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**“Mother, Where Art Thou?”
Absence and Motherhood in Tim Winton’s Fiction**

Abstract: Absent mothers are striking features in Tim Winton’s novels, whether induced by death, circumstance or their own will. Motherhood is inextricably linked with trauma and suffering, either on the side of the mothers themselves, their husbands or their children. In this paper I will explain how absence and motherhood together function as metaphors for traumatic displacement and contribute to a redefinition of cultural, national and individual boundaries, while also illuminating problematic gender relations in Australia and their cultural representations. The focus is on a close-text analysis of *The Riders* (1994) while Winton’s other novels will be used to contextualise and strengthen the points made in this paper.