Post-feminism is a dangerous term because it allows us to gloss over what is really going on. There exist many androcentric places in literature where women still appear as simulacra for Scotland and bear the brunt of masculine frustration at its own intransigent Scottishness [...] I thought that, as a feminist, I should write about women, and particularly to claw back some of the experiential potential which seemed to have been packaged up and labelled ‘male’. That was a driving force behind the writing of Negative Space (2002) […]

Now I have given myself permission to tackle those sacred thistles of Scot Lit – masculinity and class – head on [...] In the future, I hope the labels I mentioned above will disappear. How nice it would be to be known not as a ‘woman writer’ or a ‘lesbian writer’ or even as a ‘Scottish writer’, but simply as a writer! (Strachan 2007a, pp. 52, 55)

Zoe Strachan outlines here the political journey taken in her novel Negative Space (2002), in which the female protagonist, Stella (whose name, pointedly, remains undisclosed until the novel’s penultimate page), moves out of the shadow of her recently deceased brother, Simon, to forge her own identity. By doing so, she exudes Strachan’s feminist ‘driving force’. For Strachan, postfeminism is a fictive term that conceals the ongoing objectification of women ‘as simulacra for Scotland’, victimized by ‘masculine frustration’. This is clearly signalled by the narrator’s lack of selfhood: she haunts an erased negative space forever debilitated by a phallocentric gaze, until ‘I struggle to recognize myself in my reflection’ (Strachan 2003 [2002], p. 12). Charting the heroine’s growth, the novel mobilizes Stella away from urban Glasgow to rural Orkney ‘as a kind of recuperative space in female-authored…’
writing’ (Schoene 2006, p. 95). As a feminist writer indicating the need for such a healing space, Strachan challenges the delusion of postfeminism in an ongoing heteropatriarchal society and draws attention to ‘what is really going on’.

However, Anne Cranny-Francis et al. point out that:

The development of a notion of identity as multiple and fragmented, rather than essentialist and unitary, has been critical for contemporary feminisms [... and] has given rise to the claims that we are in a postfeminist era. For many women, this seems a silly claim since it suggests that gender relations and gender identities are no longer problematic, and they know that is not the case. However, another way of reading the term ‘postfeminist’ is more like ‘post-second-wave-feminist’: that is, it is a challenging of earlier feminisms which locked women into silences and repressions of critical aspects of their subject positionings (for example non-white, working class, lesbian). ‘Postfeminism’ is one term for the freeing of women from the ideological straitjackets imposed by some feminisms, enabling them to recognize their differences from other women and so to eradicate the silences within feminism; to form new, respectful alliances with women different from themselves, and to learn from those women; to position their own feminist critique specifically in relation to their own cultural background. (Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, p. 68)

This alternative way of perceiving postfeminism from Strachan’s, who warns against its shortcomings of duping society into believing that equality exists, posits that it is a term for contemporary feminists to identify with while simultaneously negotiating their differences. Despite Strachan’s critical polemic warning against postfeminism, her novel nevertheless moves towards the diversification of women in a postfeminist era that more strongly resonates with Cranny-Francis and her co-authors’ position. Stella’s multiple layers – female, lesbian, Scottish and working class – are more safely explored when she is removed from the suffocating heteronormativity of Glasgow and relocated to the remote spacious Highlands amidst a diverse company of women where she forms ‘new, respectful alliances’ (Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, p. 68). Focusing on the multifaceted identities of a group retreat, Strachan’s novel in fact helps to ‘eradicate the silences within feminism’ (p. 68), with Stella recognizing the importance of females learning from ‘women different from themselves’ (p. 68). *Negative Space* is clearly a postfeminist text that envisages exactly what Strachan