

An exegesis submitted in conjunction with a novel for fulfilment of the requirements for the

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*Mothers Empowering Daughters: Narrative strategies that reverse Freudian narrative plots  
of the mother-daughter relationship in young adult fiction*

(an exegesis)

*Scar*

(a novel)

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## Abstract

My study takes the form of an exegesis and young adult novel, and aims to unearth narrative strategies of telling story about mothers and daughters that reverse Freudian-based narrative plots of the mother-daughter relationship. I also seek to determine how authors of young adult fiction go about exploring the adolescent daughter-mother relationship, while still retaining appeal to their target audience. There is an expressed concern about the limited ways in which mothers and daughters are portrayed in young adult fiction. Researchers in the field of young adult literature have argued that the influence of patriarchal discourse in regard to the mother-adolescent daughter relationship impedes the representation of positive and empowering mother-daughter relationships in young adult fiction. In order to address these concerns, a framework of questions to be applied to the reading of the mother-daughter relationship in the selected sample of young adult novels was constructed from the research literature and feminist narrative theory. This framework of questions - along with Carol Gilligan's 'Listening Guide' - was an extremely useful method of extracting relevant details about the mother-daughter relationships in the novels. Key themes emerged from the application of the framework of questions and the Listening Guide to the readings of the novels. Ultimately, this enabled me to construct my own framework of narrative devices that may be used by authors to tell stories about empowering and mutual relationships between mothers and daughters in young adult literature. Some of these devices had not been identified before in feminist narrative theory. The narrative strategies identified have been utilised to inform and inspire the depiction of the mother-daughter relationship in my own young adult novel, *Scar*. The results of my study demonstrate that contemporary authors are moving towards employing narrative strategies that have been constructed from feminist discourses. I was able to confirm from my research that it is possible for authors of young adult fiction to explore meaningful mother-daughter narratives, while still retaining appeal to their adolescent readers. My novel *Scar* attempts to reverse the Freudian script that speaks of separation between mother and daughter, and neglect of the voice of the maternal.

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