disturbance in all mirror relations.

This monstrous disturbance is a male fear constructed of a horror of being confronted with a powerless return to the site of its often violent occupation. The return of women to centre-stage is an inevitability that has long been repressed. Cixous expresses in theoretical terms what Atwood, Rushdie and others dramatically depict:

When the "repressed" of their culture and their society returns, it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions. For when the Phallic period comes to an end, women will have been either annihilated or borne up to the highest and most violent incandescence. Muffled throughout their history, they have lived in dreams, in bodies (though muted), in silences, in aphonic revolts.

This quote signifies the start of Woman's seemingly unstoppable journey towards self-assertion. These journeys don't always begin at the same place, but they share many similar

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6 Campbell, p.26
7 Cixous, pp.342,343.
preoccupations of possession and dispossession, power and subjectivity. A certain amount of repetition is inevitable and serves to highlight the perpetuation of male and female stereotypes. Men, justly or unjustly, are bound to the patriarchal models of adventurer/explorer/conqueror of distant lands, and women are bound to those lands. Woman as metaphor for landscape serves as man's colonised subject who is often mistaken for a site of action rather than active participant.

There are many different influences that affect one's place in history. Society's contradictions do not lend themselves to a strictly linear discussion. When these contradictions affect human relationships, it is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve them one issue at a time. Ages of conflict and alienation require a radically different approach if any long-term solution is to be achieved.
The positioning of women on the margins, and within the chinks of the dominant culture forms the basis of a thesis which attempts to draw connections between the alienated worlds of women and men, the canonical/Imperial centre and the disempowered subject, worlds in many cases separated by vast chasms of negation which inevitably harm both sexes.

Women in many societies have been relegated to the position of 'Other', they are marginalised and, metaphorically, 'colonised', forced to pursue 'guerrilla warfare against imperial domination from positions deeply embedded in, yet fundamentally alienated from, that imperium.\(^8\)

These women are victims of patriarchal oppression and repression, being forced to represent their experiences through the language of the dominant culture.\(^9\)

Another focus of colonial discourse might be termed psycho sexual, exploring the ways in which colonial and imperial discourse implicitly draws upon sexual paradigms to represent itself: to what extent does the conquest of, and domination over, the land and people of the colonies model itself upon the power relations of masculinity and femininity.\(^{10}\)

Women have traditionally been forced to work through or around dominant (patriarchal) institutions. They have their spaces, both physical and symbolic, defined, repressed and

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\(^8\) Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. p.174
\(^9\) Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. p.175.
colonised by a central authorial culture. As feminist criticism has shown, the process of revising literary history to accommodate marginal texts by women has been similar to that aimed at establishing national literatures in English from former British colonies. Both involve rejecting an authorising parent. But national liberation has not meant an equal liberation for women or their writing. The construction of national identity tends to highlight robust masculine achievement whilst allowing women, at best, a marginal role:

According to some writers, women are relegated to the margins of the polity even though their centrality to the nation is constantly being reaffirmed. It is reaffirmed consciously in nationalist rhetoric where the nation itself is represented as a woman to be protected or, less consciously, in an intense preoccupation with women's appropriate sexual conduct. The latter often constitutes the crucial distinction between the nation and its 'others'.

The means by which women can come to terms with ideological inconsistencies that position them as other within their own country is to write about female experience from their own perspective, a perspective which is shared by many writers from other peripheral cultures. What

...each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonisation and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post colonial.

12 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, pp.174,175.
These tensions exist on a number of levels: global, national and personal. The freedom to challenge the assumptions of the dominant culture is something that has been building over the last few decades. Feminist deconstruction of an archaic and often oppressive dominant culture works through asserting a legitimately authoritative place in a contemporary literary dialogue which questions the nature of the past, present and future:

... a few exceptional women have indeed managed to resist the full pressure of patriarchal ideology, becoming conscious of their own oppression and voicing their opposition to male power. Only a concept of ideology as a contradictory construct, marked by gaps, slides and inconsistencies, would enable feminism to explain how even the severest ideological pressures will generate their own lacunae.¹³

Women whose opposition counters the perspective of dominant masculine ideologies necessarily create a dissonance which might bring about an erosion of the status quo. This may be effected by intervention across a range of interconnecting discourses:

'No really profound sense of human equality can ever emerge from a philosophy rooted in a stance of human superiority over nature.' Unlearning this cultural paradigm of 'Man' verses 'Nature' will take even longer than creating cultures that unify the 'masculine' and 'feminine' parts of ourselves, but cracking our belief in its universality begins its destruction ... the idea of each of us as an integral part of nature begins to take root. The self as a microcosm of nature's power is a more life-affirming kind of imagery than the notion that our progress

depends on our ability to stamp out the natural forces within us — which is of course, impossible.  

Woman has long been excluded from what Showalter calls a patriarchal 'methodolatry'. A major base of this thesis and of the texts it utilises is a discursive analysis of the stereotyping of women:

If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be.

It can be claimed that women are in many ways masculine constructs. Their attitudes and bodies are colonised to fit masculine fantasy in a process which is often channelled into the female psyche as a desirable and natural state of affairs.

The texts written by women and the few texts written by men discussed within this thesis question the authority of the dominant (patriarchal) culture in contemporary society and literature within a post-colonial/post-modern context:

Decentred, allegorical, schizophrenic ... however we choose to diagnose its symptoms, post modernism is usually treated, by its protagonists and antagonists alike as a crisis of cultural authority, specifically of the authority vested in Western European culture and its institutions. That the hegemony of European civilisation is drawing to a close is hardly a new perception; since the mid-fifties, at least, we have recognised the necessity of encountering different

\[\text{Moi, p.78.}\]
\[\text{Moi, p.76.}\]
cultures by means other than the shock of domination and conquest.  

One peripheral culture that confronts central hegemonic authority is that of the female. If it can be taken that women's writing entails criticism as well as the theory that attaches to it, then the following claim is defensible:

... at its most ambitious ... feminist criticism wants to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connections between textuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psycho sexual identity and cultural authority.  

The women's texts examined within this thesis tend to critique the socialising institutions that work towards the marginalisation of the other: institutions such as literary canons, social discourses and theories that empower the masculine and negate the feminine. Coming out of this process is an indictment of oppressive symbolic orders.

According to Lacan, the principal dominating sign is the phallus, a symbolic extension of masculine ego:

The phallus as signifier has a central, crucial position in language, for if language embodies the patriarchal law of the culture, its basic meanings refer to the recurring process by which sexual difference and subjectivity are acquired ... Thus the little girl's access to the symbolic, i.e., to language and its laws, is always negative and/or mediated by intro subjective relations to a third term, for it is characterised by an identification with lack.

17 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.162.
The item missing from the literary body of the dominant culture is an active female voice. The project of feminism involves inscribing women's literature as a positive presence within the dominant culture rather than as an absence or a reactive assertion that implies continued marginalisation.

The assertion of such a positive presence carries with it the need to revalue hierarchical assumptions and to posit a critique of the very values on which hierarchies rest:

Rating and grading people, the notion that all accomplishment lies in defeating others, even a linear view of abstractions like time and history - all these things were organised by the same paradigm: hierarchy. The pyramid or the classic organisational chart became the grid through which many cultures were to see the world for centuries from a 'male headed' household to a corporate structure in which all authority flows from the top.  

There is a fairly obvious linkage between women's writing and post-colonial literary issues in that they are both acts of resistance against entrenched male-orientated canonical texts and theories:

... the literary canon, the body of British texts which all too frequently still acts as a touchstone of taste and value ... the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world.

Acts of countering patriarchal authority need not necessarily entail literary violation; they may merely assert that there are other images and other voices that have been obscured by a

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20 Steinem, p.218.
21 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.7.
canonical history that has marginalised both post-colonial and women's literature:

All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts: and, at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it. In the process, she claims neither definitiveness nor structural completeness, for her different readings and reading systems, but only their usefulness in recognising the particular achievements of woman-as-author and their applicability in conscientiously decoding woman-as-sign.

There is another problem for women wanting to write their own stories, because:

Caught in the specular logic of patriarchy, woman can choose either to remain silent, or produce incomprehensible babble (any utterance that falls outside the logic of the same will by definition be incomprehensible to the male master discourse).

Women's and postcolonial texts are often difficult to read with the tools of criticism set up by the dominant culture. Intertextual referencing, for example, is difficult to locate as dominant patriarchal discourses rarely, if ever, make positive reference to marginalised discourses. In spite of this phenomenon, postcolonial and feminist discourses actively address questions of authenticity and identity more strongly than ever before as they challenge the myths of the dominant culture by highlighting the problems of transferring a measure of power/knowledge from the centre to the periphery.

22 Showalter, in Lodge, p.333
23 Moi, p.135.
II

A part of personal identity comes out of the myths and legends of the dominant culture. These have a tendency to construct images of masculinity and femininity that inhibit the likelihood of a truly positive relationship between men and women:

One of Cixous's most accessible ideas is her analysis of what one might call 'patriarchal binary thought'. Under the heading 'Where is she?', Cixous lines up the following list of binary oppositions:

- Activity/Passivity
- Sun/Moon
- Culture/Nature
- Day/Night
- Father/Mother
- Head/Emotions
- Intelligible/Sensitive
- Logos/Pathos

Corresponding, as they do to the underlying opposition man/woman, these binary oppositions are heavily imbricated in the patriarchal value system: each opposition can be analysed as a hierarchy where the 'feminine' side is always seen as the negative, powerless instance.\(^\text{24}\)

The dominant culture's discourse slides across these binaries to hide its own contradictions. Jean Baudrillard asserts that a certain allowance is made for opposition:

... oppositional theory and practice is allowed for in advance by ruling ideologies. While in some sense this may be so at a conceptual level... it fails to deal with the awkward fact that oppositional movements do occur... and do sometimes win.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{24}\) Moi, p.104.
\(^{25}\) Williams and Chrisman, p.6.
Any society which continues to perpetuate, however tacitly, binaries of self and other, power and powerlessness is in perpetual need of re-authentication. The process of re-authentication can only take place if society's contradictions, both in operation and "under erasure" are absorbed and then ignored. However, they are never completely erasable as the dominant culture rarely accept responsibility for its intransigence:

It is a refusal to accept responsibility that is characteristic of a self caught in the morality of the other. And in a sense, the negation and refusal of responsibility...is defensible exactly because the code is to begin with that of the other and not strictly that of the self. The self has ingested the notions of the other.

Woman as 'Other' is a territory under siege by her binary opposition - man. In order to encroach upon or to deny the authenticity of his binary opposition, mankind has to, in a sense, deny Woman's essential humanity (of course in the process of using words like mankind and humanity the absence of the female is implied). A great part of post-colonial women's writing centres around a longing for an existence that does not require self-sacrifice, self-denial or subjection to the small and large oppressions of a self-centred dominant culture. When 'feminists' image their liberationist program, they often take over models 'owned' by hegemony and are accused of being stridently repetitive:

In a pattern that goes back to Ibsen's A Doll's House, our heroine slams the door on her domestic prison,

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journeys out into the great world, slays the dragons of her patriarchal society, and triumphantly discovers the grail of feminism by ‘finding herself’. The quest motif, in short, and we have met the feminist pilgrim countless times in the past decade or so... 27

The 'stridency' arises from overt opposition to consolidated masculinist discourse, and may be as imprisoning. However, Woman's quest has as much validity as any romantic mind-journey set up by man's need for reaffirmation. This quest is less easy because it has to fight through the terms of its own liberationist model:

... the route of the search for authenticity does question the model of rationality profoundly. The challenge to the world-view is not that women have been excluded; it is to its premises. The argument is that the dominant world-view has been entirely from a male perspective, a perspective that has assigned to masculinity those characteristics which serve rationality, truth-seeking, logic. Woman – and the feminine are cast in this scenario as the antithesis, the negation, and most particularly as the Other. The Other is not just different; it is antithetical. The metaphor of dualism which maps on to masculinity and feminity logically requires that one pole is the negation of the other. 28

Such a radical attack on patriarchy is made more pressing and more difficult in the post-colonial context because of the extra levels of discursive struggle -- class, race, nation, culture informing the liberationist quest.

In settler (colonised) societies, for example, woman has to work against not merely the macho aspects of a pioneering ethos, but a discourse that locates civility and independence in a landscape discursively 'captured' as female.

The search for identity can be problematical because the process of discovering oneself can result in the negation of the other – either male or female. The desire to take possession of the landscape and its female inhabitants remains part of a male-orientated colonial psyche. Woman and nation/landscape are often discussed as if they were the same thing. Nation is often represented as a mother for comfort, and a lover for submission. Situated somewhere within this frame is woman herself, not always as metaphor, but almost always negated in one sense or another:

The colonial world was no place for a woman, let alone a lady; it was a man's world, demanding pioneering, martial and organisational skills, and the achievements of those in the shape of conquered lands and people were celebrated in a series of male-orientated myths: mateship, the mounties, explorers, freedom fighters, bushrangers, missionaries. At a later stage the same skills were used to overthrow colonialism, thus reinforcing the ethos of the colonies as a predominantly male domain, both in reality and in the popular imagination which was both formed by the myths and shaped reality. This male ethos has persisted in the colonial and post-colonial world long after the reality which formed it had ceased to exist.29

Place is often a mythical and tenuous construct, and in the process of construction, sometimes, something is lost. In this case, that

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which is lost is the identification of a substantial and (seemingly) irrefutable female presence which has been subordinated to masculine fantasy.

In a world dominated symbolically and physically by men, women often serve as a metaphor for a distanced and objectified nature:

There has been a growing awareness of the use of female metaphors for nature and natural metaphors for women. An examination of the text of science highlights the correspondence between the way men treated women in particular historical periods and the way they used nature.\(^{30}\)

Australia may be 'a sunburnt country/ a land of sweeping plains'\(^{31}\)...it is also 'a woman beyond her change of life'.\(^{32}\) The hills of New Zealand are comfortingly, bawdily familiar: 'They're not sharp hills or pointy. They're bums and boobs, with cracks and splits. They're fat and folding. I like it when the wrapping comes off.'\(^{33}\) England's landscape has been conquered but is still open to invasion from within:

...heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and falling back leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that


comes under the wind in Autumn, showing the birds' nest no longer worth hiding. Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away.

The earth has a lineage of manipulation, distortion and exploitation by a humanity which seems to pass its rites of passage through the manipulation of metaphors of landscape which are gendered in ways that highlight women's lack of 'real' status.

Woman's inability to function on her own is a long-ingrained motif of Australian literature; she is either pining for her man or marking time. One example of this masculine projection can be found in tales of national mythology:

In the Australian nationalist mythology of the late nineteenth-century, the representation of the bush sweetheart is centred on the romantic notion of the heart. Constancy is her most admirable trait: yearning for the bushman, she awaits his return with unaltering love. Yet though she may live for the bushman she loves, almost inevitably she will not live with him. This is because the hearts of women are potentially disruptive to the order of men in bush mythology. Australian bush myths transform the bushman's labour to extract a living from the inhospitable natural into the struggle to form the nation by claiming its territory; there can be no place for a woman in this struggle and hence no place for her in the imaginary order through which 'The Bush' was constructed.

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In the literary construction of Australia, therefore, Woman is marked by absence [or lack]. "The Drover's Wife" can be considered a good example of the literature of the bush which has been used to form notions of national and, by extension, personal identity. Urban myths do exist, but they are overshadowed, in Australia at least, by the vast mass of 'The Bush'.

Many Australian writers have constructed images of a mythical place and time, but few tales have been more influential [or more insidious] than Henry Lawson's "The Drover's Wife". There have been a number of adaptations made of his short story; most of them question the advisability of following generations of alienation and subjection.

The drover's wife is a woman who excels in the role of wife and mother. She struggles courageously to hold home and family intact, whilst her husband, the archetypal bush adventurer, caught between hope and despair, measures his grit against a threatening landscape.\(^{36}\)

She can be seen as a fantastic projection of the male ego, in that her story isn't allowed to come into conflict with masculine ideologies. Her son is a sympathetic figure, promising never to go droving when he sees his mother's tears. This provides a moments solace for mother and child but also reinforces a little boy's determination to take on the mantle of protector of women. This may be a noble desire, but has the effect of returning this woman to her place in the traditional family hierarchy. This is

the most insidious aspect of the story. It seems to offer a promise of dependability and stability. It is, however, a subtle reassertion of traditional codes of power and dependency.

The drover's wife is a good woman who has to rely on men for those duties which she might find arduous or distasteful. Her brother-in-law butchers her sheep and provides her with essential provisions. (If she fails in traditionally male-orientated effort, she evokes sympathy rather than scorn.) She would have been beaten by a bush-fire if it wasn't for 'four excited bushmen who arrived in the nick of time', and:

She thinks how she fought a flood during her husband's absence. She stood for hours in the drenching downpour, and dug an overflow gutter to save the dam across the creek. But she could not save it. There are things that a woman cannot do. Next morning the dam was broken, and her heart was nearly broken too, for she thought how her husband would feel when he came home and saw the result of years of labour swept away. She cried then.

The drover's wife may not be capable of holding down a 'man's job' but is permitted by Lawson to find a sense of fulfilment in her role of wife and mother in a man's environment:

She seems contented with her lot. She loves her children but has no time to show it. She seems harsh to them. Her surroundings are not favourable to the development of the "womanly" or sentimental side of nature.

Lawson's short story seems sympathetic to the plight of womankind in an alien landscape, but suggests that the

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37 Lawson, H. *While the Billy Boils*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1944, p.193.
38 Lawson, p.193.
39 Lawson, p.196.
Australian environment can be tamed only by its men who seem to draw strength from the never-ending struggle between themselves and nature, to emerge victorious, to wax lyrical about their relationship with a landscape(or woman) that is no longer free. It also provides a statement about Woman's place. Woman, according to Lawson's subtext, belongs to a more refined place where she need only to concern herself with child-rearing and home duties.

The main theme connecting "The Drover's Wife" (character and story) to her (its) literary descendants is a pervasive sense of alienation and insecurity in a society which perpetuates myths of female inadequacy. The women in these stories are rarely allowed to feel safe; if they aren't threatened by the Australian bush, they are savaged, in one sense or another, by it's 'superior' male inhabitants.

As the drover's wife pushes her pram down the bush track, she is joined in a figurative sense, by Olga Master's character, Lil Warwick. Counsellor Fisher is a pathetic inheritor of this myth when he likens the fearful Lil to the drover's wife:

His thoughts then turned to the Henry Lawson story of "The Drover's Wife" he had read as a schoolboy. His favourite story. That woman, little Mrs Warwick, who never went anywhere with her husband and had most of her shopping done for her by her mother or brought from catalogues (he opposed this practice of not supporting local business but approved in the case of Mrs Warwick, who really was consistent in her desire to be alone made him think of the drover's wife, whom he would have liked for a mother. He used to see himself killing the
snake for her, then flinging himself on her bosom and being nursed and rocked). Councillor Fisher's mother was a different kind of woman. She was a hospital matron who never gave up working and he and his brothers were brought up in the quarters built for staff. Councillor Fisher had always wanted to know if she had loved his father, who was killed in World War 1, but he never asked. Councillor Fisher had no wife himself.40

The message implied, if not actually uttered in "The Drover's Wife" and perpetuated through 'popular mythology' is that motherhood provides a comforting shelter for its male offspring, and that life's story can only have a happy ending if husband and father return to restore the family unit to its rightful balance. Councillor Fisher is unhappy with his own history, which traces the same mythic outline, but breaches rules of masculine indispensability. His own mother managed to stand on her own two feet, without masculine guidance.

The wives and mothers in these stories may be symbols of 'perfect motherhood' taking their offspring on a ritual stroll into a genteel place and time, but in Lil's case, at least, she is escaping into herself; a place in which there is a illusion of safety. As the drover's house provides little security against threatening intrusion, neither is Lil's mind a safe harbour against fear and unnecessary shame as her body is invaded by her husband and her spirit broken by an unhappy marriage and maternity. Lil finds small comfort in taking herself and her children for a stroll as she is constantly in fear of spatial invasion by, perhaps, well-meaning modern-day bush travellers. (Lil, like the drover's wife,

is aware that her security is constantly under threat.) Lil's 'worst enemy' is not herself; but is to be found in the perpetuation of a lie; that motherhood automatically promotes happiness and security.

Murray Bail's adaptation of "The Drover's Wife" attempts to deconstruct romantic conceptions of the marital and maternal states, whilst presenting woman in a more realistic setting. The inspiration for this setting is provided by a consideration of Russell Drysdale's painting based on the story. The woman of this story leaves her husband in search of a better life, as a person in her own right, large enough to threaten the bruised ego of a 'small' man:

I recall the drover as a thin head in a khaki hat, not talkative, with dusty boots. He is indistinct. Is it him? I don't know. Hazel--it is Hazel and the rotten landscape that dominate everything.\(^{41}\)

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The drover and, in an ironic juxtaposition, the man who is left behind become shadowy, indistinct figures; possibly out of favour with their shared woman, whose eyes have cleared to the realisation that 'her men' no longer form an essential part of her existence. An image is created of a woman, no longer willing to pay service to a mythology which blackmails many women into accepting the bondage of destructive marriages and martyred motherhood. This woman not only leaves her husband; she also forces him to accept responsibility for his own progeny.

The ironic twist to this story continues as Hazel usurps masculine privilege to become 'the bush adventurer' as she follows a trail of her own making, in search of her own identity. The implications of her defection are clear to the man she leaves behind, because as the landscape is appropriated by her, her man's peace of mind is placed under threat by this woman who is big enough to stand alone; leaving behind a male shaken in his faith that Man was born to be free and Woman to suffer a form of martyrdom, tied to home and family.

These adaptations of Lawson's story provide some insights into a masculine ethos which tends to ignore the contribution that women have made to the formation of present-day Australia. They lead the reader to a rather negative conclusion on the issue of literary myth making:

In Henry Lawson's story the woman character lives her life as if she were a sheep. She is penned up in her outback fold, unable to go anywhere. Her routines of the day resemble closely the life of a
sheep and it can be taken that this is a literary transformation for the sake of propriety. She tells in this story how she was taken to the city a few times in a compartment, as is the sheep...And we note that in the three works there is no drover, this is a reversal of situation, an inside-out truth, for we know historically that there was a drover but there was historically no wife, not in any acceptable conventional sense.\textsuperscript{42}

The preceding passage may be a section lifted from a mock academic paper by an 'Italian professor of Australian studies'; it is also an attempt by an Australian writer to highlight the insidious nature of a his-story that denies women an independent existence.

Women do play a vital role in global history but, as these texts suggest, it is a sad fact that their contribution has been actively marginalised by myth-makers, obsessed with conquest and domination. Man's vision still continues to filter through to women through refracted sunlight, and through countless windows, losing a good deal of meaning in the process when notable writers like Bail and Moorhouse are presented by \textit{The Bulletin} as sources of authorised dissent.

Even though their texts are reformist in design, their commentary privileges a male point of view. Paradoxically, Master's critique written from a woman's perspective received little notice at first. 'The Drover's Wife' has been reinterpreted by Bail and Moorhouse in witty and incisive treatments. However,

their focus is on 'realism' and satire rather than on the more confronting issues of dis-ease that are considered by Masters.

If woman has a place in patriarchal texts, it is in an obscure male tribute to the nameless and archetypal (domesticated) wife and mother, in a setting constructed by men out of their own fantasies. Murray Bail's female adventurer is not the first of her kind...many have gone before and there are many more setting out on a quest for empowerment as they journey across man's alien landscape.
If the female quest narrative is in danger of becoming clichéd, it is because it utilises and works within an age-old patriarchal model (itself a cliché) which is outlined within Gerald Murnane's *The Plains*; with the plains being a metaphor for local identity:

The fact is that the first settlers stayed here, presumably because the plains were the nearest approximation to the lands they'd been looking for. I can't believe that even our plains could equal that land we all dream of exploring. And yet I believe that land is only another plain. Or at least it must be approached by way of the plains around us.\(^{43}\)

Like imagination, a quest for self-identification often begins and ends within the boundaries of the familiar. The recording of history is a highly subjective process. It is, far too often, a product of 'remembrances of the mis-remembered'.\(^{44}\) Historical interpretation and re-interpretation can lead, in an oppressive cycle, towards misinterpretation as women are swallowed by landscapes situated within the vast, almost unrelenting void of an imagined country.

Bennett and Stephens suggest that a conventional historiographic interpretation (a central theme of *The Plains*) can lead to the installation of another version of history with similarly universal claims to validity. This process is unlikely to validate alternate (co-existing) histories:

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\(^{44}\) Murnane, p.82.
In contrast with the anti colonialist programs of many nationalist historians, the project of post colonial criticism is not to revive or invent 'authentic', pre-colonial social traditions and 'indigenous' subjects uncontaminated by contact with colonial culture. Instead, it seeks to promote the idea of 'multiple', coexisting histories; and in this sense, the politics of much post colonial criticism are of a distinctly postmodern kind. In attempting to 'interrupt' and 'displace' the hegemonic narrative of Euro-American modernity without installing another version of history - which makes similarly universal claims to validity - in its place, it adopts the strategies of deconstruction rather than of conventional historiography.45

The history of national representation seems to have a lot to do with the colonisation of women. The landscape, especially in settler colonies, has often been seen as threatening and mysterious - something to be tamed.

While Murnane appears to adopt a 'post-colonial' strategy of postmodern interrogation of representations of space and time (maps, film making, story telling), it can be argued that his work leaves the female constrained within the natural/national landscape of the pastoral-ist work. Insofar as this is true, the writer, while seeing the problems of history, has not fully investigated his own position within that history.

Possession is an obvious colonial theme as the coloniser, usually masculine, attempts to reshape the world to reflect something familiar that he feels emanating from within himself. Any

change that takes place is stamped with 'his' mark as circumstances change but his position often remains the same:

This was the slight hope that urged the least prepared of the petitioners into the inner room of the hotel—that some landowners there might be in the grip of the mild madness that could only end when all he owned was stamped or carved or embroidered or painted with proof that he had interpreted his life afresh. 46

Any thesis dealing with the recycling of history should acknowledge, at least in passing, the imperial environment which continues to shape the perceptions of those individuals (including writers and cultural critics) tied by birth, to their personal, historical and mythical origins:

Much of the school journal dealt with celebrations of the British Empire, with articles and photographs of the royal family, chiefly the two little princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret Rose. There was a description too, of their life-size dolls' house, with photographs. In contrast to the factual prose of the school journal and the praise of the Empire, the king, the governor general, the Anzacs at Gallipoli, Robert Falcon Scott at the South Pole, the poems were full of mystery and wonder...had become part of my dreams and comprehension of the Outside World. 47

The Empire is deeply embedded in the minds of its subjects, past, present and future. All individuals pass through a colonising process, of one type or another, on their journey from the cradle to the grave. Society imposes a burden of conformity and obedience on all its subjects. In the process, the mind is invaded by mythologies that seem to deny the individual a sense of independent national or self-identification.

46 Murnane, p.36.
National independence is no more complete than the individual's when family and nation continue to see the old imperial centre as 'the mother country', whose interests come before the security of one's own potentially independent 'is-land' state:

There was a kind of war fever in the town. Young men hurried to enlist with few questioning the duty to "rally round to help the Mother Country." Flags appeared on buildings. The wireless played Rule Britannia... 48

The British Empire's 'glorious deeds in battle' are part of a mythology that seems to make the perpetration of terrible crimes against the psyche acceptable:

O Valiant hearts, who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through the battle-flame;
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the Land you loved... 49

With an empty promise of remembrance, the idea of glory arising from martyrdom denies the horror implicit in the ending of personal potential. The legend might be remembered, but the individual rarely is. Women are often the innocent victims of Man's need for personal authentication through service to an ideal grounded in personal sacrifice and domination of places and peoples deemed suitable for conquest.

One of Margaret Atwood's characters wonders about a society obsessed with superficial veneers that continue to overlay something insidious and violent:

48 Frame. p.219.
49 Frame. p.218.
A secure woman is not threatened by her partner's fantasies, Rennie told herself. As long as there is trust. She'd even written that, or something like it, in a piece on the come-back of satin lingerie and fancy garter belts. And she was not threatened, not for some time.

"You're so closed, Jake said once. I like that. I want to be the one you open up for. But she could never remember afterwards what he had actually said. Perhaps he'd said, I want to be the one who opens you up."  

Discursively, Jake serves as an archetypal coloniser who sees women as sites ripe for conquest as much as exploration. In this regard, the mapping of (disciplining of) women's bodies is an extension of both sexist and colonialist discourse.

As a young man's voyeurism deepens, he becomes a connoisseur of the fragmented female body; his potential for fragmentation and colonisation realised:

Her face is thinner, she's lost that adolescent roundness; her once nondescript hair has been shaped into a stylish cap. Good enough legs too. You have to have good legs to wear a mini. So many women look stumpy in them, hams in cloth, their legs bulging out the bottom like loaves of white bread. Joanne's legs are out of sight under the table, but Donny finds himself dwelling on them as he never did when they were clearly visible, all the way up, on the waitresses' dock. He'd skimmed over those legs then, skimmed over Joanne altogether. It was Ronette who had held his attention. He is more of a connoisseur, by now. 

Donny's attitude mirrors the preoccupations of this thesis in that his gaze is fuelled by fantasy rather than by any real vision.

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50 Atwood, M, Bodily Harm, Virago Press Ltd., London, 1990, p.106  
Teresa de Lauretis suggests that masculine preoccupations with the female body construct woman as image, as woman becomes

... the object of the spectator's voyeurist gaze; ... and a critique of the psycho-social, aesthetic, and philosophical discourses that underlie the representation of the female body as the primary site of sexuality and visual pleasure.\textsuperscript{52}

Joanne is problematicised as an object of fantasy because her proximity doesn't present Donny with a challenge. Distance seems to imbue Ronette with erotic qualities that form a fuzzy focus within Donny's imagination. This links back to The Plains where men's vision of women is often preferentially constructed within their imaginations, as an extension of what they think Woman should be:

\textbf{4TH LANDOWNER}: I'm trying to remember those lines from 'A Parasol at Noon' – a neglected masterpiece; one of the greatest romantic poems to come out of the plains. That scene where the plainsman sees the girl from a distance...

\textbf{6TH LANDOWNER}: That scene is the only scene as I recall the poem. Two hundred stanzas on a woman seen from a distance. But of course she's hardly mentioned. It's the strange twilight around her that matters – the other atmosphere under the parasol...

\textbf{4TH LANDOWNER}: ... he sees this aura, this globe of luminous air, under the parasol... He never quite distinguishes her features in the glow. And he asks impossible questions: which light is more real – the harsh sunlight outside or the mild light around this woman... why should we think nature is real and things of our own making less so?\textsuperscript{53}

Race, class and sex carry certain meanings which are imprinted on the human body. Grosz, building on Foucault, argues that:


\textsuperscript{53}Mumane, p.42.
power is on and by bodies through modes of social supervision and discipline as well as self-regulation. The bodies and behaviours of individuals are targets for the deployment of power, and they are also the means by which power functions and proliferates.\(^{54}\)

It is useful to bear in mind that all bodies are inscribed, in one way or another, by systematic modes of social organisation:

Messages coded on to the body can be 'read' only within a social system of organisation and meaning. They mark the subject by, and as, a series of signs within the collectivity of other signs, signs which bear the marks of a particular social law and organisation, and through a particular constellation of desires and pleasures.\(^ {55}\)

The basic Female Body comes with the following accessories: garter-belt, panty-girdle, crinoline, camisole, bustle, brassiere, stomacher, chemise, virgin zone, spiked heels, nose-ring, veil, kid gloves, fishnet stockings, fichu, bandeau, Merry Widow, Weepers, chokers, barrettes, bangles, beads, lorgnette, feather boa, basic black, compact, Lycra stretch one-piece with modesty panel, designer peignoir, flannel nightie, lace teddy, bed, head.\(^ {56}\)

But fixation on bodily shape and fashion and the overt rejection of normative models can be itself a reductive fetishising of a wider problematic. Women and men can be tempted into an acceptance of superficial palliatives for conditions that require a shift of paradigm.

Sandra Bartky, using a feminist Foucauldian framework, argues that fashion and beauty practices and rituals are modes of bodily discipline characteristic of the modernisation of patriarchal power. Analysing the gendered nature of these rituals, Bartky argues that they produce self-regulating female subjects whose identity and

\(^{54}\) Grosz, p.64.
\(^{55}\) Grosz, p.65.
subjectivity is built upon the normalisation of a sense of bodily perfection and the need and desire to attract and please men.\textsuperscript{57}

In the process of shaping the female body to fulfil man's desire, it is easy to fragment, and in the process negate the potential for an essentially complex unified and potentially independent body.

As we have seen, post-colonial women's writing is at least partially concerned with the deconstruction of masculine self identification which is often projected onto women and landscape with tragic results.

Alice Munro touches on this trope, but extends its import into metaphysical questions about the confusing barrier to self-identification in Lives of Girls and Women. Before she is absorbed completely into man's mindscape, a young girl recognises that other worlds exist alongside her own; with boundaries that are set for a time, but through time might alter, to become something else:

"Day-ud cow."

...Being dead, it invited desecration. I wanted to poke it, trample it, pee on it, anything to punish it, to show what contempt I had for its being dead. Beat it up, break it up, spit on it, tear it, throw it away! But still it had power, lying with a gleaming strange map on its back...I had never once looked at a cow alive and thought what I thought now: why should there be a cow? Why should the white spots be shaped just the way they were, and never again, not on any cow or creature, shaped in exactly the same way? Tracing the outline of a continent again, digging the stick in, trying to make a definite line, I paid attention to its shape as I would sometimes pay attention to the shape of real continents or islands on real maps, as if the shape itself were a revelation beyond words, and I would be able to make sense of it, if I tried hard enough, and had time.  

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The dead cow presents a metaphor of the textualised body, which "affirms the body as a page or material surface on which messages may be inscribed."  

In another Canadian text about self-discovery, Margaret Atwood promotes the impression that freedom means removing all boundaries that define what one is, or has to be:

Now I understand the rule. They can't be anywhere that's marked out, enclosed: even if I opened the doors and fences they could not pass in, to houses and cages, they can move only in the spaces between them, they are against boarders. To talk with them I must approach the condition they themselves have entered; in spite of my hunger I must resist the fence, I'm too close now to turn back (Surfacing).

A woman enters into a state approaching madness as she abandons the trappings, mental, physical and superficial of the dominant culture. She works through the feelings of socially imposed repression that had brought her to this point in her life; entering into an inner wilderness where an unknown quantity is met... her quintessential essence which has the power to heal and reconcile. One of the most disturbing aspects of self-renewal is that someone surfacing from this process might be confronted by a society whose symbols have been found wanting but which still refuses to adapt itself to encompass a different point of view.

In Surfacing, Atwood clearly links personal, gender, ethnic and national discourses — and attempts to unravel the linkages as her

character seeks self determined authenticity. Located at this point
is a dramatisation of the problem of counter-discursive reform.
In questing after a total paradigm shift, the central character
attempts to move beyond discursive boundaries, but learns that
such radicalism moves beyond human meaning.

Atwood's resolution supports a common assertion of feminist
and post-colonial literary expression: the primacy of community
over (male, pioneering) individuality. The capacity to identify
with one's own kind in a positive way can be a step towards
freeing oneself from an imposed subjectivity. Solidarity is as
necessary for women as it is for any marginalised group.

When the women's liberation movement began, she
read each book, pamphlet, and essay that came her
way. Patriarchy and men in power reminded her of
racism and whites in power, which began to explain
her feelings. If woman's position in the home and
the world wasn't natural, she hadn't been so wrong
to identify with other groups in trouble after all.  

In another settler society (famed for its myths of man alone) Janet
Frame figures herself in a very similar to Atwood's (anti)
heroine:

Had I been a city, the shock of war would have torn
apart all buildings, entombing the population, or as
after a volcanic eruption there might have been an
overflow of numbness, like lava, preserving all in a
stone mask of stillness and silence. I had never felt
so shocked, so unreal. I knew that war happened in
history and in places far away, in other nations...  

Post colonial women writers are concerned with, amongst other
preoccupations, the nature of the 'self' and its external, internal,

61 Steinem. p.58.
62 Frame, p.217.
real and imagined boundaries. There are a number of questions that can be raised about (and cloud) the nature of identity, these are:

- How does surface create an illusion of depth in the human subject?
- Are there boundaries between the constructed self and the real self?
- How are those boundaries lived and experienced?
- Where is there consistency and where is there dissonance between the self that is presented to the world and the self that is experienced?
- How much of the self that is constructed and presented feeds back to create the self that is experienced? 63

Janet Frame experiences her own problems of self-identification in an age and place in which the approval of others plays such an important and limiting role. Her creativity becomes a handicap when it is subjected to judgment, for to be judged, even favourably, can isolate an individual who might not have a fully-formed concept of 'self' (generated by a nurturing sense of self awareness),

in an adolescent homelessness of self, in a time where I did not quite know my direction, I entered eagerly a nest of difference which others found for me but which I lined with my own furnishing.64

Janet Frame's reconstructed life centres around the search for something she has perhaps always possessed:

My life had been for many years in the power of words. It was driven now by a constant search and need for what was, after all, "only a word" — imagination.65

63 Corrigan, p.120.
64 Frame, p.197.
65 Frame, p.203.
'Janet's' poor self-image affects the pleasure she might otherwise have found in the exploration of her own unique imagination. Her view of her own worth is distorted by a reflection that is damaging in its effect upon her psyche:

My memory of myself contains now myself looking outward and myself looking within from without, developing the 'view' that others might have...I saw myself as powerlessly in harness. 66

Her sense of powerlessness is intensified by the way in which others construct her personality, and in the process deepen her alienation:

There was also the question of "personality." One had to have "personality." I wasn't aware that I had any, although I had seized upon and embellished certain attributes that I may or may not have had. When Miss Farnie, having seen my poems in Dot's Page, said one day, "You do write poetry, don't you Jean?" and I blushed and looked embarrassed, and she said to the class, "Jean's so shy," I seized this (already given by Jessie C., the music teacher) as a welcome, poetic attribute and made shyness a part of my "personality." 67

Many women and men, in the process of constructing themselves, and being constructed by others, are absorbed into a mythology which continues to negate individual potential. Women who have managed to work through feelings of inadequacy and guilt might arrive at a place where a reconciliation with the masculine principle might be possible and the process towards reconciliation might be strengthened through the deconstruction of patriarchal myths of female dependency.

66 Frame, p.208.
67 Frame, p.209.
Woman's internal authority is often constrained by other people's interpretation of what she should be. In the different context of a settler society that has mutated into a First World Metropolitan power, even a notable citizen like Gloria Steinem can feel the same pressures and forces of negation that Atwood and Frame delineate. It is noticeable, however, that Steinem's feminist liberation adheres more closely to the national US dogma of the primacy of the individual:

I had no idea why certain landscapes or sounds could make me ineffably sad; that my image of myself was very distant from other people's image of me; and that, in short my childhood years—a part of my life I thought I had walled off—were still shaping the present as surely as a concealed magnet shapes carried over from my own childhood — and redoubled by growing up with the invisibility of a female in a male run society — my sympathy reflected my own feelings of non-existence. I had retreated to researching and reporting because I doubted the reality of my inner voice.  

Within this national and western patriarchal Judeo-Christian context, Steinem's self determination begins with self empowerment:

Ever since then, I've noticed that the process of discovering and esteeming a true self is remarkably similar for a race, a group or a nation. When women began to call themselves Mary Jones instead of 'Mrs. John Smith', for example, they were doing the same thing as formerly colonised countries that stopped identifying themselves in relation to Europe. When India and England continued their Commonwealth and other relationships after India's independence, one might say that, as George Sand once suggested men and women do, they had broken the marriage bond and reformed it as an equal partnership.

When 'Negroes' became 'blacks' and then 'African Americans' in the United States, it was part of a long journey from the humiliation of slavery to a pride of heritage. When I myself started to say 'we' instead of 'they' when speaking of women, it was a step toward self-esteem that was at least as important as identifying with one's true ethnic heritage. It was also my Declaration of Interdependence.69

The decolonisation of a mind can be symbolised through the retention of one's own name. In naming or renaming themselves without having to abandon an integral part of self-identification women challenge centuries-old dicta that ask 'what's in a name?'. Names can be binding and oppressive signifiers of identity. Names can also contribute to positive reconstruction of collective identity. Renaming British West Africa, for example as Ghana and Nigeria is a step towards decolonising culture and society. Yet as Steinem points out, this reformation reproduces forces that oppress people within the collective:

The family is the basic unit of the state...a paternalistic hierarchical kind of family; yet somehow, he expected a perfect democracy to emerge from this model of inequality in which one parent lived through others, the other parent had authority 'over' others, and the children were possessions with few personal rights, even under the law. Feminism is just beginning to change this earliest hierarchical paradigm, and to create a microcosm of democracy inside this group from which we acquire our deepest sense of self and human possibilities; yet we haven't begun to change even in our minds our image of nationalism. It remains insular and territorial, a dangerous anachronism on this fragile and shrinking planet where neither war nor environmental dangers can be contained by natural boundaries any more. Even those of us most sceptical about nationalism have drifted into considering it a

69 Steinem. p.56.
necessary evil. How can we ask any group to go without it in the aftermath of classical colonialism, and the presence of racial, economic, and corporate colonialisms that often go just as deep?\textsuperscript{70}

This questioning points to the complexities of a feminist program within the wider context of post-colonial/decolonising movements. Third World women have criticised their first world 'sisters' for confining feminist theory and debate to a narrow program aligned to white bourgeois interests. The priorities, strategies and narratives of liberation of Black minorities and developing nations can be quite different. For one thing, the order of violence to women and in society can be different:

Where and why fix the boundaries of this place? A succession of names come to mind. In the mud of rice fields, on the asphalt of cities, imprisoned in a crowd which is destroyed or dying in solitude, the massacred ones, the refugees, those shot or tortured converge at once into this place, into someone. Into this living woman, wounded to death. Violences piled upon each other, horror overlying horror, bloody faces, faces drained of blood, a haemorrhage of men...\textsuperscript{71}

As a result, writings by women from Africa (for example) seem more oppositional and less hopeful of a happy resolution than those of their western peers:

The feminist novel in Africa is not only alive and well, it is, in general, more radical, even more militant, than its Western counterpart. It lacks the utopian flavour of many American or British efforts... There is a bitterness and cynicism born of

\textsuperscript{70} Steinem. pp.23,24.

the unflinching vision and hard struggle that informs these books... one is struck by the magnitude of their repudiation.\textsuperscript{72}

In a struggle for female independence, in a physical, metaphysical and literary sense, Third World women must work against political systems that are entrenched in militant national or ethnic struggles which, even when they involve women, are waged within a predominantly masculinist discourse. When the independent nation fixes its self-representation around woman as mother, it is more difficult women to redefine themselves without appearing unpatriotic. The violent tensions in such a discursive 'closure' can be seen in Salman Rushdie's expose of the Pakistani totalitarian state in \textit{Shame}. Whether as an individual body or a collective social constituency, Woman is forced to seek a freedom beyond the limits of prevailing discourse:

\begin{quote}
All these novels embrace the solution of a world without men: man is the enemy, the exploiter and oppressor. \textsuperscript{73}
\end{quote}

Daisy Kabagarama's story \textit{The Rich Heritage} comes from Africa and is concerned with similar issues that preoccupy western writers as she writes of a young woman being manipulated through family mythology into accepting the status quo:

\begin{quote}
'Remember, our pretty girl, that you are the eyes of the village and indeed of the whole clan. Make sure to keep the wisdom of your grandparents alive. Avoid these new so-called schools and keep your dignity as a woman. God gave you everything when you came out of your mother's womb as a girl. Your
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72} Frank, in Jones, p.15. 
\textsuperscript{73} Frank, in Jones, p.15.
future husband will take care of you. This is how the custom has been and will continue to be. 74

The notion of settling for a family of her own, in a dependent relationship, with what might as well be an alien master and with a life of responsibility without power is not a very inviting proposition for an individual wishing to embark on a journey into a better life:

Her concern about my life, which I needed and took for granted, I could not bear to have expressed. Also I felt that it was not so different from all the other advice handed out to women, to girls, advice that assumed being female made you damageable, that a certain amount of carefulness and solemn fuss and self-protection were called for, whereas men were supposed to be able to go out and take on all kinds of experiences and shuck off what they didn't want and come back proud. Without even thinking about it, I had decided to do the same. 75

A woman's life generates, through experience, a sense of herself as an individual who is never really free from an irrational guilt at breaking with a tradition that demands female suffering and masculine gratification. In their bid to discover independence, women are often confronted by the irrational and dispiriting judgements of a world that considers liberation to be a subversive transgression. Women who have the strength to find themselves in their own way are often condemned for betraying myths of patriarchal infallibility.

Novels written by African feminists possibly arise as a reaction to something in their past. They question:

74 Frank, in Jones, p.16.
75 Munro, pp.173,174.
... whether this entrenched patriarchal culture came with the white colonists or is inherent in African society...\textsuperscript{76}

The answer appears to be 'yes' to both questions. Whilst African societies can traditionally be matrilineal in spirit and descent, they still, in the final analysis, rely on an acceptance of man's physical and practical right to authority:

I don't want to be a wife... a mistress, yes, with a lover, yes of course but not a wife. There is something in that world that does not suit me. As a wife I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife, I am almost impotent. I am in prison...\textsuperscript{77}

Katherine Frank also suggests that:

Until recently most African novels have been written by men, and they tend to focus on social, historical, and political rather than personal or domestic themes. By and large women characters are defined in these novels by their relations to men: they are someone's daughter or wife or mother, shadowy figures who hover on the fringes of the plot, suckling infants, cooking, plaiting their hair\textsuperscript{78}

The stereotyping of women as essential wives and mothers, or mothers-in-waiting, severely limits female potential. This theme is not limited to the feminist writers of developing countries. Many writers from different national and cultural backgrounds are critical of this ongoing oppressive practice.

To be known as a wife often means giving up one's personal identity to be absorbed into the dominant culture's idea of what a woman should be — a mother in subjection to her husband and

\textsuperscript{76} Frank, in Jones, p.15.
\textsuperscript{77} Frank, in Jones, p.22.
\textsuperscript{78} Frank, in Jones, pp.14,15.
children. The suggestion that marriage can become a prison for women is shared by many texts: in *Surfacing*, a woman reflects on a past that never really belonged to her:

> It was good at first but he changed after I married him, he married me, we committed the paper act. I still don't see why signing a name should make any difference but he began to expect things, he wanted to be pleased. We should have kept sleeping together and left it at that. 79

Atwood comes from a society in which there is room for cohabitation between relatively autonomous individuals. As Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* shows, there is no social space in Nigeria for a woman to survive independently of a man: she must be daughter, wife/widow or prostitute.

As part of the process of questioning the ways in which women have been, and still are, manipulated into supporting decaying ideologies of masculine superiority and female subjection, it is useful to examine the textual appropriation of the female body and the ways in which writers use this body to express subjection, negation and ultimately, the inevitability of absorption into a metaphoric body.

Alice Jardine writes of modern texts as being involved in:

> the historically unprecedented exploration of the female, [differentiated] maternal body. The paternal fiction is in decline and the M(other) — what has been excluded from the symbolic order — has become a major preoccupation. 80

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79 Atwood, M., *Surfacing* .p.34.
80 Kirkby, J. "The Call of the Mother in the Fiction of Elizabeth Jolley," in *Span* 26, April 1988, p.46.
In a literary and historical sense, woman's role has usually been either negated, played down or absorbed into masculine mythology. The mother as the image/site of life and gender production becomes a key vehicle for feminist and post-colonial interrogation.

The Mother is the archetypal site of endless beginnings, arrivals and departures. Mother is a metaphor for nation and a 'monstrous' reminder of man's mortality. Man's dependency on woman for perpetuation is galling for a gender which worships rugged individualism and the myth that history owes little or nothing to women.

The machinations of the dominant culture are such that women have usually had little choice other than to accept total immersion as colonised subjects. The capacity to reject the unwelcome attentions of their exploiters has only recently become an alternative. For example, Buchi Emecheta repudiates a patriarchal linking of women and nation as sites ripe for colonisation:

I see now that Abosi and his like are still colonised. They need to be decolonised. I am not like him, a black white man; I am a woman and a woman of Africa. I am a daughter of Nigeria and if she is in shame, I shall stay and mourn with her in shame. No I am not ready yet to become the wife of an exploiter of my nation... Goodbye Alan. I don't mind you being my male concubine, but Africa will never again stoop to being your wife; to meet you on an equal basis, like companions, yes, but never again to be your slave.\textsuperscript{81

\textsuperscript{81} Frank, in Jones, p.27.
These words link empire and colony, nation and the individual. Men have colonised other men and women as Empire has occupied and dominated alien landscapes. And women appear to be very much at the forefront of an even larger movement away from the oppressive notion that to be 'other' is to be something less.
In Margaret Atwood’s novel, *Surfacing*, a woman leaves her husband and child in defiance of the expectations of the dominant (patriarchal) culture. The book also shows how the protagonist’s quest for identity can be subverted, to a degree, by a force that is impossible to ignore. The archetypal absent father/patriarch is still capable of influencing and often perverting the lives of girls and women. Influence is more effective than presence as the father (a metaphor for patriarchy) is difficult to leave behind.

In any patriarchy, for instance, absentee, inexpressive, or withholding fathers are so much the result of values and job patterns that keep men from taking equal care of small children that two abnormal results are often assumed to be normal: men who keep seeking approval from paternal authority figures, and the women who keep looking to their husbands and male lovers for fathering. 82

His intangibility does not mean that he cannot do harm. His powerful absence is of the same kind as the controlling silence of a society which perpetuates oppression whilst often refusing to acknowledge its presence.

In *Lives of Girls and Women*, a mother is aware of the iniquities existing in the relationship between men and women but makes a profound and consciously contradictory statement:

There is a change coming I think in the lives of girls and women. Yes. But it is up to us to make it come.

82 Steinem, pp.82,83.
All women have had up till now has been their connection with men. All we have had. No more lives of our own, really, than domestic animals. He shall hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force, a little closer than his dog, a little dearer than his horse. Tennyson wrote that. It's true. Was true. You will want to have children, though. 83

The process by which a woman can lose her sense of self through Marriage and Motherhood provides a linkage between a number of sections of this thesis. Quite apart from Woman's previous appearance as manipulated metaphor, she can also become, through time, a metaphor which overshadows (in a sense, like patriarchy) human existence.

There was an enormous difference between my mother's two personalities. That was why as a child I often had anxiety dreams about her. By day she was a loving mother, but at night she seemed uncanny. Then she was like one of those seers who is at the same time a strange animal, like a priestess in a bear's cave. Archaic and ruthless; ruthless as truth and nature. At such moments she was the embodiment of what I have called the 'natural mind'

'Archaic and ruthless': from this description it is clear that Jung is writing as much of the Mother as archetypal figure – the mythic and universal 'Earth Mother' – as he is of his own parent. Another linkage reappears at this point – culturally loaded binaries. These binaries are ancient and modern, animal and human, uncanny and familiar. They blend reality and myth in the body of a 'universal Earth Mother' and acknowledge that opposites sometimes co-exist in a black and white view of positivity and negativity.

83 Munro, p.173.
Binaries might co-exist but they do so in a dis-eased relationship. Salman Rushdie has one of his prime characters speak of a seemingly untenable relationship when he wonders at his 'monstrous' wife's display of 'nobility in savagery'. In *Shame*, Rushdie explores the violent juxtapositions of binarised patriarchal and post-colonial society as fabulised through dynasties of an allegorised Pakistan.

Rushdie has one of his male characters nicknamed 'the woman', an ironically manipulated title which is at once an honour and an insult:

On the opening day of the double bill of his destruction the meaning of his nickname changed for ever. He had been named The Woman by the street urchins because, being a widower, he had been obliged to act as a mother to Bilquis ever since his wife died when the girl was barely two. But now this affectionate title came to mean something more dangerous, and when children spoke of Mahmoud the Woman they meant Mahmoud the Weakling, the Shameful, the Fool. 'Woman,' he sighed resignedly to his daughter, 'what a term! Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word?'

Despite the negative associations attached to 'woman', paradoxically all cultures tend to admire or venerate Motherhood as the ultimate symbol of female achievement, though it is usually validated in terms of a mother's capacity to bear, and care for, the male. As the West African writer Buchi Emecheta puts it:

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85 Rushdie, p.286. See also page 57 of this thesis.
86 Rushdie, p.62.
...he was a man, and if a woman cared for him, very good; if not, there would always be another who would care. Yet it was so convenient, so tidy, if the woman who cared for a man happened to be either his mother or his wife...87

The Mother, as Archetype suffers greatly at the hands of the collective and personal unconscious. When landscape or the earth itself are imbued with maternal qualities, they are to be abandoned or escaped from. This is a troubling reassertion of a binary code which perversely promotes the notion that the positive relationship that should exist between mother and child is predestined to failure at some stage (with a return to the relationship providing scant comfort). This abandonment, or escape and subsequent return has a place in narrative as much as in the psyche. With escape from the 'maternal' body:

There is, however, a psychic law of gravity which marks return with the index of necessity. The high and up are shadowed by the low and down, our cheerfulness by depression and the high frontier of space by the deep frontiers of soul. In this respect, the shadows of technology may harbour in their message of return an end to optimism. They may signal by their presence that return means the end of the Enlightenment dream of reason, the end of progress 88

Return to the earth symbolises the inevitability of death. For something to begin means that something else must end. The essential cycle of beginnings and endings means that one generation will be supplanted by another, and whatever is created by one generation may be discarded by the next. The only measure of security for the individual who understands the

87 Emecheta, Buchi, The Joys of Motherhood, Heineman, London, 1979, p.120.
tenuous nature of personal existence might be found in the realisation that whilst the individual may not last, he or she makes the next step along the path of experience and knowledge possible.

The words 'Woman', 'Mother' and 'Wife' are often insidiously interchangeable, as Jung reflects in his autobiography:

While my mother was away, our maid, too, looked after me. I still remember her picking me up and laying my head against her shoulder. She had black hair and an olive complexion, and was quite different from my mother. I can see, even now, her hairline, her throat, with its darkly pigmented skin, and her ear. All this seemed to me very strange and yet strangely familiar. It was as though she belonged not to my family but only to me, as though she were connected in some way with other mysterious things I could not understand. This type of girl later became a component of my anima. The feeling of strangeness which she conveyed, and yet of having known her always, was a characteristic of that figure which later came to symbolise for me the whole essence of womanhood.  

The contemporary Australian writer Marion Campbell examines the concept of motherhood in her article "Spectacular Motherhood." She begins by presenting the mother as sideshow rather than main feature:

Since I'm stuck in a place of images, I am caught repeating the gestures of old cultural habit, offering myself as an usherette or a guide. At best I'm a curator without a contract, asking you to feel your way and not to take photographs, please. My qualifications would not be recognised in any case. I am only my mother's daughter and my daughter's mother; I am young and very old.

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89 Jung, p.23.
However, when she attempts to respond to manipulation she is seen as a monstrous transgression:

Take a category like masculinity: as soon as that becomes a theme in narrative, ‘a tool for thought,’ a motif for art, it has to be tested and reassured by what it thinks it isn’t – feminine and by extension female. It has to look in the mirror for endorsement, not just by its opposite but by what troubles the very standard of the opposition, by the kind of loopy thinking that contests any duality. The monstrous is the disturbance in all mirror relations. 

The stories used in the discussion of images of 'woman' and 'Motherhood', within this thesis, reflect a reaction against this kind of 'loopy' thinking. If that 'monstrous disturbance' is removed, however, the idea of the 'other' becomes far less problematised. It is a discomforting reminder that what has been negated is fully half of what makes man's existence possible. That which has been seen as other is, in fact, an integral part of human existence.

... For that masculine subject of desire, trouble became a scandal with the sudden intrusion, the unanticipated agency, of a female "object" who inexplicably returns the glance, reverses the gaze, and contests the place and authority of the masculine position. 

This intrusion questions the validity of easy solutions and disturbs the narratives of those cultures and characters which perpetuate a wrong-minded manipulation of the female principle: Shame's shameless 'hero' is consumed by his outraged, infertile, wife. Buchi Emecheta's elderly female victim

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of masculine privilege is abandoned and dies at the roadside. *The Plains* dissolves into a glaring, formless and seemingly meaningless projection of man's internal inability to accept woman's alternative perspective.

Various adaptations of "The Drover's Wife" highlight the dominant culture's need to perpetuate itself through the false elevation of mankind in the face of alienated womankind. C. G. Jung's autobiography links womanhood inextricably with motherhood: his women can be possessed by small boys and men as they are colonised, fragmented and left open for eventual negation. The preferential categorisation of all women as potential mothers is a denial of their individual identities and part of a discursive operation that needs to be dismantled.
As this thesis relates, Women as mothers are venerated by the majority of cultures. However, such veneration is also a mode of recuperation of the mother into the patriarchal ‘symbolic’, the status quo. The women who give birth to boys are invariably granted the highest status in the hierarchy of womanhood. A woman's ability to fulfil her social 'role' often works against her in the long term, as she becomes a servant not only to her husband but also to her children. Her body is manipulated differently by her spouse and children. It is not really her own when men and children make demands on it for security and gratification, in what can often be a non-reciprocating arrangement.

In many societies male children are born with powers denied girls and women:

Nnu Ego smiled weakly. 'I know what you mean. Girls are love babies. But, you see, only now with this son am I going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real woman - all I want to be, a woman and a mother. So why should I hate him now? 93

Women are often allocated higher status if they give birth to male children. A woman's value is often defined by her husband's need to recreate(define) himself. She has good reason to hate him - he represents a archetypal burden that imposes itself on all men, women, and children –the patriarch.

93 Emecheta, p.68.
Men's mythology claims that they descend in a direct line from God, with women coming as an afterthought, as many women have been taught to believe:

... Remember, God giveth and God taketh away. We are His, and He treats us the way He feels.  
... Nnaífe is the head of our family. He owns me, just like God in the sky owns us...he owns me.  

Even when ideas of ownership are not an issue, women are often manipulated through other means:

It was not fair, she felt, the way men cleverly used a woman's sense of responsibility to actually enslave her. They knew that a traditional wife like herself would never dream of leaving her children.  

If female subjection is a masculine manipulation, female rebellion can receive masculine approval for the wrong reasons.  
The interpretation of the word 'woman', like 'mother' is dependant on the perceptions and moods of the group or individual to whom she is either a whore or a goddess; powerless victim or threatening monster in a world doomed to extinction as 'woman' falls victim to masculine misinterpretation:

Fiery eyes and the stink of odure and death. 'For the first time in her life' — he shocked himself by the sympathy in the thought — 'that girl is free.' He imagined her proud; proud of her strength, proud of the violence that was making her a legend, that prohibited anyone from telling her what to do, or whom to be, or what she should have been and was not; yes, she had risen above everything she did not wish to hear. Can it be possible, he wondered, that human beings are capable of discovering their nobility in their savagery?  

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94 Emecheta, p.84.  
95 Emecheta, p.274.  
96 Emecheta, p.173.  
97 Rushdie, p.254.
This is an interesting passage — perhaps the monster bride should have been a dutiful wife and mother — but ironically, a display of seemingly mindless aggression leads to her gaining a perverse approval through an Imperial projection/reflection of nobility in savagery that leads to death in Rushdie's version of a Jungian nightmare:

And then the explosion comes, a shock-wave that demolishes the house, and after it the fireball of her burning; rolling outwards to the horizon like the sea and last of all the cloud, which rises and spreads and hangs over the nothingness of the scene until I can no longer see what is no longer there.  

In other writings, female nobility is defined as moral and passive in relation to male savagery. Women are often caught in a double-bind: they are either noble feminine victims or, if assertive, are seen as monstrous surrogate males. A young girl is made aware of her lack of power as her spirit is savaged by boys sure of their birthright to intrude into, and violate, her world:

Boys' hate was dangerous, it was keen and bright, a miraculous birthright, like Arthur's sword snatched out of the stone, in the Grade Seven Reader. Girls' hate, in comparison, seemed muddled and tearful, sourly defensive. Boys would bear down on you on their bicycles and cleave the air where you had been, magnificently, with no remorse, as if they wished there were knifes on the wheels. And they would say anything.

They would say softly, "Hello hooers."
They would say, "Hey where's your fuckhole?" in tones of cheerful disgust.
The things they said stripped away freedom to be what you wanted, reduced you to what it was they saw, and that, plainly, was enough to make them gag.

98 Rushdie, p.286.
99 Munro, p.115.
Lisa Tuttle writes that:

Woman's SEXUALITY has been defined and developed for men's pleasure. 100

Her words were written as part of an article on "Compulsory Heterosexuality" but they also convey a wide understanding of the ways in which women's psycho-sexual identity is constructed for them. If the dominant culture were willing to accept an alternative view of the world:

... then GENDER identity, the structure of the unconscious as well as the structure of society would be vastly different - presumably non-sexist.101

Girls and women are victims, along with boys and men, of the myth that women are guilty when victimised with sexual violence, and men are permitted to feel that their often anti-social behaviour is the result of forces beyond their control:

"My mother says it's the girl's fault," said Naomi, ignoring me. "It's the girl who is responsible because our sex organs are on the inside and theirs are on the outside and we can control our urges better than they can. A boy can't help himself," she instructed me, in a foreboding, yet oddly permissive, tone of voice, which acknowledged the anarchy, the mysterious brutality prevalent in that adjacent world. 102

The capacity for men and boys to fragment the female body for their own desire, and in the process to often alienate the female body from the female mind, continues through life and women are caught up in a cycle of sexual oppression based on isolation, pain and vilification:

101 Tuttle, p.67.
102 Munro, p.132.
"Hey, maybe I'll hook a beaver," he said. "The national emblem. That's what they should've put on the flag instead of a maple leaf, a split beaver; I'd salute that."

"Why should it be split?" I said... I didn't get it 103

Life is split into many alienated fragments with the understanding that not only do men and women live in separate worlds, but also that individual perceptions and prejudices produce internal schisms.

Men invent women for their convenience. Knowledge is only power for a woman if she keeps her mouth shut, so its potential may never be realised. Woman is often regarded as property, even when she's not married. Women can be inadvertently betrayed by metaphor, and when a man wants a woman to act as guide to her own country — it pays to be cautious. Life is filled with endless betrayals of trust. Women can betray themselves if they fail to examine critically the mythic structures of the dominant culture and become victims of self-regulating subjectivity.

Witi Ihimaera examines this problem within the dynamics of post-colonial Maori culture. His epic novel, The Matriarch, not only mounts a critique of white colonialist historiography by validating oral indigenous tradition (otherwise treated as myth), but within that frame of tradition challenges fixed ideas about the place of women. However, in inserting his heroine into the politics of Maori society, he shows her being engulfed by the power of patriarchal conflict. To critique all of these formations,

103 Atwood, M., Surfacing, p.113.
feminist and post-colonial, Ihimaera tracks back to mythic constructions of the creation of the human race, a theme shared by the Genesis creation myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition:

The sky is high, sacred and male while the earth is low but fruitful, profane and female. Thus was the first setting apart of the roles of male and female.  

Maui, a male demi-god, crushed between the thighs of a woman leaves a legacy of mortality. His attempted rape/domination fails and woman becomes a metaphor for his shame, as he fails to force his way through a manifestation of the female principle to realise power through domination of the feminine:

To truly travel through the body of a woman from end to beginning is to find immortality.  

Man's attempt to travel through woman, from vagina to mouth, from end to beginning, symbolises travelling backwards through the mother to defeat her, rob her of her greatest, most enduring power: that of endless beginnings.

Man's abortive quest for continuity moves from ancient myth to contemporary fiction in its transition into print. *Surfacing* forshadows *The Matriarch*, as the novel's narrator denies Joe what he might have seen as his 'rite' of passage when she refuses to have sex with him:

I stretched out inside my body, twigs and pine needles under me. At that moment I thought, Perhaps for him I am the entrance, as the lake was the entrance for me (into another life). The Forest condensed in him, it was noon, the sun was behind

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105 Ihimaera, p.4.
his head; his face was invisible, the sun's rays coming out from a centre of darkness, my shadow. Perhaps Joe is closer to her than either of them had realised. He and she are alienated aspects of each other. His face is obscured by the sun's glare - her face is hidden by his shadow. At this moment of revelation they are both powerless and, perhaps, this is a starting point.

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106 Atwood, *Surfacing*, p.141.
Atwood points out that all individuals work through narrative and crave the security of tidy storylines:

...she said "Do you ever hear from Ronette?" She still had the narrative habit, she still wanted to know the ends of stories. But he'd looked at her in complete bewilderment.

"Who?" he said. It wasn't a put-down, he really didn't remember. She found this blank in his memory offensive. She herself might forget a name, a face even. But a body? A body that had been so close to your own, that had generated those murmuring, those rustlings in the darkness, that aching pain - it was an affront to bodies, her own included.\textsuperscript{107}

The older one gets the less likely one is to achieve a comforting sense of closure. Melodrama can be tempting, but promises of happy endings in domesticity are indistinct shadows of a mythic place and time best left behind. Repetition and sacrifice are cast off when women and men question the myth of narrative closure — a closure that is impeded in an ongoing process of colonisation through lies, misrememberances and negation.

The power position of the dominant culture is based to a considerable degree on mythic (and fantasy) constructs of identity and non-identity. If one exists on the periphery of the power discourse, knowledge can be threatening. A liberated woman might have the illusion of space — room to grow — to construct herself. The obverse side of this freedom means that she can be

\textsuperscript{107} Atwood, Wilderness Tips, p.34.
abandoned/marginalised without guilt. Atwood notes that class, colonial and gender discourses collude in excluding the subject:

...she was of no class. She had no class. She was in a class of her own. She could roll around among the English men...secure that she was not being measured against the class yardsticks and accent-detectors they carried around in their back pockets, was not subject to the petty snobberies and resentments that added such richness to their inner lives. The flip side of this freedom was that she was beyond the pale. She was a colonial - how fresh, how vital, how anonymous, how finally of no consequence. Like a hole in the wall, she could be told all secrets and then abandoned with no guilt.\footnote{Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.46.}

It is ironic (but understandable) that Woman's externally imposed otherness can be utilised by the dominant culture as a useful and yet disposable attribute.

Narrative closure is a feature of a mythic society which fails to question its institutionalised icons until it is almost too late for change. There are few 'authentic' endings that fulfil their initial promise; there are only beginnings that might not negate the possibility of co-existence:

... off in the shadowy rustling bushes of the shoreline, sex lurking dangerously. It had been dangerous, then. It had been sin. Forbidden, secret, sulllying. Sick with desire. Three dots had expressed it perfectly, because there had been no ordinary words for it.

On the other hand there had been marriage, which meant wifely checked aprons, play-pens, a sugary safety.

But nothing had turned out that way. Sex has been domesticated, stripped of the promised mystery, added to the category of the merely expected. It's just
what is done, mundane as hockey. It's celibacy these days that would raise eyebrows.

And what had become of Ronette, after all, left behind, in the past, dappled by its chiaroscuro, stained and haloed by it, stuck with other people's adjectives? What is she doing, now that everyone else is following in her footsteps? More practically: did she have the baby, or not? Keep it or not? Donny sitting sweetly across the table from her, is in all probability the father of a ten year-old child, and he knows nothing about it at all.

Should she tell him? The melodrama tempts her, the idea of a revelation, a sensation, a neat ending.

But it would not be an ending, it would only be the beginning of something else. In any case, the story itself seems to her outmoded. It's an archaic story, a folk-tale, a mosaic artefact. It's a story that would never happen now. ¹⁰⁹

These words suggest the possibility of constructing new modes of expression as the dominant (patriarchal) culture is questioned in ways that are often confronting, and potentially liberating. Derrida anticipates a similar opening up of 'stories' from a theoretical viewpoint:

[Deconstruction]...is directed toward an undoing of closed structures in order to make possible the coming of the other; not an other which merely reinforces the same, not an other which is simply outside or absolutely new, but one that displaces the very opposition of same and other, inside and outside, old and new. ¹¹⁰

There are many women who find a niche within the boundaries of closed structures, women who conform to traditional roles, without questioning their lack of real status. Simple, unproblematised women are seemingly more fortunate than their more perceptive peers; as they cling to a sense of self

¹⁰⁹ Atwood, Wilderness Tips, p.37.
connected to an acceptance of a place within the mythology of the dominant culture:

But she knows other things, hidden things. Secrets. And these other things are older, and on some level more important, more fundamental. Closer to the bone.\footnote{Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.19.}

Perhaps this woman exists on a plane where she can survive without too much bitterness on the periphery of man's society.

Woman's identity is constructed in part by literature, but her narrative, trapped within the dominant discourse, is unlikely to have any closure other than death. Unfinished narratives are unsatisfactory for many readers because the processes of voyeurism fail to reach a climax and one is often left hanging on the brink of the unknown:

"That's why you hired me, isn't it?" She says. "Because I go way too far." But he's in one of his analysing moods. He can see these tendencies of hers reflected in her work...he says. All that leather and those grotesque and tortured looking poses are heading down a track he and others are not at all sure they could continue to follow. Does she see what he means, does she take his point? It's a point that's been made before. She shakes her head slightly, says nothing. She knows how that translates: there have been complaints from the advertisers. Too bizarre, too kinky. Tough.\footnote{Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.43.}

Everything a woman does is open to censorship, her efforts are supposed to conform to a superficial pattern: men can be bizarre, kinky and tough with a freedom that women are denied if they want to maintain a place within the established order. Everything a man does reflects what he thinks he is and his
female partner becomes an extension of his ego (and by further extension, his phallus):

Her insolence used to excite him, during their arguments. Then there would be a grab of her upper arms, a smouldering, violent kiss. He kisses her as if he thinks someone else is watching him, judging the image they make together. Kissing the latest thing, hard and shiny, purple mouthed, crop-headed; kissing a girl, a woman, a girl, in a little crotch-hugger skirt and skin-tight leggings. He likes mirrors.\textsuperscript{113}

Sometimes women can negate men:

"Goodbye, Gerald," she says. She pronounces the name with mockery. It's a negation of him, an abolishment of him, like ripping a medal off his chest. It's a warning.\textsuperscript{114}

Mockery is a dangerous activity as women are rarely forgiven for usurping masculine privilege. Wounding the patriarchal ego is one of the worst crimes imaginable, and even though this occurs within the imagination, a woman will be made to suffer for her transgression. For the present, Atwood's female character is allowed to reshape Gerald's image so that he can present a facade of sophistication to a society obsessed with surfaces:

He'd been Gerald when they first met. It was she who transformed him, first to Gerry, then to Ger. (Rhymed with flair, rhymed with dare.) She made him get rid of those sucky purse-mouthed ties, told him what shoes to wear, got him to buy a loose-cut Italian suit, redid his hair. A lot of his current tastes - in food, in drink, in recreational drugs, in woman's entertainment underwear - were once hers. In his new phase, with his new, hard, stripped down name ending on the sharpened note of r, he is her creation.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{113} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p43.  
\textsuperscript{114} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.44.  
\textsuperscript{115} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.44.
Images are presented for effect:

...it was done entirely with cameras. Frozen light, frozen time. Given the angle, she could make any woman look ugly. Any man as well. She could make anyone look beautiful, or at least interesting. It was all photography, it was all iconography. It was all in the choosing eye...\(^{116}\)

Keeping up appearances can be psychically expensive, as one can never really be sure who one is from one day to the next. If the new man is in any part her creation, Woman assumes a creative power that is based on 'rocky ground' as she projects a glimmer of borrowed mythology:

She made her way up the ladder, from layout to design, then to the supervision of whole spreads, and then whole issues, it wasn't easy, but it was worth it. She had become a creator; she created total looks. After a while she could walk down the street in Soho or stand in the lobby at openings and witness her handiwork incarnate, strolling around in outfits she'd put together, spouting her warmed-over pronouncements. It was like being God, only God had never got around to off-the-rack lines.\(^{117}\)

But female appropriation of a dominant position can end in tragedy. Frustrated patriarchs are lovers of other people's traditions; a newly conquered territory which they absorb as part of their empire.\(^{118}\)

When Atwood's character has a growth removed from her body, it becomes the metaphoric monstrous offspring of a perverse and ultimately unsatisfactory union between man and woman, coloniser and colonised and woman's thwarted potential:

\(^{116}\) Atwood, *Wilderness Tips*, p.45.
\(^{117}\) Atwood, *Wilderness Tips*, p.45.
\(^{118}\) Atwood, *Wilderness Tips*, p.200.
Still, sitting here on the rug looking in at it, she pictures it as a child. It has come out of her, after all. It is flesh of her flesh. Her child with Gerald, her thwarted child, not allowed to grow normally. Her warped child taking its revenge.

"Hairball," she says. "You're so ugly, only a mother could love you." She feels sorry for it. She feels lost. Tears run down her face. Crying is not something she does, not normally, not lately.

Hairball speaks to her, without words. It is irreducible, it has the texture of reality, it is not an image. What it tells her is everything she's never wanted to hear about herself. This is new knowledge, dark and precious and necessary. It cuts.\(^\text{119}\)

She loses the patriarchal power game because she is no longer in a position to shore up her edifice. Her world falls apart because she had failed, until she is forced to re-evaluate her life, to recognise the threat growing within her body. The unkindest cut for Kat is the realisation that she's disposable. Her shame lies in loving a mythic construct — Gerald. Gerald is an archetypal male who will never accept his share of responsibility for the wounding chasm they have created between them. Woman's status is hard won and has to be guarded against erosion. Women may shape men to fill their own requirements, but men and the colonised are always capable of betrayal:

Naturally. Betrayal. The monster has turned on its own mad scientist. "I gave you life!" she wants to scream at him.

She isn't in good shape. She can hardly stand. She stands, despite his offer of a chair. She sees now what she's wanted, what she's been missing — the stable, unfashionable, previous, tight-assed Gerald. Not Ger, not the one she's made in her own image. The other one, before he got ruined. The Gerald with a house and a small child and a picture of his wife in a silver frame on his desk. She wants to be in

\(^{119}\) Atwood, *Wilderness Tips*, p.54.
that silver frame. She wants the child. She's been robbed.\textsuperscript{120}

Patriarchal plots are adaptable. Myths steal from other myths. As Christianity appropriates pagan rituals to ease its way through transitional phases, a pagan, Matriarchal past cannot be destroyed, only repressed and covered over. Names can be changed and new identities can be invented to suit any given situation as technology and nature jockey for position in the construction of another life:

...she wends her way through a long underground tunnel encrusted with blood-red jewels and with arcane inscriptions that glitter in the light of torches. For years she walks, her garments - garments, not clothes - trailing, her eyes fixed and hypnotic, for she is one of those cursed with an unending life; walks until she reaches, one moonlit night, the iron-grilled door of the Petrowski tomb, which is real, though dug improbably into a hillside near the entrance to the also-real Mount Pleasant Cemetery...

The lock splits. The iron gate swings open. She emerges, raises her arms towards the suddenly chilled moon. The world changes.

There are other plots. It just depends which mythology he's cribbing from.\textsuperscript{121}

Men and women often view the same event from a different perspective:

It was in 1960 - the end of the fifties or the beginning of the sixties, depending on how you felt about Zero. Selena was later to call it "the white-hot luminous egg/from which everything hatches," but for Richard, who at the time was slogging through \textit{Being and Nothingness}, it signalled a dead end.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{120} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.52.
\textsuperscript{121} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.60.
\textsuperscript{122} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.61.
Radically opposing points of view can be indicators of points of departure. This is also the realisation of the ultimate binary – Being and Nothingness – two concepts that should not exist at the same time; these can indicate dead-ended archetypal representations of power relations.

Communication difficulties between men and women can be expected, but when fathers denigrate their son’s imaginative efforts, an insidious cycle is perpetuated:

Seeing these poems in print, with his name underneath — he used initials, like T.S. Eliot, to make himself sound older — had given him more satisfaction than he’d ever got out of anything before. But he’d made the mistake of showing one of these magazines to his father... This had rated nothing more than a frown and a grunt...123

Later:

... he’d heard his old man reading one of his free-verse anti-sonnets out loud to his mother, spluttering with mirth, punctuated by his mother's disapproving, predictable voice: 'Now John! Don't be so hard on him'!124

This passage says as much about the capacity of men for perpetuating a disdain for difference as the following passage highlights a traditional conspiracy to maintain the status quo of women playing one role, and men another:

The anti-sonnet was about Mary Jo, a chunky, practical girl with an off-blond page boy who worked at the library, and with whom Richard was almost having an affair. "I sink into your eyes," his father roared. "Old swamp eyes! Cripes, what's he gonna do when he gets down as far as the tits?"

123 Atwood, Wilderness Tips, pp.62,63.
124 Atwood, Wilderness Tips, p.63.
And his mother, acting her part in their ancient conspiracy: "Now John! Really! Language!"  

When men manufacture women after their own desire, women can lose touch with what they might have been; as female potential is bound by an alien mythology.  

Patriarchal and colonial society displays a desperate need for a story with a reason, a tangible solution... not an enigma surrounded by a void. Feminism is oppressed by man's mindscape. Women are often condemned for something that isn't their fault. They live two lives, one as metaphor for landscape and the other trying to escape man's mythologising processes.  

Women often move into the future, carrying the past with them. The past exists alongside the present. They might enter into a new life for which they are poorly prepared by a society that does not really want them to succeed on their own merits:

...The future could be furnished without love or scholarships. Now at last without fantasies or self deception, cut off from the mistakes and confusion of the past, grave and simple, carrying a small suitcase, getting on a bus, like girls in movies leaving home, convents, lovers, I supposed I would get started on my real life...  

Woman's quest for authenticity is made difficult as her journey into the future commences with all artificially constructed perceptions and prejudices intact. If women can't define

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126 Atwood, *Wilderness Tips*, p.98.  
128 Munro, p.238.
themselves by what men aren't supposed to be, their quest for self identity can become even more confused.

A woman might collect landscapes because she wants something that is in them; someone looking back out, someone disturbingly familiar - perhaps it is a reflection of self.\textsuperscript{129} Appropriation is a kind of stealing,\textsuperscript{130} but in order to journey into an internal wilderness, a landscape of the mind, certain levels of appropriation are essential. Successful journeys, especially internal ones often depend on a certain amount of experience.\textsuperscript{131} The landscape is a reminder of negation into which Women can disappear. Women are in constant danger of being resumed within a patriarchally constructed train of lies designed to slow a metamorphic passage towards independence:

In early February, as a member of a Railway Family with a privilege or priv. ticket, I travelled south on the Sunday slow train to Dunedin and my future.\textsuperscript{132}

As a young woman travels into the future, a journey is shared philosophically, at least, by many other women.

Alice Munro, Janet Frame, Margaret Atwood and many other writers question the structure and authority of institutions, living and dead – the Empire, the family – and most importantly of all, the effects that these images, mythic and real, have on a woman in search of a sense of a personal, rather than a national identity.

\textsuperscript{129} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.110.  
\textsuperscript{130} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.117.  
\textsuperscript{131} Atwood, \textit{Wilderness Tips}, p.118.  
\textsuperscript{132} Frame, p.253.
As women strive to maintain a sense of individual identity in the face of considerable opposition, they are not always told that independence is unattainable or unacceptable. However, their lives are constantly bombarded with images that shake their confidence. As Del says in Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*,

I used to wish sometimes for this very thing, to see my parents by look or embrace affirm that romance — I did not think of passion — had once caught them up and bound them together. But at this moment, seeing my mother go meek and bewildered — this was what the slump of her back showed, that her words never would - and my father touching her in such a gentle, compassionate, grieving way, his grieving having not much to do with Uncle Craig, I was alarmed, I wanted to shout at them to stop and turn back into their separate, final, unsupported selves. I was afraid that they would go on and show me something I no more wanted to see than I wanted to see Uncle Craig dead. 133

Del might not want to witness a lack of faith in eternal existences as her parents are presented with a reminder of their own mortality, in the body of Uncle Craig, it is also possible that their interdependence at times of stress makes it difficult for a child to develop her own sense of a separate, strong and independent identity.

Women have their own rites of passage: their first period, their first child and, finally, menopause. Gloria Steinem feels that the end of youth can be liberating:

... many women become ourselves after fifty. As Heilbrun writes: 'Age portends all the freedoms men have always known and women never - mostly the freedom from fulfilling the needs of others and from being a female impersonator.'

133 Munro, p.49.
Perhaps it's is not quite 'never'. There was a time of freedom - not in comparison to males perhaps, but in comparison to women's later lack of it - for many little girls in the years before the feminine role. It is not surprising to learn that there are two times of crisis in a woman's life: when she enters that social role in adolescence, and when it abandons her at around fifty. Perhaps one day, we will have changed society enough so women are never asked to submerge a true self. Until then, those early years are the best guide to the person we can become in that last third of life.  

Unfortunately menopause is also all too often the time of greatest negation for many women. Gloria Steinem feels that it is necessary for women to become party to a universal ceremony which accepts difference, because:

In moments of sorrow or joy, too many of us are forced to turn to ceremonies that falsely elevate some and demean others, that separate us from nature, that make us feel ashamed of sacred parts of ourselves. It will take courage, creativity and community to replace them with inclusive ceremonies that mark life passages; rituals that externalise universal myths and nature's symbols of old and continuing mysteries - and exclude no one.  

This positive reconstruction seems to be echoed in the context of Indian feminist literature where Valli Rao, writing of Feminist mythmaking in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, suggests that:

...feminist self-affirmation can be facilitated by the meaningful and creative reinterpretation of myth. Feminism needs a myth to live by, to help the movement transcend alienation from the nature of

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134 Steinem, p.107.
135 Steinem, p.366.
the feminine, an alienation manifests chiefly as negativism towards motherhood.\textsuperscript{136}

The dominant culture's acceptance of Woman's own rite of passage, as different from, but equal to, a masculine journey towards authentication might be a positive place for the reconstruction of a fairer society. However, woman's journey will provoke unease in a society dominated by patriarchally orientated myths, legends and oppressive assumptions of gender roles.

A universal program through which women and men can pass as equals, in acceptance of each others' differences, is a literary and sociological vision for the future. This is in keeping with the basic principle of a thesis which points towards an eventual dissolution of patriarchal paradigms which are irrational now and untenable for the future.

An end to the patriarchal paradigm doesn't necessarily mean an end to all negative male/female relationships. It is necessary to broaden one's mind to encompass other possibilities. It is clear from the texts utilised in the construction of a thesis on negation, and the search for identity, that old boundaries of the mind are being challenged to an unprecedented degree. There is ample motivation for anticipating a future free from subjection, with men and women developing, as Gloria Steinem suggests

a deep change in the way we see ourselves and the world. It means changing from binary and linear thinking to a cyclical paradigm that is a new declaration of interdependence.

... internal colonialisms of sex and race. Superior/inferior, light skin/dark skin, masculine/feminine divisions are being replaced with the idea that each person has a full circle of human qualities in unique combination.

... Since the sexual caste system is the most ancient form of oppression and one on which all others are based, changing it is like pulling the rug from under the whole hierarchy.  

The new world can be considered to be in a poorer position than the old world because the former has access to knowledge on an unprecedented scale. However in spite of all its technologies, it perpetuates small and large betrayals of trust. Knowledge can be criminal and no preparation for the end of a (patriarchal) world phase.

137 Steinem, p.219.
Conclusion

There are many intersections between feminist and post-colonial discourses. They share preoccupations of centre and periphery, power and powerlessness, possession and dispossession:

Post-colonial criticism and the strategies of recent feminist theory overlap and inform each other. Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, and Margaret Atwood have all drawn an analogy between the relationships of men and women and those of the imperial powers and the colony, while critics like Gayatri Spivak articulate the relationship between feminism, post-structuralism, and the discourse of post-coloniality.¹³⁸

A range of texts from different cultural and political backgrounds has been used to show how such interconnections can be read as part of a common discursive struggle within a broad liberationist project. However, since part of that project is a demand for recognition and acceptance of difference, it should be emphasised that this thesis does not intend to imply a homogeneity of 'feminist' or 'post-colonial' textuality. Dissatisfaction with the patriarchal quest narrative and a move to indeterminate forms resisting closure implies a variety of different and differently positioned texts working differently within a broad liberationist project.

Homi Bhabha writes of 'a myth of narrative based on linear progression and closure'...a myth underpinning the narratives of

¹³⁸ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, pp.31,32.
western culture which might be undone by a previously peripheral counter-discourse. Something strange happens when one attempts to impose a sense of linear cohesion by fragmenting texts in order to make them fit a particular pattern; they seem to loose clarity rather than gain it. Most of the themes discussed in this thesis are interwoven in a way that highlights the idea that few parts of life exist in isolation. The historical and ideological productions of a 'master' discourse, as Bhabha suggests are:

...necessary fictions that tragically believed too much in their necessity and too little in their own fictionality. They are historical in the sense that Giddens locates such practices of writing - such concepts of consciousness and truth - in the post-feudal West, associating them with development of the ideas of tradition, hermeneutics, histography, and dissociating them from ascriptive cultures. where writing may be ideological, and time-consciousness is cyclical. They are ideological in the sense in which the discourses of historicism and realism manifestly deny their own material and historical construction. Their practices can be seen as unmediated and universal because the unity of tradition lies in an absolute presence - a moment of transcendent originality.  

The disturbance in all mirror relations is the mother's body; something that has been objectified, fragmented and manipulated. (M)other is a metaphor for a negated principle, nation and language. Most of the texts used in the construction of this thesis on different aspects of negation recognise that complete repudiation of the dominant culture leads to total alienation. This is a theme running through Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. However, the possibility of a better relationship between men and women is intimated by the novel's lack of

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closure. The narrator is not being rescued. She prepares to meet her lover on her own terms.

A problem exists in that the dominant culture is obsessed with the process of adapting itself to encompass the marginalised subject, rather than accepting a different perspective in which the two might occupy the same spaces. This process is disturbed by a counter discourse which requires recognition:

For Lacan and psychoanalysis, the mother is constitutive of the subject; for Derrida, she is the only possible survivante, the 'survivor' as 'more than alive', of any ecriture; for Deleuze, it is the rejection of the mother that is the founding fantasy of the west. For all of these writers, the mother must be rediscovered, differently, if we are to move beyond the repetitive dilemmas of our Oedipal, Western culture.140

If there is to be a positive gain, it will be found in a holistic acceptance of otherness as a positive rather than a negative aspect of existence. Men's rites of passage seem to pass through several insidious phases; dependency on the fragmented mother, then a rejection of her powers through puberty, to vilification or manipulation of her body through young adulthood to the realisation that something valuable has been lost in a male-orientated quest for self-authentication.

The preceding words presents a very disturbing picture of Woman's manipulation by forces driven by masculine self-interest. Women are often forced, by default, into inheriting

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masculine myths of place and identity, an imposition which severely limits their potential. There appears to be a vast chasm of alienation which surrounds a female search for personal identity.

Kamala Das's short poem "The Proud One" presents a clear metaphorical image of post-colonial preoccupations and could almost serve as a synopsis for this thesis:

> Perhaps it had begun as a young man's most Normal desire to subjugate a girl. But when she, being silly, spurned him, he took The country as his bride and rode her For thirty years. Is it any wonder that He felt hurt when the old wife turned whorish and Withdrew from under him? I saw him that day Lying nailed to his bed, in imitation Of the great crucifixion, but, loving him, I found no courage then even to be kind.\(^\text{141}\)

The rule of the father can be rejected by a country/woman sick of oppression, echoing a literary repudiation which was clearly expressed more than seventy years ago,

> ... he remembered that he had, or ought to have, a mother-land. ... India a nation! What an apotheosis! Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood! Waddling in at this hour of the world to take her seat! 
> "...Clear out you fellows double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most...we shall get rid of you... and then... and then... you and I shall be friends."\(^\text{142}\)

\(^\text{142}\) Forster, E.M., A Passage to India, St Edmundsbury Press, Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk, 1978, p.324.
These words were written by E.M. Forster, a man who was able to see Imperialism from the perspective of the marginalised other. He, in writing *A Passage To India*, made a profound statement on colonial rule and the Empire – an occurrence which might bring about a reconciliation in a better time and place:

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want."

But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the guest house, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Amu beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there.""^143

It could easily be said that the first few sentences of this passage are problematic in terms of an argument about establishing an acceptance of difference. However, taken in its entirety, the passage can be interpreted as a departure from subjection as the dominant voice is no longer that of the coloniser. It seems to reflect Forster's sympathetic acknowledgment of India's right to independence and a more equitable alliance in a time and place of her own choosing.

The Indian writer, Kamala Das, together with many indigenous African women writers might present the impression that, for them, repudiation of the dominant(patriarchal) culture is the most likely outcome of a tenuous union. Many texts written by the women and men of settler societies consider a more positive outcome.

^143 Forster, p.325.
In a metaphoric sense the way is left open for a return to a place of 'unknown potential' which, through metaphor at least, begins and ends with the mother's body. However, the metaphoric and actual journey away from the boundaries of the past presents a final barrier. This journey towards liberation should be undertaken with the understanding that some 'regenerative' cycles, put in place by the patriarch/trickster can confound and re-subjugate inexperienced travellers:

Yes, the naives to the first and second degree are still legion. If the New Women, arriving now, dare to create outside the theoretical, they're called in by the cops of the signifier, fingerprinted, remonstrated with, and brought into the line of order that they are supposed to know: assigned by the force of trickery to a precise place in the chain that's always formed for the benefit of a privileged signifier.144

Woman's negation was never a theory, it was, and is, as practical an imposition as any other effect of man's desire to colonise. Women and men wanting to move in a new direction without a fairly complete understanding of their actual, as opposed to mythic, subjection are likely to be reconnected to a thread leading back into the mythological labyrinth of patriarchy's easily imagined potential:

We are pierced back to the string which leads back, if not to the Name-of -the-Father, then for a new twist, to the place of the phallic – mother. Beware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified! Beware of diagnosis that would reduce your generative powers. "Common" nouns are also proper nouns that disparage your singularity by classifying it into species. Break out of the circles: don't remain within

144 Cixous,p.347.
the psycho-analytic closure. Take a look around, then cut through...145

And in the process break out of the all-too familiar and embrace the unknown.

The texts examined within this thesis, written by women and men recognise that a fundamental schism exists between the sexes. This schism has been created by binaries of self and other, appropriation and subjection. These texts serve as cautionary tales which leave their readers with the responsibility for understanding why the focus of these texts has become such a dominant feature of post colonial literature. In order to unravel what might at first seem to be a complex and legendary thread leading nowhere, it is necessary to accept that the metaphysical is at least as important as the practical and physical. This is the level at which 'literature' works best as it operates within the almost unlimited sphere of the imagination.

A world which is going through an inevitable post-colonial reconstruction requires new tools of interpretation which do not depend on preoccupations with national and gender-specific ideologies of power and dominance for authentication.

Women writers, finding their own voice in resistance to the 'specular logic of patriarchy', might break down some of the institutionalised boundaries inhibiting human and literary growth. This is perhaps a more positive outcome than a return

145 Cixous, pp.347,348.
to possibly mythic representations of women as mother-gods that might set the scene for a continuing cycle of negation.
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