WOMEN AND PEACE

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
PALESTINIAN WOMEN

A THESIS PRESENTED BY

HALA A. EL-ATRASH

TO

THE INSTITUTE OF
ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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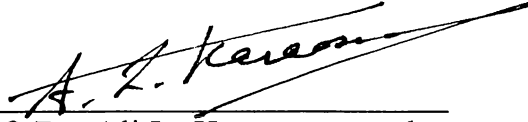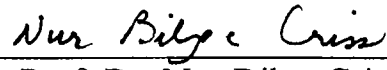
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I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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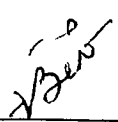Asst. Prof. Dr. Ömer Faruk Gençkaya

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ABSTRACT

This research is an introductory study on the topic *Women and Peace* from the viewpoint of Palestinian women. Its main argument is that social factors offer the best explanation for relevant relationships that have been traditionally given other explanations. Historically, females are seen as inherently peaceful, while men have been viewed as having war-related tendencies. These stereotypes have been shown to be erroneous. Feminism in the West is discussed in light of its goals and activities. Feminism in the Middle Eastern world, however, has largely chosen not to follow the same ambitions as its Western counterpart. This is because Middle Eastern women live in an entirely different social context and so naturally interpret the principles of women rights from a different perspective. On a narrower level, Palestinian women are greatly affected by the situation in which they find themselves. The lack of basic freedoms that the women of Palestine have endured has resulted in women's groups joining the struggle for national liberation, as opposed to concentrating on obtaining equality with men. These women have tended to avoid joining peace movements similarly for social reasons. The living conditions of the women are considerably poor and the lack of education and financial resources have limited the number of Palestinian women who can participate in formal peace-promoting organizations.

ÖZET

Bu araştırma Filistinli kadınların bakış açısından Kadın ve Barış konusu üzerine bir başlangıç çalışmasıdır. Araştırmanın temel argumanı, diğer açıklamaların geleneksel olarak verdiği ilgili ilişkiler için en iyi açıklamaları öneren sosyal faktörlerdir. Tarihsel olarak, erkeklerin savaşa yatkın görünümlerine karşılık kadınlar tabii barışçı olarak görülürler. bu klişeler yalış olarak gösterilmiştir. Batı'da Feminizm amaç ve etkinlikleri ışığında tartışılmaktadır. Buna karşın Orta-Doğu dünyasında Feminizm geniş ölçüde Batı ile aynı amaçları takip etmemek için seçilir. Bunun nedeni Orta-Doğulu kadınların tamamiyle farklı bir sosyal yapı içersinde yaşamaları ve doğal olarak da kadın haklarını farklı bir perspektiften yorumlamalarıdır. Daha dar bir açıdan, Filistinli kadınlar içinde kendilerini buldukları durumlardan daha fazla etkilenirler. Filistinli kadınların sahip oldukları temel hakların azlığı, kadın gruplarının milli bağımsızlık için birleşme mücadelesine ve erkeklerle eşitliği elde edebilme konusunda birleşip muhalefat yapmalarına neden olmuştur. Bu kadınlar benzer sosyal nedenlerle barış hareketlerinde birleşmekten kaçınma eğiliminde olmuşlardır. Yoksulluk, eğitim eksikliği ve mali kaynakların kısıtlı olması gibi yaşam koşullarındaki güçlüklerden dolayı resmi barışpromosyon organizasyonlarına katılan Filistinli kadınları sayısı sınırlıdır .

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

"Peace at home, peace in the world." This famous motto by the founder of modern Turkey, reverently known as Atatürk, reflects the aim and ambition of millions of individuals, and a considerable number of organizations, dedicated and devoted to both national and international peace movements. On the surface peace is simply the opposite of war, but on a deeper level it also signifies the complete absence of conflict, whether on a personal or social level. Without minimizing the importance of inner harmony and tranquillity, the more traditional usage of this word will be considered in this study.

Eliminating conflicts that exist internationally is obviously necessary if the somewhat utopian task of creating world peace is ever to become a reality.[1] Maintaining peace among the nations is hampered by nationalistic policies which frequently produce tension, hostility and the carrying out of threats among rival countries. The proliferation of weapons of war only serves notice to the fact that the typical nation spends considerably more time and money preparing for conflict than it does on attempts to avoid it.

The daily work of creating and maintaining peace is carried out through the United Nations and other non-governmental associations. Of course, it is not the groups themselves which promote peace, but the people who run and support them. What many individuals fail to realize is that women actually play a prominent role in such peace movements. In ever increasing numbers women have become vigorous,

effective and untiring promoters of world peace and defenders of civil order. This is true in spite of the fact that women, who comprise 51 percent of the world's population, are not traditionally seen as political actors, being confined instead to the margins of political life and activity.[2]

The existing scholarly literature on peace studies verifies that research in this emerging field has tended to focus on issues relevant to the state, and similarly dominant groups, while neglecting the perspectives and concerns of the traditionally subordinate, i.e., women. Although the number of studies in the West which deal with the woman's role in peace movements is growing, the material which is presented is not always accurate, especially when the topic is women of the Middle East. Imaginative and misleading literature, describing the lives and experiences of these individuals, has in the past century been presented in the West instead of empirical research. This only adds to the traditional problems of Middle Eastern women who lack accessible information and whose activities are generally left unnoticed.

Despite the fact that women of this region have been raising their voices and organizing for social emancipation and social and political change since the beginning of this century, the stories of their struggles have been marginalized and written out of conventional international relations studies on Middle Eastern politics.[3] These women are usually portrayed in academic works and the media as passive victims of their circumstances. There is little or no attention paid to their struggle to achieve control over their own lives by changing the social and political situations present in their societies. However, it is necessary to do more than just

2

record women's voices and perspectives. Calling attention to the social construction of stereotypical images and their political implications, to the multiplicity of voices among Middle Eastern women and to the complexities, contradictions and changes in the struggles of women in the region is also of vital importance. In a recent Middle East report on agenda and politics in the Middle East, Julie Peteet and Barbara Harlow point out that "in the Middle East and in Middle East studies, the disruption of old forms of thinking is creating space in which women's independent initiatives are mapping new paths of social, cultural, political transformation."[4]

Long before there was any official acquiescence to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, Palestinian and Israeli women had engaged in a series of international conferences to develop feminist frameworks for Middle East peace. Furthermore, prior to this historic occasion, it was again women from this region who alerted the world community of the serious need for an international initiative to address the broader Middle Eastern disputes, of which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was at the forefront.[5] The participation of Palestinian Hanan-Ashrawi at the Middle East peace talks in 1991-92 was, then, not simply decorative affirmative action. It marked the entry of women articulating, within the arena of Middle East and international politics, explicit feminist agendas grounded in the complex ongoing struggles of Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The topic of women and peace was brought to attention several times during the 1980s on the international level. For example, the *1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace* in Copenhagen concluded that progress towards any of these three main objectives

3

would have a beneficial effect on the others. In particular, it is only under conditions of peace that it is possible to move forward to the full implementation of equality and development. In a situation where peace is absent, however, obtaining these fundamental objectives seems illusory.

The selection of peace as one of the themes of the *United Nations Decade for Women* resulted from the long tradition of women's concerns about the human suffering and devastating waste of resources exacted by war. It also reflected women's growing consciousness of their roles as supporters of the war system, of their own victimization during war and other forms of conflict, and their potential contribution to world peace. Most of all, it manifested a significant increase in women's actions to affect policy-making on issues of peace and security.

The United Nations inherently considers women's civil and political participation essential for peace. This was outlined in their declaration on the *Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation.* In this 1982 document, the General Assembly encouraged the qualitative and quantitative increase in women's participation in the sphere of international relations. It was believed that international peace and security would be strengthened with women's increased participation in non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. Women's political action groups have used these and other similar declarations to support their aim of mobilizing women across the globe to be more active politically.

Many of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system also pursue activities relevant to women and peace. UNESCO has conducted a number of such events, including an expert group meeting on the role of women in educating young people for peace; another one on mutual understanding and respect for human rights; and organizing an international seminar in 1986 on developing a framework for women to participate in, and influence decisions related to, peace and development.

In the middle of the decade feminists staged a conference in Eastern Africa. This resulted in the *Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women* document which stated that the full and effective promotion of women's rights can best occur in conditions of international peace and security. Namely, where relations among states are based on the respect for the legitimate rights of all nations, great and small, and people's will for self-determination, independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to live in peace. In other words, peace is promoted by economic equality and the universal enjoyment of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As a result of women's issues being globally introduced, the concept of peace has become broader and more complex, far beyond merely an absence of, or period between, war. The potential for peace rests in large part on the possibility for the full emancipation of women and for the realization of their visions for peace and security. While it is clear that the traditional roles and social experiences of women lead them to a special appreciation for peace, this alone does not account for their

interest in it. As women become more politically aware and active, they increasingly acknowledge this critical linkage between peace and development.

This research serves as an introductory study to the topic *WOMEN AND PEACE: From the Perspective of Palestinian Women.* It has three major sections. The first discusses the broad subject of *Gender and Peace.* It argues that social influences primarily explain the supposed relationship peace has with females and aggression with males. *Women, Feminism, Peace and Human Rights* is the title of the second main section. It argues that women's movements in the Middle East are inherently different from typical feminist perspectives in the West. It presents Palestinian women as an example of the necessity for basic human rights to be met before comparatively luxurious issues like equality with men are confronted. The final section concerns *Palestinian Women and Peace Movements.* The role of women in different Middle Eastern peace movements is surveyed and several socio-political reasons why Palestinian women are under-represented in these movements are given.

As a young Arab woman, I have a personal interest in this subject, having felt firsthand the frustration and disappointment of my Palestinian sisters. Since the Middle East has traditionally been the most volatile region in the world, this is also a relevant topic to those dedicated to the discipline of international relations. Considerable literature exists on relationships in Israel and Palestine. Peace in this land of two nations has even been adequately presented. However, there is hardly any published research on peace from the women's point of view, especially from the Palestinian's perspective. The chapters to follow will serve as an introductory

6

study to this neglected subject. They will go beyond the peace initiatives which are traditionally associated with agreements signed by heads of states, emphasizing instead that peace must come from the living realities of the people in Palestine.

It is, therefore, necessary to move beyond the traditional boundaries of international relations in order to better deal with this topic. As Walker in her piece *Gender and Critique in the Theory of International Relations* notes: "The attempt to develop feminist perspectives on world politics cannot be restricted to the critique of theories of international relations alone."[6] If this is true for feminism, it is certainly also applicable for the narrower issue which is here being presented.

CHAPTER II:
GENDER AND PEACE

This study focuses on the central concepts of women and peace from the lives and struggles of the women of Palestine. It can be said that peace is a supreme desire of the majority of individuals, both Arab and Israeli, living in the Middle East. True, there are many who feel that the best way to obtain this objective is by first eliminating their alleged enemies through aggressive means. Nonetheless, the peace process in this area of the world has definitely turned the corner, so to speak. In the midst of this gigantic chess game where knights battle bishops, it goes without saying that the women of Palestine are no more than pawns. As the men struggle for supremacy, it is the women and children who suffer the daily realities of life without peace. This chapter will lay the foundation for a better understanding of peace from their perspective by referring to this topic on a broader level.

2.1 Definitions

There are certain difficulties involved in attempts to define both of the main terms in this study. The definition of *women* in many societies tends to be, at least partly, in opposition to the category of men. In other words, the definitions are relational. That means women are not men and vice-versa.[1] Anthropologist Needham in his book *Right and Left* contends that an important and basic dimension of the way in which cultures order themselves, is a tendency to construct oppositions, to give the world some sort of order and coherence by dividing it into neat categories, the simplest of which are opposing pairs: male-female, day-night, right-left.[2]

These binary oppositions have a persuasive cultural logic. A sort of continuous variation is generally hidden beneath the discrete, discontinuous categories of language and culture. Furthermore, those oppositions which are especially socially or cosmologically significant tend to be shored up by various symbolic procedures (like rituals, taboos and myths) which have the effect of highlighting and essentializing differences. This is well-demonstrated in the case of the male-female dichotomy where the differences between the sexes is culturally marked and exaggerated by conventions over such matters as dress, behavior, speech, access to public spaces and so forth.[3]

Like the term women, *peace* is also usually defined relationally. As Marina Warner has put it, the idea of peace seems difficult to seize without referring to the absence of war, and thus making war present as a standard.[4] Or as Jenny Lindsell notes, peace is seen only through the mirror of war.[5] Gary Cox has pointed out that while we use the word war in a verb form (to war on evil), peace does not have a verb form. In Arabic, too, there is no verb form for the concept of peace. Thus, we cannot "peace" on an adversary. We think of war as an activity in which people can purposefully engage. It is something soldiers can learn how to do. In contrast, we think of peace as a kind of condition or state which is achieved or simply occurs. Thus, unlike warring, peace is not thought to be something we can do.[6]

It is only recently that peace has been attempted to be theorized as a positive state, something to be explained and accounted for on its own terms, rather than as the interim between conflicts or as an unattainable religious or political goal.[7]

While there is a growing realization that peace is not simply the antithesis of war, peace activists agree that the reduction and elimination of war is a goal never to be abandoned until achieved. However, their cries for peace generally fall on deaf ears and their overall success can be questioned.[8] Greed, the root cause of war, is usually a stronger force among an aggressor than any underlying emotions calling on respect for humankind. War is the ultimate expression of power, the ability to make people do what they do not want to do.[9] As long as there are leaders and nations who desire to possess what others have (greed) and use all means available to obtain it (power) there will always be physical confrontations (war).[10] Even if the majority are satisfied with their position, history has shown that it takes all sides to make peace, but only one to make war.

While peace clearly includes preventing such violence as armed conflict, military occupation and intervention by one country in the affairs of another, it also means "the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms."[11] Peace is envisioned as a complex of specific political, economic and social changes that in some way make the world more just, as it increases the areas of agreement among nations and peoples. Peace also means a set of relationships based on trust, cooperation and recognition of the interdependence and importance of the common good and mutual interests of all peoples. Peace must be regarded as a positive state to be maintained or attained.

An important distinction needs to be made between peace and pacifism. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, *pacifism* means opposition to the use of force under any circumstance. Pacifism, therefore, must be placed squarely

10

in the realm of political and ideological commitment and choice. It is not to be explained by either biological or historical reasoning. If there is any necessary connection between women and peace it is certainly not immutable. Pacifism is also the advocacy of a way of life in which the root causes of war are attacked. If carried to its logical- albeit improbable- conclusion, war would be made theoretically unnecessary. Finally, pacifism is the wish to eliminate the condition of people being threatened, people being left without choice.[12] It advocates the type of lifestyle where the lion lies down with the lamb and the aggressor turns his sword into a plowshare.

Pacifistic behavior is actually the predominant natural desire for both men and women. In contrast with the overwhelmingly violent world, which is numbingly presented on the television screen, human beings tend to avoid conflict, whenever possible. They are not innately unpeaceful.[13] That is why methods of physical intimidation are effective in securing power and privileges for anti-democratic governments and illegal mafia-type groups. If the majority's desire for peace was universally equated with pacifistic behavior, then many of the seemingly justifiable reasons for war could have been eliminated a long time ago. However, when even a few individuals choose not to accept this disposition, then it spoils the potential for peace among the majority.[14] Pacifism is, in summary, a deliberate conscious choice of principles and policies relevant to promoting peace.[15]

2.2 Biology and Peace

Women act as powerful symbols of peace. A question which persistently arises in discussions of women and peace is whether or not women are inherently more peaceful than men.[16] In other words, do women- just because they are women- have a distinctive biological inclination to make peace? It is true that the male hormones are inherently more aggressive than the female's. Furthermore, men are also by nature physically stronger than women. Therefore, it makes sense if the sex which is naturally more aggressive and stronger takes responsibility for defending the interests of the group in question.[17] However, the problem lies in the oversimplification of these factors and the socialization and suppression of the female gender into a forced role of submissive-type activity.

There is a tendency in many cultures to associate peace with passivity, to depict it as an inactive and negative state, rather than as something positive in and of its own right.[18] Howell and Willis note that peacefulness carries with it the negatively valued connotations of being passive and inert, qualities which are also associated with females.[19] It is the argument here that claims of instinctive or natural associations between maleness and aggression-warfare, or between femaleness and passivity-peace, are over represented. The generalization occurs when physical weakness is made synonymous with pacifistic tendencies. The problem with this association is that it does not take a person's attitudes and dispositions properly into consideration. After all, the strong may do the fighting, but they are usually led by those who are physically less able, but mentally more capable.

A defense of this position will include examples of women who have been or are involved in non-pacifistic activities. This, in turn, will show that cultural and situational factors are the real reasons for the apparent connection between women and peace. Biology is, it should be remembered, a science not traditionally influenced by exceptions. In other words, if one man is able to give birth, then we cannot say that men are biologically incapable of producing children. Likewise, if one woman is involved in war, then we cannot assume that all women are predestined to peaceful activity.[20]

2.3 Motherhood and Peace

Some argue that it is the mothering experience which predisposes women to favor peace. However, maternal peace politics is simply based on the myth that mothers are peacemakers without power who are simply outsiders to, or victims of, armed conflict.[21] It is also false to say that their business is exclusively that of life, while the work of war (death) belongs to men.[22] This is not to say that there is no contribution of motherhood to the dislike of violence. Mothers who have invested a considerable part of their time and effort raising children, have a tendency to value life more than those who have not. But one should not assume that simply because a mother sees a "casualty of war" as being more than just a statistic that this means she is unwilling to support what is best for herself or her country.

It appears that the social roles women have played throughout history have actually led many of them to feel the burden of war more, thus valuing opportunities of peace more than the men.[23] This war-burden scenario is complicated by the fact that a woman faces the issue of support of or resistance to war, and the puzzle of

achieving peace, in a context very different from that of a man. One of the key differences in their social and political contexts is the fact that women have been overwhelmingly disarmed throughout most of the history of civilization.[24] If women are not able to protect themselves from the enemy because they are defenseless, it should not be a surprise if they tend to resist the existence of any such conflict.

2.4   Women and War

There are many women who do choose to be a part of their country's political and military mechanisms, particularly the growing number of women- including mothers- serving in the United States military. There is also the position of the National Organization for Women (NOW) which supports women's eligibility for combat on the perfectly rational grounds of professional equal opportunity. Luisa Amanda Espinosa argues that if women find themselves demanding entry into armed forces on the same basis as men; if women feel love, solidarity and even exhilaration on the shooting range with a female armed self-defense group; if women pursue visions of societies from which men have been banished by female-instigated armed revolutions, then where is the unity and compelling logic joining women to pacifism?[25]

In some societies women fight and otherwise exhibit aggression. One anthropological example is the Uduk of the Sudan-Ethiopia borderland. In this culture, women fight with staves and even occasionally beat their husbands.[26] There are examples of individual women who are famous with their decisions to go to war: Boqdicea, the Celtic warrior queen; the young Elizabeth I rallying England

to face the Spanish Armada in 1588; and, more recently, Margaret Thatcher's leadership of Britain during the Falklands War. The seemingly hawkish attitude of the Turkish prime minister, Tansu Çiller, is a contemporary example of women with political power who do not shy away from supporting iron-fist tactics when they feel it is necessary.

Of course, there is somewhat of a self-fulfilling hypothesis in the relationship between women and war. Females are viewed as passive and so less capable of being political and military leaders; because they are viewed in this way relatively few women are chosen for positions of authority; with few women leaders there are also fewer chances for women to make active decisions concerning war; as examples are scarce, little is done to disprove the stereotype itself.[27] Instead of looking at numbers, it would be more accurate to examine the responses of women in leadership positions when put in threatening positions. In other words, it is not the number of women who make non-pacifistic choices that is important, but the female leaders' acts of aggression ratio. It is supposed that this percentage would not be entirely different from that of the male leaders.

2.5   *Women and Leadership*

The section above refers to women in leadership positions making decisions related to war. On a more general level, how do the few who have made it to the top act? What do they do with their femaleness? It has become popular to argue that women in power usually assume roles that are traditionally reserved for males.[28] This is done because they cannot afford to bring their female values to a world dominated by men if they intend to remain in power. This results in traits

typically associated with women being discarded (i.e., indecisiveness) and those connected with men (i.e., leadership) being accepted. Sometimes male-oriented qualities are purposely given a feminine connection in order to re-create the image of a prominent female figure (i.e., the Iron Lady). In order to show that she is only an exception to the system, and not a threat to it, the woman leader is careful not to ignore her own "domestic instincts", emphasizing the importance her family has in her own life.

Once again noting the experience of Prime Minister Çiller, we can say that there is some truth in the above theory. She walks with confidence, talks with authority and at times leads- dare I say rules?- with an iron fist. However, there is no denial that she has incorporated some traditionally female qualities in her political package. On more than one occasion she has cried in public and shown emotion from which a male politician would shy away. She has also been careful to maintain her attractive looks, using her femininity in a very tactful way (How many other nations brag about having the most beautiful prime minister, if admittedly not the brightest?). Her example shows that, like the above theory, she has adopted male traits. However, contrary to this notion, she has incorporated female characteristics into her professional career, painting a picture of a compassionate leader.

Another inherent weakness in this female-trait abandonment theory is that it assumes that "traditional male characteristics" are found only in males and implies that "typical female qualities" belong exclusively to females.[29] A rebuttal can be given by asking several relevant questions. Is there located within every man a

biological gene or hormone which secretes the tendency to be a decisive leader? If so, how can we explain the fact that most men are *not* in positions of leadership? Does nature only choose some males to possess these "male traits"? If not all males have these qualities, then why should it exclusively belong to this gender? If there is no biological connection, then why cannot women also possess these a-sexual characteristics? Do not social factors play a significant part in shaping the personality of an individual?[30] If people are not born leaders, does not society simply help determine who has a better chance at becoming one?[31]

2.6   Gender and Passivity

Another anthropological argument against the traditional male-violent / female-passive stereotypes is the fact that there are many societies in which there is little or no aggression among either men or women. These include the Mubuti Pygmies of the Ituri forests of the Congo and the Semai and Chewong of Malaysia.[32] If men in these societies are non-violent, then it is improper to argue that males are biologically predisposed to war. These and other people groups show that culture is a more accurate predictor of war-peace attitudes than simply biological sex.[33]

Religion can be another determining factor for one's disposition towards war.[34] A relevant example in the West are the traditional pacifist Protestant denominations (Quakers, Brethrens, Mennonites) who settled in the North American continent to avoid persecution in Europe for their non-violent attitudes. The influence of these religious groups in the formation stage of The United States as a nation was considerable. One only has to consider the example of the large

State of Pennsylvania, which was named after the famous Quaker, William Penn. Even to this day, it is quite common for young men from these traditionally peaceful denominations to sign a war-draft related declaration at the age of 16 stating their opposition to war and their position of being a conscientious objector. Martin Luther King and, of course, Gandhi are other famous examples of religious men who were opposed to all forms of violence, expousing instead "pacifistic resistance" to obtain what they believed to be their divine human rights, even at the risk of adhering to a belief unfairly associated with femininity.[35]

Carol Gilligan illustrates a theoretical difference in the playground activities of young males and females. While boys tended to continue a competitive game to the point of conflict between the players, girls were more likely to break off the game before it reached conflict in order to preserve the relationship among the players. Girls also tended to choose games, like skipping rope, in which one player's success did not derive from another player's loss.[36] However, I would not interpret this behavior as proof that females are hormonally predisposed towards pacifism and males towards war. After all, it is difficult to be too active on the playground when wearing a skirt and dress shoes. This is simply another example of a self-fulfilling prophecy to maintain a traditional stereotype.[37] The fact that those girls who desire to wear more comfortable clothing and be more active are subsequently labeled "tomboys" only encourages the types of games chosen by girls. Therefore, through the process of socialization, the roles that men and women are supposed to play in the future are taught through positive and negative reinforcements while they are still children.[38]

2.7　*Gender and Peacefulness*

The differences in attitudes and perspectives between women and men are learned from society, rather than being biologically inherent.[39]　Society has assigned to men responsibility for the production, maintenance and defense of its infrastructure.　Women, on the other hand, are to produce and nurture human life and create well-being among relationships.[40]　It is undoubtedly true that there is a historical connection between women and peace, and men and war, but it is a connection imposed upon women along with their subordination, disarmed condition and stereotyped roles.[41]　Because women and children are the foremost victims in war and other conflict situations, many women's organizations have focused upon issues of peace and war.[42]　The dedicated activities of such groups have made a notable contribution to raising public awareness on these issues. Therefore, it is as vigorous contributors to its promotion and maintenance that women have become so widely recognized in the arena of world peace.

In conclusion, we can say that women's peacefulness is at least as mythical as men's violence.　Wherever battles are justifiably fought, women have never opposed the war effort.　Whatever the causes, women on both sides of the battle lines have supported the military engagements of their brothers, husbands and sons.　There is nothing in the female sex's genetic make-up that would naturally prohibit her from actively participating in a military excursion if the circumstances so dictated.[43]　It can even be argued that women are especially enlivened by war's opportunities because they are traditionally confined by domestic expectations in peacetime. Nonetheless, women usually justify their militarism the same way as men do: in terms of loyalty, patriotism and what is right.[44]　Finally, we can note the position of

19

the prominent conflict resolution scholar John Burton: "It is not that females are more peace-oriented or less forceful than males. But that because of their social experiences, women are better positioned to trust conflict resolution initiatives and engage in activities that will further the prospects for peace."[45]

CHAPTER III:

WOMEN, FEMINISM, PEACE
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The previous chapter argued against stereotyping women as passive creatures, biologically tied to pacifistic behavior, and men as macho war machines. In reality, social factors are primarily responsible for any supposed connection between females and peace, or males and aggression. This chapter narrows the topic to women, primarily from the feminist camp, and examines their traditional attitudes towards peace. Feminism in the Middle East is shown to be different from the Western version, once again due to social reasons. The poor human rights situation of the Palestinian women offers a concrete example of how contextual factors affect women's participation in rights-seeking organizations.

3.1   Women and Western Feminism

While it is clear that women's traditional roles and social experiences lead them to a special appreciation of peace, this alone does not account for their complete interest in it. There are other reasons why this is a special issue to many, although not all, feminists.[1] It should be stressed that although research has been done on the topic of women and peace, there is almost no theoretical literature on the relation between feminism and peace. Later, this chapter will investigate how the goals of Middle Eastern feminists differ from those of traditional feminists, with the women's movement in Palestine being given special emphasis. Finally, the case of Palestinian women will be used to illustrate the reasons for this discrepancy.

Feminism rests on a belief that people can exercise control over their own lives and live in harmony with others and that women can share equality of opportunity and freedom. Colleen Roach offers the following definition: "Feminism is a political perspective that demands an end to the oppression of people because of their gender, and an end to the institutional and individual structures that define men as more valuable than women".[2]

Western feminist ideology includes several different perspectives, ranging from the conservative to the Marxist. The predominant trend, however, is towards the liberal feminist line.[3] A basic feature of liberal feminism is its perception that sexism is the root cause of women's problems. According to this view, women experience discrimination, low pay, poor jobs and other indicators of inequality due to male domination in the family, economy and politics. These feminists argue that the solution to women's problems could be achieved through economic independence, access to better jobs and privileges, equal pay, equal rights and general freedom from male domination.

Most of the proponents of this view are middle-class, white Western women who have already achieved some basic rights and equality but are looking for more freedom and independence. After acquiring some higher education, searching for a job or getting married, and subsequently being indoctrinated with the individualistic Western measures of success, these women see the way to greater achievements and success blocked by men and their sexist attitudes in society.

3.2   Women, Western Feminism and Peace

In recent years, a number of feminists and peace-loving women have grappled with the practical, historical, social and intellectual problems resulting from their commitment to peace. At the conference, *The Second Sex: Thirty Years Later a Commemorative Conference on Feminist Theory*, held in New York in 1979, none of the papers dealt directly or indirectly with this subject. In the occasional feminist essay where peace was discussed, it was usually directed towards issues like, the peace-war dichotomy or women in the military. Much more difficult to find are articles dealing with the theoretical questions and implications of this relationship.[4]

Western feminists, in their linkage between feminism and peace, see war resulting from the sex role socialization of males to accept or advocate violence.[5] In historical terms, men must take responsibility for the act of war, since women have no political voice or influence in this process. Many feminists believe that, if given the choice, women in most cases would find peaceful solutions to avoid conflict. Feminists also contend that fighting has mainly been a masculine occupation. Encouragement to go to war and the appeal to use physical force as a means of solving the world's problems have been significantly masculine, as have been the speeches and actions by those making such decisions.

This view has been most strongly suggested by Elise Boulding in her book *Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom*. Here she explains that the feminists' demand for changes in sex roles is a significant aspect of the struggle to

overcome violence at all levels in human life. She asks: "Who will create the images needed for such a transformation?" She replies:

> It will be those who are marginal to the present society, who are excluded from the centers of power, who stand at the world's peripheries and see society with different eyes...It happens that the category of human beings I have been writing about in this book fulfills the requirements of marginality of exclusion from the centers of power, and of possession of practice every day skills at the micro and intermediate levels of human activity...the family, the neighborhood, the town...I am referring, of course to women.[6]

Berenice A. Carroll points out that feminists must challenge the war system. She links the war system to: 1) the emergence of patriarchy and war together in the history of civilization; 2) the male monopoly of legitimate or state violence and its functions in maintaining the powerlessness and subordination of women; 3) the patriarchal character of military institutions and their prevailing misogynist propaganda; 4) the military exploitation of women in service roles and prostitution; 5) the role of mass rape in warfare; 6) the promotion of war and battle "heroism" as proofs of masculinity in patriarchal propaganda. She explains that war and military institutions are essential to masculinity and so must be eliminated to overcome it. In other words, feminists must challenge the war system.[7]

It is recognized that what feminists' really want is nothing more than their natural rights as human beings. As the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other related documents proclaim, all governments and individuals should be responsible for the observation and application of the basic principles of human rights and hold each other accountable. The declaration explains that peace is to

strive for the rights to a healthful environment and to a social and international order where rights and freedoms can be fully realized. Conflict must be resolved in an atmosphere of tolerance, mutual respect and equality among nations, groups, men and women. Peace requires the reduction and elimination of structural violence, and the violation of life and well-being that derives from social and economic institutions.[8] Peace is the antithesis of exploitation, marginalization and oppression. Therefore, ending discrimination against women and achieving peace are mutually interdependent and inseparable goals.

3.3 *Women and Middle Eastern Feminism*

A central question must be asked: Can the conditions of women in the Middle East be evaluated by the same criteria as the West? Is it not Euro/American-centric to put forward the lives of Western women as the only democratic, just and forward-looking model?[9] Women's movements in general are mainly developing along the lines of a Western understanding of women's problems and their solutions. However, with the possible exception of Israel, the experience of women in the Third World and in Middle Eastern countries is radically different from that of Western women. The basic concepts and ideologies that serve as the foundation for traditional feminism are inapplicable to the lives of the average non-Western women with their differing historical and cultural backgrounds.

During the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85), Western feminists began with outward issues like the veil, telling Middle Eastern women that these were pivotal hindrances in their struggle for women's liberation in their countries.[10] By the end of the decade, there was the recognition that things were not so simple.

25

Even if there was some truth behind the argument that the veil is a symbol of oppression,[11] it was not the place of Western women to decide what were the main issues for a Middle Eastern or African woman. The latter recognized that by simply discarding the veil they would not acquire what were really their main desires: economic independence, food, shelter and peace.[12]

The Nairobi Conference and others have proved that women, including those in the West, have not been entirely confined within the narrow bonds and outlook of mainstream Western feminism, a clear statement on the interdependence of political and socioeconomic issues that are still quite noticeably lacking. There is a reluctance on the part of Western feminists, in particular, to cite the political nature of women's problems, since a recognition of the political bases of these problems invites a recognition and admission of the West's culpability in the oppression of many Third World nations, including their women.[13]

Feminism in the Muslim world first took root at the turn of the century, as women's literacy increased and educational opportunities for them were expanded. The enlightenment of the female mind did have a modernizing influence on social life and outward symbols like clothing.[14] Eventually, two divergent strains of feminism emerged and vied for supremacy. The traditional feminist attitude has been predominant among the higher classes and promotes a feminism that assumes westernizing, secularizing tendencies such as those in Western-type societies. The alternative feminist position has gained popularity during the latter part of this century. It promotes a feminism which is in many ways opposed to Western imitation and argues instead for women's rights in a context compatible within a

native, vernacular, Islamic discourse in terms of a general social, cultural and religious renovation.[15]

3.4   Women, Middle Eastern Feminism and Peace

Especially in the Middle East, studying feminism and feminist perspectives on peace implies that life experiences, voices and struggles of women in the region are taken into consideration and the concept of peace from that perspective should be clearly understood.[16]   In the Middle East, the concerns and activities of women, especially in Palestine, are directed within the political framework of the struggle for Palestinian rights and national self-determination.   This inseparability between women's issues and political concerns, so fundamental to Palestinian women, is incomprehensible in the West.   Women in the Middle East have recently engaged in direct challenges of the distinction between public and private, and between politics and narrowly defined women's issues, and have asserted that all issues are profoundly political.[17]

Despite the fact that most Middle Eastern women have not come across feminist scholarship on issues related to war and peace, which until recently has originated primarily in Western feminist studies, the Middle Eastern feminists' interpretations have opened the way to alternative scenarios for Middle East peace. Such perspectives were not born in academic settings alone, but emerged from the ongoing struggles of women in the region as part of ways to cope with political developments.   The underlying assumption of the struggle of women is that questions of war and peace are inseparable from questions of development, environmental and ecological degradation, gender, race and class inequalities,

human rights abuses and attacks on cultural identities.[18] Thus, feminists in the Middle East have recently stressed the importance of developing social and political strategies to mobilize and intervene in local and global politics in ways that will advance specific women's interests as well as ongoing struggles for emancipation and equal rights.[19]

3.5 *Palestinian Women and Organization*

In the area of land historically referred to as Palestine, it is more correct to speak of a women's movement as opposed to a feminist one, the latter simply being a more radical interpretation of the former. The Palestinian women's movement began at the turn of the century, as women joined their male counterparts to press for a proper establishment of their Palestinian and Arab identity during the British Mandate period.[20] The occupying force changed in 1948, but their main objective did not and in many ways it still has not. During the time of the mandate, "the Palestinian women's movement played a supporting role to the national struggle, and did not include specific women's rights among its stated goals; today, in contrast, there is a popular women's movement encouraging the active participation of women in the struggle for their rights and freedom."[21]

Until the 1970s, the women's movement in Palestine had been quite unidimensional, equating colonialism and occupation with the debasement of women's status. The Palestinian society was seen as homogenous, not taking into consideration class and gender relations and conflicts.[22] The leaders during the first part of the century were from the elite segment of society, the female relatives of the male political representatives and land owners. The leadership of Palestine,

and also the women's movement, passed into the hands of the middle class during the 1950s and 1960s, with the creation and eventual supremacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In these decades, the structure and function of the women's organizations that operated in the West Bank and Gaza Strip took mostly the form of highly centralized charitable organizations, middle-class women reaching out to assist the poor and oppressed. [23]

Summarizing this period, Giacaman and Odeh note in their study entitled *Palestinian Women's Movement in the Israeli-Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip*:

> While one might argue that the conceptual formula took many forms over the years, its content nevertheless remained the same. For over 50 years women's activities remained confined within a formula devoid of the concept of internal social contradictions independent of colonialism or occupation, and without an analysis of the relation of those contradictions to the oppression of certain sectors in Palestinian society, especially women.[24]

In the late 1970s, with the development of Palestinian society and the influence of a small segment of educated women, a less-charitable and more politically sensitive women's movement came into existence. This progressive committees' movement was founded on the attempt to politically mobilize the untapped potential of the rural and refugee camp women.[25] Suddenly, women's committees sprang up among the poor and downtrodden and found a constituency possessing miserable living conditions, inadequate health facilities and low educational standards. The previously dormant issue of gender relations was subsequently added into the women's liberation formula. The movement has,

29

however, realized that the basic needs of the underprivileged women need to be met before it is possible to mobilize them politically.[26]

The situation facing the feminists located in the progressive movement appears rather bleak. They realize that as long as the occupation continues there is going to be no independence; without independence there is going to be no political freedom; with no political freedom there is going to be no improvement in the living conditions of the poor; with poor living conditions there is going to be no increase in educational standards; with poor education there is going to be an apathy among women towards political issues; with political apathy there are going to be difficulties in mobilizing the masses against the occupation...

3.6   Palestinian Women and Human Rights

The special experience of Palestinian women can hardly be described as unique, since politics pervade all societies and is inseparable from women's conditions in particular. However, with reference to the Palestinian case, under the yoke of occupation women are struggling against sexism and discrimination, against imprisonment and deportation, against homelessness and statelessness. Palestinian women are also suffering from the kinds of sexual discrimination and oppression that women in all class-based societies must face. On the one hand, Palestinian women still confront the traditional sexist attitudes towards women that predate the Israeli occupation. These include the traditional Arab view of the role of women as housewives/mothers and the restrictions placed on their participation in public life and productive work outside the home.[27]

On the other hand, living under the occupation has generated special problems for Palestinian women. The effect of the Israeli occupation has in some cases reinforced the traditional role of women as inferior to men, where Palestinians have taken refuge in their own traditions in reaction to alien Israeli rule. Yet in other cases, the reaction to the reality of the occupation has radically transformed traditional values, where conditions of life under foreign rule have forced both men and women to wage a joint struggle for survival.[28] It is at this level that we can make sense of the perspective of Palestinian women with regards to the interdependence of women's issues and national concerns. Palestinian women have realized that their liberation as women can only take place within a total context of social liberation from exploitation and oppression, namely in the liberation of Palestinians from Israeli rule.[29]

As it was earlier mentioned, peace can only derive from the reduction of structural violence and the violation of life and well-being that derives from social and economic institutions.[30] It makes sense, then, to analyze the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women under the occupation. The 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank destroyed what remained of the traditional economic basis of Palestinian society as it transformed villagers into wage laborers, while generating a radical transformation in the position and role of Palestinian women.

3.6.1 *Employment*

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the impact of Israeli colonialization on Palestinian women relates to their role in the labor force. Since the beginning of the occupation, the female labor force has increased in real terms and is characterized mainly by the entry of Palestinian women into the wage-labor force. Between 1967 and 1983, the number of female wage laborers rose from 13,800 to 28,000 in the West Bank. In percentages, 12 percent of West Bank females were in the labor force in 1983, constituting 17.8 percent of the total West Bank labor force.[31] Land expropriation and dispossession of Palestinians have affected camp women in particular. Forced, at least out of necessity, proletarianization has made their participation in the labor force higher than that of village and urban women.[32] The statistics on women's participation in the labor force do not, however, take into account local agricultural production, which is unpaid and performed by women over and above their household duties. The agriculture sector is becoming the main employer of women in the West Bank. The percentage of women employed in this sector has increased from 31 percent at the beginning of the occupation to 46 percent as of 1983. In industry, this figure ranged between 11 and 15 percent over this period.[33] This may indicate that women tend to replace men as agricultural workers, because of male proletarianization and employment as wage-laborers in Israel. Moreover, women who generally receive the lowest wages are subject to more exploitation and are the first to be fired.

The general statistics on female labor in the West Bank suggest several implications for Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. First of all, the very fact that women's proletarianization has occurred indicates the degree of

32

disintegration of the traditional village community and its various socioeconomic structures. Thus, the traditional Palestinian village, whose residents already faced problems of unemployment and high emigration rates, has now been reduced to dependence on Israel and the market system. In addition, the village has been transformed into a community of women and children where the men return only at night from work in Israel. The combined effects of the proletarianization of men and the increased dependence on Israel have been severe in their effects on the traditional family structure.[34]

The growing economic need has forced women into the labor force to meet the rising costs of living. It is also the Palestinian women who have to bear the responsibilities of holding together a secure and stable family under the continuous pressures of life under the occupation, since the men are either at work in Israel, deported or imprisoned at the hands of the Israeli authorities, or else have been forced to emigrate abroad.[35]

The demographic distribution of males and females in the West Bank reveals a low ratio of men to women, especially in the productive 30-64 age group. Most of those who emigrate (about 17,000 in 1980 and 15,800 in 1981) are single males (41 percent in 1982) which means that many women in Palestine remain unmarried.[36] This surplus of women, especially in the 30-49 age group, has significant implications for the role of women, who are traditionally prepared for family life and who must now enter into the labor force and various social activities in order to secure a living.

3.6.2 Education

Education is very essential for the participation in sociopolitical activities and organizations.[37] Palestinian women had earlier learned that education was a way to improve their conditions in society. Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, and with the mounting pressures and costs of daily life, families became increasingly aware of the need to educate their daughters to assume productive roles in society. While in 1967, 74.3 percent of the West Bank females had no education, fifteen years later females accounted for 45.1 percent of school enrollment. Additionally, females accounted for 42.1 percent of total university enrollment in the occupied territories in 1982-83, and from 52.7 percent of the enrollment in the literacy programs offered by the voluntary associations.[38]

However, these higher figures may be somewhat misleading when one realizes that female enrollment is especially high at elementary levels but drops off at the preparatory and secondary levels. Furthermore, the higher percentage of females at West Bank universities reflects the fact that many males travel abroad to study while females are forced to remain in the West Bank. Thus, in 1983 only 35 percent of secondary school students in the West Bank were women, compared to 37.9 percent of preparatory students and 44 percent at the elementary level.[39] The high rate of attrition can be traced to poor and deteriorating educational conditions at state schools, the lack of qualified teachers with their low salaries and over-crowded and inadequate facilities that resulted from Israeli occupational policies restricting educational development.

It is evident that education for Palestinian females in the West Bank suffers from certain constraints resulting from both neglect and repression at the hands of the Israeli authorities and the economic and social pressures that force women into the labor force at a very early stage in their education. Conditions under the occupation have meant that illiteracy among Arab women still remains high, especially in rural areas. Those who do manage to complete their higher education may be confronted with unemployment.[40]

3.6.3 Health

Health conditions are also very important. The failure to meet women's health needs is a violation of their human rights and, consequently, of the rights of others. As the special committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) has repeatedly emphasized, the health status of Palestinians has been adversely affected by numerous environmental problems. These include the salinity of the water supply and nutritional deficiencies due to the lack of essential foodstuffs.[41] According to the special committee, these problems are compounded by specific Israeli policies, such as the refusal to allow the digging of wells. Palestinians also suffer from the results of overcrowding in homes, making for poor living conditions. Other specific services are limited or lacking. In fact, a survey of over four hundred villages in the West Bank found only 20 percent had safe running water.[42]

It is evident that many essential elements for a healthy and sanitary environment are especially lacking in the village and rural areas of the West Bank. This has obvious implications in terms of prevailing health problems, where the high incidence of infectious and communicable diseases that particularly strike children

and women is noted.[43]   Such diseases are compounded by the effects of malnutrition, and this can reflect the poverty and generally unsatisfactory environmental conditions of the Palestinian community.

3.6.4 Detention

Palestinian women are also subject to detention, imprisonment, deportation and death in retaliation for their resistance activities against the occupation regime. Since the beginning of the occupation, some 1,250 women have been arrested or detained in Israeli prisons and 48 have been deported.[44] Moreover, 80 percent of women detained are between 15 and 29 years of age and over 92 percent of those who received life sentences are also in their productive years.[45] The ever-present threat of detention or arrest creates a feeling of insecurity among both Palestinian men and women.   Families fear for their daughters as much as for their sons, husbands fear for their wives and whole families are disrupted when the remaining female breadwinners are also subjected to detention or house arrest.

In summary, under the Israeli occupation Palestinian women have to devote their main energies to basic survival, retaining a Palestinian identity, struggling for the elementary right to a home, land and nationality. They are unable to concern themselves exclusively with the issues which Western women view as priorities, such as daycare, abortion rights, higher pay, better jobs and equal opportunities with men.   Palestinian women are exposed to exile, imprisonment, exploitation and oppression.   In addition to the daily hardships of life under the occupation, for Palestinian women the struggle for women's rights and the struggle for peace become one and the same.

Women are ready to strive for peace and security in an authentically secure world where human rights are respected. However, their effectiveness will depend on having their own rights recognized and their own needs more adequately met, especially in the areas of health, education and employment. These conditions are rights in themselves and also the requisites for the pursuit of other human rights. As women's rights and needs in these areas are denied, so too are the rights and needs of others whose care is entrusted to women.

CHAPTER IV:

PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND PEACE MOVEMENTS

The previous chapter examined the typical attitudes of women towards peace, especially from the feminist perspective. It showed that there is not only one version of feminism, as the women of the Middle East have been inclined towards a feminism more sensitive to their own needs and desires. This chapter will concentrate on peace movements that have taken place among women's groups in the land of Israel-Palestine. Several reasons are given for the Palestinian women's comparatively low level of participation, with social factors, including religion, forming the heart of the discussion.

4.1   Peace Movements Defined

As was argued previously, since women have historically lacked political power, men bear the burden of responsibility for the events surrounding war.[1] Peace movements have traditionally been led, inspired and supported more by women than men as a means by which the suppressed political female voices could be heard. As the bearers of life, it should not be surprising that women are usually quicker to recognize the senseless destruction and loss of souls that war inevitably involves. At the same time, this fact does not minimize the important role that men of the same persuasion have had in creating a pacifistic opposition to war.[2] Even though the emphasis in this study is on the women's role in peace, this does not assume there is an absence of contributions on the part of men.

In general, *peace movements* try to resist and put an end to wars. They oppose those individuals who argue that war is a necessary part of international relations which history has shown is the ultimate recourse to solving disputes and conflicts. Peace movements today are comparatively broader and more comprehensive than in the past, especially as they have increasingly included women as active and vocal participants.[3] Indeed, the women of the world represent a still relatively untapped potential of political force in the contemporary campaign for peace and social progress.

This notion finds support in the *Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation*, which was adopted by the 37th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Article 1 of the declaration states: "Women and men have an equal and vital interest in contributing to international peace and cooperation. To this end women must be enabled to exercise their right to participate in the economic, social, cultural, civil and political affairs of society on an equal footing with men."[4] Another form of support has come from women's organizations that have recently stressed the importance of developing social and political strategies to mobilize national, regional and international coalitions that will advance women's interests in peace and democracy.[5]

4.2 Citizen Diplomacy

As was mentioned previously, Israeli and Palestinian women engaged in a series of international conferences to develop feminist frameworks for Middle East peace long before there was any official acquiescence to the Madrid Peace

Conference. Many groups and movements were organized that have since made great contributions to peace building in the Middle East. This is especially true in light of the recently formed peace process known as citizen diplomacy.[6] *Citizen diplomacy* refers to an entire class of informal and unofficial procedures, as opposed to more formal contexts and interactions, that are applied at the international or intercommunal levels in places where the different cultures concerned create an apparent need for better understanding. Different forms of citizen diplomacy are linked under this term, due to their shared status of non-professional diplomacy and decision making.

Using procedures that are outside the normal processes of diplomatic and official activities, the efforts are widely varied, including: citizen exchange visits, educational exchanges, joint research projects, humanitarian aid, and all manners of informal contacts. Since official diplomacy operates within a power framework, attempts to improve personal or inter-governmental relationships are always suspect. The goal of citizen diplomacy, then, is to break through those barriers of distrust that characterize relations based on mutual threat.[7] It rests on the theory that more direct contacts at a citizens level can create improved relations that could ideally, with the presence of an influential link, positively influence decisions on the official level.

4.3   Feminist Peace Movements in Israel and Palestine

Israeli and Palestinian women's joint initiatives represent a clear example of citizen diplomacy. The peace movements that developed in their respective regions included participating in large-scale activities with two major goals: First, to

mobilize public opinion against the occupation and, second, to build bridges of solidarity with Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[8] The Intifada also created better conditions for cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian women in Israel and in these two occupied areas.[9] These new and fragile alliances took the shape of joint protests, solidarity visits and conferences. Relevant peace movements will now be surveyed in order to understand the joint peace activities undertaken by Israeli and Palestinian women during the Intifada. The separate and joint struggles of these women will be highlighted in order to articulate alternative frameworks for peace and security.

4.3.1 Peace Now

Peace Now was a group that emerged in 1977 to express support for the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and to publicize the danger to Israel of occupying the West Bank and Gaza.[10] It was launched with the publication of an open letter from 350 reserve soldiers and officers who declared that: "A government policy that leads to the continued rule over one million Arabs is liable to damage the Jewish democratic character of the state, and will make it difficult for us to identify with the basic direction of the state of Israel."[11] The group developed into a broad-based movement which mobilized popular opposition to the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and was responsible for the largest demonstration in Israel's history after the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla.

Peace Now organized several demonstrations to protest the Israeli government's use of violence to quell the uprising. Under the slogan *There is Someone to Talk To* they called on the government to enter into negotiations with

the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Peace Now did little to support the notion propagated by the right-wing parties that the PLO was an enemy organization.[12] On the contrary, it emphasized the need for Israel to talk to those that oppose it. Peace Now stressed that the continuation of the occupation and the violence unleashed by the Intifada was damaging the moral, political, economic and social fabric of the Israeli society.

In addition to public demonstrations, Peace Now hosted several public debates where Palestinian leaders, such as Faisal Hussieni, were invited to address Israeli audiences. They also coordinated a series of Peace Days when busloads of Israelis traveled in convoys to towns and refugee camps in the West Bank in order to meet and talk to Palestinian activists. Among their most spectacular events was a demonstration to mark the second anniversary of the Intifada in December 1989, when 20,000 Israelis and Palestinians joined hands around the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.[13] Women attended these protests in large numbers and contributed enormously to the administration and fund-raising of Peace Now. At planning meetings of the local branches throughout the country, women could often be seen discussing policy and organization, but their role in regards to their relation with the people was less prominent.

4.3.2 Women in Black

The most visually striking demonstrations, and perhaps the best publicized both in Israel and abroad, were those of the Women in Black.[14] A small group of Israeli women attempted to raise awareness of the situation in the occupied territories by setting up a large generator on a busy street corner in Tel Aviv and

showing slides every evening from American television newsreels. Given the technical difficulties they encountered and the lack of media attention their efforts received, the organizers decided to initiate an alternative form of women's protest. They subsequently launched a protest vigil at one of the busiest intersections in Tel Aviv during the Friday lunch-time rush hour. The participants decided at the outset to adhere to three principles: to ensure that the vigil was entirely female; to dress in black to symbolize mourning for the victims of violence; and to protest under one slogan. In order to unite women from a variety of different political and religious persuasions, who might not agree with specific solutions to the conflict, their motto was simply *End the Occupation*.

As news of the women's protest spread by word-of-mouth, the Women in Black appealed to all their female friends, relatives and acquaintances to join their vigil, which subsequently dramatically increased their numbers. The movement also spread spontaneously to about 30 different locations. Groups of Women in Black appeared at weekly protests in cities, towns and on main roads near villages and Kibbutzim. In Jerusalem, the protesters were predominantly Jewish but in places like Haifa, Acco and Nazareth they also included Palestinian women.[15] Women in Black were usually physically threatened by followers of an ultra-right wing rabbi and on many occasions the police were called to intervene in cases of attack.

In the summer of 1989, the first national conference of Women in Black was convened at a Kibbutz outside Jerusalem, where 250 women from all over the country gathered to discuss in small groups their role in the peace movement and the political role of women in Israel. The conference drew on feminist traditions of

43

political consciousness-raising. However, it is important to stress that the group did not start as a feminist group. The aim was to stand with other women, but the larger they grew the stronger they felt about being only women.

4.3.3 The Peace Quilt

Shortly after the Intifada began, another small group of feminists in Tel Aviv felt compelled to respond.[16] The group started with ten women who decided to contact between five to ten other women and ask them to contact a further ten women. The idea was to create a chain of women who could contribute small squares of patchwork fabric inscribed with a call for peace. Each woman was informed that her contribution was an endorsement of the following statement: *We women call on the government of Israel to put an immediate end to the occupation and to initiate immediate negotiations with the chosen representative of the Palestinian people in order to find a just solution to the present problem.*[17]

The project touched the imagination of over 5,000 Israeli and Palestinian women who embroidered, painted and decorated their squares with multi-lingual peace slogans and symbols in Arabic, English and Hebrew. The squares were then sewn together into pieces of patchwork. In June 1988, the quilt was used as a centerpiece for a demonstration outside the Knesset by 500 Israeli and Palestinian women, dressed in white to symbolize peace.

On International Women's Day (March 8, 1989) members of different women's peace groups staged a spectacular open-air exhibition in one of Tel Aviv's main squares which featured a peace tent where artistic materials were provided for

women to contribute squares to the peace quilt. The event was attended by thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women who marched together through the city under the banner: *End the Occupation*.

4.3.4 *Women for Women Political Prisoners*

Women for Women Political Prisoners (WFWPP) was founded in May 1988, in Tel Aviv by about 40 Israeli women to provide moral and material support to Palestinian women who were prosecuted as a result of their social and political activities against the occupation.[18] WFWPP organized for its members daily visits to detention centers in the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv regions in order to monitor the cases of Palestinian women prisoners. They attended court hearings to ensure that the correct legal proceedings were observed and maintained contact with released prisoners. Women presented papers about day to day reality in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They described the conditions of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli prisons.

Many of the supporters explained that their political analyses grew out of personal experience, as the linking of political arguments to personal experience is a particularly female form of expression.[19] All the participants agreed to press for improving social conditions as a contribution to reaching peace. They also stressed that education and health should not be used as instruments of collective punishment. Israeli and Palestinian women also agreed on the need to broaden support for the peace process within their own communities.

4.3.5 Israeli Women against the Occupation

This group started working under the name Women against the War, but after the war in Lebanon changed its name to Israeli Women against the Occupation.[20] It called attention to the oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite political marginalization and systematic attempts to silence their voices, this group expressed solidarity with Palestinian women in the occupied territories through words and political actions. They invited Palestinian speakers to present up-to-date information about the Intifada at bi-weekly meetings. For example, at one meeting, a female psychologist described the psycho-social effects of the Intifada on Palestinian women and children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli Women against the Occupation also set up a number of small study groups which published a series of information sheets in English and Hebrew about different aspects of the occupation. The first of these dealt with the issue of administrative detention, it described the process by which individual Palestinians were imprisoned for a period of up to six months without being charged or going to trial. Protests were subsequently organized against this procedure, which was condemned as undemocratic and a violation of human rights. Women started to realize how the occupation was affecting women and others wanted to prove that it is not enough to simply demonstrate or discuss politics. In fact, as a member of the WFWPP in Tel Aviv explained: "The group has immense impact due to the level of personal contact and communication, you don't change ideology with intellectual discussion, social change comes from feeling and from being practical."[21]

A second study group produced an information sheet about the closure of schools and kindergartens in the West Bank. The group disputed the notion that school closures were effective in reducing protest activities among the Palestinians and contested closing schools as a form of collective punishment. In addition to publicizing these concerns, they led a series of solidarity visits for Israelis to meet the families of West Bank teachers in administrative detention.

In accordance with its educational policy, Israeli Women against the Occupation also organized a special public meeting shortly before the general elections in November 1988, to discuss how the different political parties viewed the subject of peace.[22] The meeting, which was attended by over 100 Jewish women from Jerusalem, was addressed by a panel of spokespersons from each of the different left-wing and central political parties. It was viewed as an important opportunity for potential voters to question the different candidates directly. The group focused on the need to develop programs for peace education in schools and the contention that durable peace between Israel and the Palestinians would require more than just formal agreements. They subsequently held a series of workshops for Israeli teachers and other educators to discuss how to inform children and young people about the occupation and how to promote Arab-Jewish coexistence.

4.4 Feminist Peace Initiatives in Israel and Palestine

There were other initiatives for peace by women in addition to those just surveyed. An alternative women's peace conference entitled *A Call to Peace: Feminist Responses to the Occupation* was organized by different peace groups. At this meeting, members of the different protest organizations outlined their activities and discussed how they perceived the linkage between women's liberation and the

47

occupation. Together with representatives of European and American peace groups, participants committed themselves to three fundamental principles: to end the occupation; to press for negotiations between Israel and the PLO; and to promote a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[23]

In Jerusalem 6,000 Palestinian, Israeli, European and American women participated in a peace march in December, 1989 that called for: Israeli negotiations with the PLO; a two-state solution with security guarantees for all; respect for Palestinian human and political rights; an immediate end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and an acknowledgment of the significance of feminist perspectives and practices to peace building in the Middle East.[24]

Another group was the Yesh Gvul, whose name means "there's a limit and there's a border", was founded during the Lebanon War to support Israeli soldiers refusing to serve in Lebanon.[25] They were reactivated from December 1987, to support the fifty or so Israeli soldiers, mostly reserves, who were jailed for refusing to do their military service in the occupied territories.

As the Intifada continued, the number of protest groups seeking to mobilize Israeli popular opinion against the occupation proliferated.[26] Women were over represented within many of these organizations, including the following: End the Occupation, which arranged regular visits for small groups of Israelis to meet Palestinian families in the West Bank; Strength and Peace, which was made up of religious Jews; Israelis by Choice / Immigrants against the Occupation, an organization of Israeli immigrants which held a constant vigil outside Prime

Minister Shamir's residence in Jerusalem; and Twenty First Year, which marked the 21st anniversary of the occupation by organizing a boycott of products manufactured in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Although communication between these different women's groups was often hindered by personal and political differences, there were several attempts for coordinated action. The first national meeting of all the women's peace groups in Israel was held one year after the beginning of the Intifada, in December 1988. It was partly inspired by a response to an international Jewish feminist conference entitled *The Empowerment of Jewish Women*, which took place earlier in the month. The organizers of the conference attempted to deter women who were involved in peace activities. Some women peace activists wished either to boycott the proceedings or demonstrate during the conference, because it was held at the Hyatt Hotel in East Jerusalem, built on Palestinian land confiscated by Israel in 1968. Nonetheless, the organizers did declare that as feminists, they were against oppression in their society, being especially sensitive to the oppression of other groups and peoples, men and women alike.[27]

Meetings between Israeli and Palestinian women also took place internationally.[28] Sixty Israeli and Palestinian women from Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Europe and North America were invited to a four-day conference entitled *Give Peace a Chance: Women Speak Out*, which was organized by the Center for Secular Humanistic Judaism in Brussels in May 1989. Among the participants were female academicians, writers and political activists. Their discussion took place in the Borshettes Center of the European Community in the presence of hundreds of

observers, including Israeli foreign office staff, EC and PLO officials and journalists from Europe, North America and the Arab World.

4.5 Palestinian Women's Barriers to Peace

The above survey of indigenous women's peace movements in Israel and Palestine has shown that members of both major nationalities have been involved in this particular type of citizen diplomacy. However, it is true that the Israeli women have been comparatively more active than their Palestinian counterparts. The fact that the former live in a democratic society can partly explain this difference.[29] A more accurate explanation, however, must recognize the applicability of a fundamental psychological needs-theory to this situation. Namely, that basic physical needs must be met before other more emotive developments- pertaining to social, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual issues- are pursued. Women in Palestine, unlike their Israeli counterparts, live in miserable physical conditions where fundamental requirements, like drinkable water, are absent. Nawal El Saadawi explains that "no oppressed social group can become an influential political force unless the following three conditions are present: a consciousness of the true reasons for the existing oppression and exploitation, political organization and the economic ability to organize."[30] Arab women lack all of these basic conditions. Concerning the latter, it must be remembered that in addition to intellectual power and cultural potential, a women's organization needs financial resources if it is going to be able to operate and succeed.

As was mentioned previously, it is extremely difficult to convince women to spend their time and limited sources on promoting peace movements before their basic human needs are met.[31] It has often been thought that Palestinian women

were somehow different from their Arab sisters. Indeed, the inadequate realities of life in villages and refugee camps, and the struggle for a homeland, have imposed a new dimension on those Arabs who are also Palestinians. There are grave disparities in the Palestinian society between those living in towns, villages and refugee camps. The differences in living standards are also present between groups within each of these residencies, as well as between rich and poor and even men and women.

Palestinian women need assistance in solving their daily problems before they can develop their own roles and positions in other national or international arenas. In short, they need improvement in their political, economical, social and cultural statuses. Therefore, an urgent effort is required by the international community, led by the United Nations' agencies, to promote an effective means of providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people so they can overcome their present difficulties. It is hoped that all international financial and economic agencies will join in an effort to secure the necessary financial and economic aid to the Palestinian people to enable them to build their own country and to live in peace with their neighbors.

One negative consequence of poor living conditions is poor education. Just as the lack of education constitutes a major obstacle to the participation of Palestinians in women's organizations, so is it a barrier for their participation in national and international peace movements. One should not expect women who cannot even read or write to keep up with peace activities and related politics. Therefore, it is only a relatively small percentage of middle and upper class

Palestinian women who would, in practicality, be capable of devoting themselves to the peace process. This implies that the imbalance between Israeli and Palestinian participation in various peace initiatives starts with improving the living and educational standards of the region.[32] It is only then that the majority of women would have a realistic chance to support and promote peace. Of course, these two variables are not really mutually exclusive and there is a certain degree of covariation taking place between them, peace helps improve living standards and higher living standards can influence the prospects for peace.

4.6   Palestinian Women's Resistance to Peace

Not all Palestinian women who have been capable of contributing towards peace have chosen to do so. There are many who have simply agreed with the traditional belief that the occupied lands belong to them, and that peace, if it means pacifying this position, is synonymous with betraying this conviction. The struggle against Israeli suppression is seen through a religious worldview which contends that God is with Muslims and will help them break free from their oppressors.[33] In this sense, accepting peace is equated with a lack of divine faith while supporting the resistance is both spiritually and nationalistically proper. On a more macro level, this position hinders the promotion of peace by women in different Palestinian organizations. Similarly, other Palestinian women felt that long-term peace could only be achieved through resistance and so lent their active support to the Intifada.[34]

Another barrier associated with Palestinian women's involvement in peace movements has been the influence of fundamentalist, or traditional, Islam. Women are seen as "jewels" which need to be protected from the dangers lurking in the

52

world of men and all the accompanying vices. This "protection" takes place through concealment of the women's beauty (i.e., robes and veils) and limiting her potential contact with what is "evil" (i.e., staying at home and not going out in public unattended). The teachings of contemporary Islamic fundamentalists serve to limit women by "restricting their scope of action and ensuring their continued subordination to men. While women are accorded a secondary and marginal status, they are made to believe that this status is a great honor and distinction, and that they have attained a degree of emancipation yet unequaled."[35] Restricting movement obviously acts as a barrier to women desiring to attend a meeting, let alone actively participate in an organization.

The fundamentalist discourses affect women directly because they deal with the quest for a transcultural and a historical "Muslim identity" defined in opposition to an external entity. On the other hand, returning to a mythical past, where women are repositories of this identity, legitimates the control of women. Thus, restrictions of movement obviously act as a barrier to women desiring to attend a meeting, let alone actively participate in an organization. These Islamic fundamentalist groups (i.e., Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Muslim Brotherhood) exercise their opposition to all proposals of peace conferences and to any settlement involving the partition of land or a twin-state solution. Such initiatives, they argue, run counter to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement. They contend that giving up part of Palestine is like giving up part of the Islamic religion, since the Qur'an and history support the notion that Jews are untrustworthy.

Although not having their freedoms curtailed to the extent of the typical Palestinian women, Israeli women are socialized to believe that they, as Jews, have a special relationship with God and that the land the Palestinians are living on is theirs through divine appointment.[36]   Perhaps an adequate explanation for the relatively easier acceptance of peace by the Israeli women, then, lies in the dominant role their nation has had in the conflict.[37]   The daily injustices, atrocities and bloodshed that have been common in the occupied territories hardened the hearts of many of those who were oppressed. As indignation turns to hatred, it is difficult to forgive those who have caused so much harm. In other words, it is much easier for the mother of an Israeli soldier to hold out the olive branch than it is for the mother of the Palestinian youth he killed to accept it.

In more general terms, Palestinian women living in the absence of basic freedoms have been negatively affected by the violation of their human rights as a result of the Israeli occupation.[38]   Living under conditions where their rights and status are arbitrarily violated and denied have also soured their desire to become actively involved in feminist-sponsored peace movements. Personality is free only when society itself is freed from the forces of hunger, poverty, low education and violence. A qualitative change for the better and the creation of both a moral and humanitarian framework must first become reality.[39]   Palestinian women will become more active in peace after they have more freedom of speech, respect for independent thinking and the opportunities to take part in politics and every other area of society.

In summary, it can be said that there have been many initiatives among the Israeli and Palestinian women that have promoted peace. These exercises in citizen diplomacy were all aimed at ending the occupation and bringing an end to the conflict which naturally resulted from this situation. The degree of support which the women of these two groups gave to these movements was influenced by contextual social factors. In other words, the Palestinian women have had more barriers on their road to peace than have the Israeli women. Nonetheless, the importance that both these groups have had in determining the political steps taken towards peace must not be minimized and should not be forgotten.

CHAPTER V:
CONCLUSION

This study has concerned itself with women and peace from the Palestinian point of view. It is rather ironic that in a land where both Jews and Arabs use the term *peace* as a greeting, there is really so little of this much-mentioned quality. Peace truly has been much more of a desire than a reality in the Middle East. Concerning those who long for this state, the argument should not be that women are by nature more peaceful than men or that Israeli women are inherently more inclined towards peace than their Palestinian counterparts. Any differences which are present are primarily due to social factors.[1] Since women, along with their children, are the innocent victims of war, it should not be surprising that they tend to long for peace more earnestly than their male counterparts.

Following the outbreak of the Intifada, Israeli and Palestinian women sought various means to show their disapproval of the government's hardlined position. Some participated in protest actions that clearly reflected a different style of political expression. They represented a crucial turning point in the political consciousness and activism of Middle Eastern women. It triggered unprecedented processes in the political lives of women in the Middle East, resulting in the establishment of women's groups like: Women in Black, Women for Women Political Prisoners, and Israeli Women against the Occupation, all of which took clear positions against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[2] The dedicated activities of these and other groups made notable contributions to raising the awareness of this injustice. At the same time, the Israeli and Palestinian women tried to improve the

relationships that existed between themselves by participating in exercises of civilian diplomacy together. These alliances took the shape of joint protests, solidarity visits and conferences.[3] Overall, they were rather successful in their cross-cultural contacts, both locally and internationally.

Just as it would not be correct to say that there is only one feminist perspective,[4] so it would not be fair to assume that every woman who is a peace activist is necessarily a pacifist.[5] Nor is it correct to say that all women share common ideological goals, since they do at times differ greatly in terms of political orientations and even campaign strategies. What united different women under the umbrella term of peace movements was their criticism of the Israeli government's policies in the territories occupied since 1967, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[6] To a certain degree, they were also united in their support for the Palestinian's right to self-determination. These groups brought together women of different political and philosophical tendencies, united only in their determination to make known and help abolish those political, social and economic injustices which naturally produce conflict. Their goal was to create an atmosphere conducive for peace and to subsequently work towards achieving it. After all, peace does not simply mean the elimination of war and armaments but also achieving economic and social justice through structural changes in society.[7]

There is increasing recognition that solving social problems needs to be sought in relation to other problems.[8] Similarly, under systems of exploitation and oppression a real and lasting peace and true freedom cannot exist.[9] Women in Palestine are victims of the generalized violence of war and oppression. They suffer

the pain of often being helpless to save their loved ones, and those in their care, from the violence of armed conflict and economic structures that impose cruel deprivations. They are the victims of the violation of their persons and they suffer the consequences of militarism and militarization directed against their community.[10] In even more general terms, "the dependence of Arab countries on world capitalism in all spheres- economic, cultural, political and social- underlies many problems of women in the Arab world and it is the effects of this dependence that present them with a great challenge."[11]

Palestinian women are traditionally more active in national liberation movements than they are in peace movements.[12] However, the latter do not condemn the former because they also are seeking peace, in the sense of achieving a state of being in which people have enough to eat, are equal in society, are free to speak their minds and can take part in politics and every area of society. For example, the typical Palestinian feminist today is not really a peace activist.[13] They are, on the other hand, more interested in achieving nationalistic goals like taking political control over Jerusalem and making it their future capital.

The peace that was officially agreed upon in Madrid and in Washington, D.C. has been termed historic. When one remembers all the violence that has occurred between the Israelis and Palestinians, from dropping bombs to throwing rocks, it would be difficult to argue otherwise. However, it will take some time before the peace on paper will be translated into reality. There are, of course, many among both nationalities who are not pleased with the recent events. However, there does

seem to be a general consensus among the people on both sides that the time for peace has arrived.

The women's peace movements that were prominent before Madrid have somewhat lost their main purpose for existing, since the Israeli government has taken the first steps towards ending the occupation. Indeed, some groups, such as Peace Now, for various reasons are no longer active.[14] Still, there is much that women can do to promote peace in the existing situation. Of primary concern should be the importance of mothers and teachers to socialize the children of Israel and Palestine to oppose all forms of racism, sexism, oppression and injustice and strive instead for peace and harmony. By starting in the family and schools, a new generation of young people will be raised with new attitudes that will positively influence local communities and eventually political relationships.[15] The role that women have played in the Middle Eastern peace process has indeed been vital, yet a renewed call for creating the proper atmosphere for lasting peace still needs to be promoted. Perhaps the time has come to change the way we view this term and finally make *peace* into a verb.

Writing this research, I have realized how theory and research in international relations can benefit from looking more carefully at women's struggles and the relationship between gender and international politics. In fact, feminist critiques of conventional international relations scholarship, which uncover local, regional and global gender arrangements that underlie the complex relationships between and within nations and peoples, should be integrated with different detailed examples of Middle Eastern women's lives, experiences and resistance struggles.

This essay has served as an introductory study to the topic *WOMEN AND PEACE: From the Perspective of Palestinian Women*. It was divided into three main sections. The first dealt with the general subject of *Gender and Peace*. Its main objective was to defend the notion that any connection peace has with females, and aggression with males, is due to social influences. Women are not predestined to be passive pacifists, nor are only men blessed with "positive" traits such as leadership. Women are capable of performing admirably in political positions of authority, even in the capacity of "Commander of Chief," if only given a chance. The reason why more women are not leaders is, once again, due to social factors.

The second main chapter was entitled *Women, Feminism, Peace and Human Rights*. After giving some traditional comments on peace from a Western feminist perspective, it supported the concept that feminism in the Third World is, and should be, different. Having the luxury of living in comfortable surroundings without fear of hunger and physical oppression, the typical Western feminist concerns herself with the struggle to make her life equal to that of man's. The Middle Eastern feminist does not have the luxury of spending her time and efforts on such issues, since the more basic needs of humanity have not been attained. The Palestinian women were given as an example of people whose living standards are so low that it is difficult for the average women to be involved in political and gender-related issues.

The third and final main chapter concerned *Palestinian Women and Peace Movements*. Israeli and Palestinian women have been involved in a variety of

exercises in citizen diplomacy, where the people take it upon themselves to bridge the peace chasm. Several main movements and initiatives were presented. It was noted that Palestinian women are somewhat under-represented in these initiatives, due to their having to overcome more social, religious and political barriers than their Israeli counterparts.

Future research on this subject is needed, especially since the political climate in the Middle East is in a state of change. More studies need to be conducted on feminism in the Third World, particularly in Muslim societies. Instead of a blind imitation of traditional Western feminism, women of this religion should discover for themselves how seeking natural rights will be interpreted in their own unique social context. A greater understanding of the plight of Palestinian women also needs to be realized, with their sisters around the world taking a more active role in calling attention to their inadequate situation. Finally, more research is needed on the specific attitudes that Palestinian women from a variety of perspectives have towards peace. The heterogeneous theoretical positions of the rich and poor, religious and non-religious, feminist and non-feminist need to be presented in a comparative and enlightening manner.

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CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

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2. Hall-Cathala.

3. Rigby.

4. Walker.

5. Richards.

6. Hall-Cathala.

7. Persram.

8. Light and Keller.

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