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WOMEN AND VIOLENCE: A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL STUDY

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PhD

1995

ABSTRACT

By popular cultural assumption, women are less aggressive than men, and 'woman' can therefore be constructed as an image of peacefulness. This construction is a myth that needs to be questioned in the interests of proper attention to the varied experiences and circumstances of women's lives. Questioning this myth involves better description of a variety of ways in which women encounter violence - illustrated here by discussion of assaults against women in intimate relationships, women as members of military forces, women's experiences of wartime, and discussion and campaigning by women on the subjects of war and peacemaking. This kind of description values women's discourse and experiences, the range of which is expressive of great differences among women. Feminist theological ethics is a suitable tool for evaluating these experiences, and for promoting the good of women and men in the face of violence. Feminist theological ethics emerges out of non-theological feminist ethics and feminist theology. This double root ensures that (from feminist theory) ethics is not seen as entirely separated from politics, particularly along a gendered public/private divide, and also that (from feminist theology) ethics is not separated from other areas of theological enquiry. Evaluation of women's experiences out of feminist theological ethical concerns highlights a need for a modified universalism which will allow injustice to be challenged, and for the rebuilding of the relationship between theological conceptions of love and justice so that theological ethics can be more responsive to the context and material realities of human lives. Feminist theological ethics illuminates ways in which different forms of violence, in the so-called public or private spheres, interact and affect each other. One possible relation of women to military forces and to militarism can thereby be constructed, and a broadened discussion of war encouraged.



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PhD thesis

University of Durham

Department of Theology

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION: COMBATING THE MYTH OF WOMEN'S PEACEFULNESS

THE MYTH OF WOMEN'S PEACEFULNESS

"We, women of the United States...do hereby band ourselves together to demand that war be abolished.

Equally with men pacifists, we understand that planned-for, legalized, wholesale, human slaughter is today the sum of all villainies.

As women, we feel a peculiar moral passion of revolt against both the cruelty and the waste of war.

As women, we are especially the custodian of the life of the ages. We will not longer consent to its reckless destruction.

As women, we are particularly charged with the future of childhood and with the care of the helpless and the unfortunate. We will not longer endure without protest that added burden of maimed and invalid men and poverty-stricken widows and orphans which war places upon us...

As women, we are called upon to start each generation onward toward a better humanity. We will not longer tolerate without determined opposition that denial of the sovereignty of reason and justice by which war and all that makes for war today render impotent the idealism of the race."

These words are taken from the initial manifesto of the Woman's Peace Party, set up in the United States in 1915, by Jane Addams and others.¹ They demonstrate, despite the understanding held 'equally with men pacifists', a claim that women have a particular relationship to peace and to war, different from that of men, based on mothering and other caring roles. I refer to this as 'the myth of women's peacefulness'. "We in the West are the heirs of a tradition that assumes an affinity between women and peace, between men and war, a tradition that consists of culturally constructed and transmitted myths and memories".² Although this belief can be found stated in many sources, new for each generation, yet it remains remarkably difficult to trace any origin for it. The idea that women are peaceable in their private lives and in favour of peace in public policy is both confidently asserted and vehemently contested.

¹Quoted in A. Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women: Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War*, London: Pandora Press, 1985, p.218.

²J.B. Elshtain, *Women and War*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987, p.4.

The 'gut feeling' that women are more inclined to peace than men might be explained in our own times in a number of 'common sense' assertions. Crime statistics show that the vast majority of violent crimes are committed by men, not women, across a range of cultures. Even from a very young age, children's behaviour appears to be gendered, with boys far more boisterous than girls. More boisterous play is then interpreted as the 'fact' that boys are more aggressive than girls, and aggression is understood as the behaviour that ultimately leads to killing, and to war. The 'common sense' assertions continue with the fact that to be a soldier is a male role, again across a range of cultures. Women are on average physically weaker than men and therefore, it is asserted, less capable of physical aggression, or less inclined to it.

Opinion polls may give limited information, but they can be cited to illustrate these popular beliefs. "Opinion polls inform us that it is women, today [c.1986, in Britain], who most strongly oppose Cruise missiles in this country."³ Similarly, during the Gulf War, in America, there were "polls that show 83 percent of men and 67 percent of women support the war. These differences aren't new. They have been reflected in survey data for years on questions about the use of force. On such matters as abortion and the ERA, women and men do not vary significantly. But if the question is gun control, the death penalty, or going to war, the genders begin to gap".⁴ Such opinion poll figures demonstrate differences between men's and women's public assertion of beliefs. They do not supply answers to questions about how those beliefs are arrived at. They cannot distinguish biological or social factors, or show how social context affects the beliefs of any individual.

These popular beliefs and assertions about women's relation to peace develop from limited empirical observation, often highly generalised, and become a claim with causative force: these things can be observed *because* women are more peacefully inclined than men. This is most obviously true when an expectation that boys will be more boisterous than girls is added to the fact that men kill in wartime, and produces the assertion that because of their aggressive tendencies they can do no other. But the expectations and assertions involved in this kind of causative argument can all be challenged. They are the observation of some women's and some men's behaviour,

³L. Segal, *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*, London: Virago, 1987, p.166.

⁴J.B. Elshtain, "If Women Ran The War", *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 15, 1991, p.18.

mixed with popular beliefs and cultural images and expectations. The claim that women are peaceful has both an empirical and a symbolic aspect.

'Common sense' beliefs about women being less aggressive or more peaceful than men are called on for propaganda purposes when the wish is to encourage women, and men, to oppose war and other forms of violence. Some of the clearest examples of this rhetoric emerged in the women's peace campaigning of the first world war. But that was built on earlier thought based in the 'separate spheres' philosophy of the nineteenth century which asserted the moral purity and peacefulness of women. In the early twentieth century, Olive Schreiner saw women's traditional role as mothers as decisively opposed to killing in war. "We pay the first cost on all human life", she claims, in the strains of pregnancy, childbirth and rearing. These she sees as greater than anything a soldier goes through. Consequently, "No woman who is a woman says of a human body, 'It is nothing!'"⁵ The activity of mothering which builds and treasures human bodies, is negated by the destruction of bodies in war. At the beginning of the first world war, peace campaigning by women as women, to some extent separated from male-led organisations, grew out of separatist campaigning for women's suffrage. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence linked the two campaigns: "It is vital to the deepest interests of the human race that the mother half of humanity should now be admitted into the ranks of the articulate democracies of the world, in order to...enable them to combine the more effectively in their own defence against the deadly machinery of organised destruction".⁶ This quotation is just one example of the assertion that, if women had the vote, they would never vote for people or parties committed to war. A male writer expressed, in 1916, the philosophy of the women peace campaigners in seeing issues of women's rights intertwined with anti-militarism: "Militarism means the subjection of women, imposing, as it does, the right of the State to take from woman the men whom she has brought into the world to be comrades and friends of her sex."⁷ Out of separatist peace campaigning emerged language which concentrated on women's experiences and women's roles, to demonstrate why the campaigners *as women* were opposed to war, and why they urged others to oppose war also.

⁵U. Krige, ed., *Olive Schreiner: A Selection*, Oxford University Press, 1968, p.75.

⁶Wiltsher, p.51.

⁷*ibid.*, p.152. Even up to the 1930s, Wiltsher argues, separatist campaigning made sense for some because separate spheres were the daily experience of many women.

Nineteenth century beliefs about women fed into the maternalist rhetoric of women's active campaigning against war in the first decades of the twentieth century. But that pattern has been repeated in other periods of the twentieth century, and rhetoric which relies on some account of women 'naturally' being more concerned with peace than war has continued to surface. Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* bridges the gap in this respect between the work of Schreiner's period and the mood of the peace movement in the 1980s. Woolf simply sees women as standing aside from male war-making. Of a sister in relation to her soldier brother, she writes "as fighting is thus a sex characteristic which she cannot share, the counterpart some claim of the maternal instinct which he cannot share, so it is an instinct which she cannot judge".⁸ She encourages women to continue in their separation from war even as they develop different social roles.

Though not implying direct causation, Jill Liddington notes the historical development in Britain from the emphasis in the 1950s on women's peaceable qualities and gender differences, through to the creation of new campaigning space in the 1960s in which women protested about nuclear weapons on the grounds of their fears for their children's safety from radiation.⁹ The rise in the late 1970s of radical feminism and ecofeminism led to a resurgence of anti-patriarchal maternalist separatism¹⁰ which expressed itself in the peace movement as well. "Women-only peace actions became more firmly established as part of the peace movement".¹¹ The symbol of this resurgent use of the 'myth of women's peacefulness' is the Greenham Common peace camp. From February 1982 (six months after it began), the Greenham peace camp was decisively defined by gender when men were excluded from living at the camp on the grounds that both the living space and the peace actions at Greenham would then be more likely to remain non-violent. Anti-militarist arguments based on women's nature or women's activities reinforced the gendered definition of Greenham. Some of the rhetoric of the 1980s, whether from Greenham or elsewhere, echoes arguments from earlier in history, building on an *assumed* link between women and peace:

⁸V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, repr., London: The Hogarth Press, 1986 [1938], p.123. See below, p.35f.

⁹J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820*, London: Virago, 1989, p.173f.

¹⁰Cf. the discussion in Segal, chapter 1, "Compensations of the Powerless: The Themes of Popular Feminism", in which she cites such writers as Susan Griffin, Adrienne Rich, Dale Spender and Mary Daly.

¹¹Liddington, p.259. Other examples of the use of specifically feminine imagery in peace campaigning are discussed below, p.69f. The Greenham Common peace camp is also discussed there in more detail.

"It is natural for women, who give life, to be opposed to war and violence...We do not distinguish between guns and nuclear bombs, because all are weapons used for the death and destruction of people."¹²

"Traditionally pacifist, as a result of the functions they assume...women respond to the ever increasing threat of global war and total destruction through their massive adherence to peace movements."¹³

"For millenia, part of women's role has been to decry male aggression. We often see ourselves as posing a better way - a more loving, nurturing way of life than the masculine mode poses".¹⁴

All these are highly arguable generalisations, but they feed and are fed by the popular beliefs which make up the myth of women's peacefulness. In her discussion of women who have ruled and been responsible for making war, Antonia Fraser notes ..."undoubtedly...woman as a whole has been seen as a pacifying influence throughout history, this pacifying role being perceived as hers by nature and hers in duty." She notes the idea of the pacifying princess for instance in the work of the fourteenth century writer Christine de Pisan and concludes: "At the heart of the matter lies the feeling, almost if not entirely universal in history, that war itself is 'conduct unbecoming' in a woman."¹⁵ It is this feeling that provides her with the context to explain reactions to women who have made war. These women had to deal with the fact that they stood outside perceived female nature in differing from women's usual relation to war. It is Fraser also who notes that the case of Geraldine Ferraro, running for Vice-President of the United States in 1984, "shows clearly that deep, primitive fears of women's potential timidity or weakness lurked in certain quarters of her own country".¹⁶ Ferraro was constantly asked questions which her male counterpart (George Bush) was not

¹²A Soviet dissident, published in 1984, quoted in S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, p.147.

¹³M. de Sève, "Feminism and Pacifism, or, The Art of Tranquilly Playing Russian Roulette" in R.R. Pierson, *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, London, New York and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987, p.45.

¹⁴C. Adcock in P. McAllister, ed., *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982, p.210.

¹⁵A. Fraser, *The Warrior Queens: Boadicea's Chariot*, London: Mandarin, 1993, p.7 and p.326.

¹⁶*ibid.*, p.306.

asked, about whether in a war situation she would be able to act with suitable decision (or suitable aggression?).

Thus, even in recent years, women's role as mothers and carers, a notion of women's innate non-aggression and women's limited participation in decision-making about war (a mixture of biological determinism, social roles and restricted opportunities) have all been cited as separating women from manifestations of violence. "More men than women shoot the pistol and work the missiles; certainly more men than women command them."¹⁷ With the kind of rhetoric I have illustrated, some women not only proclaim themselves opposed to a narrow range of military activities, but they also interpret militarism as a construction of masculine identity itself. At its most extreme, a reinforced dualism associates men exclusively with violence, and women with non-violence. Some feminist analysis has placed the threat of nuclear war in the behaviour and psychology of men. "The idea of Cruise as a symbol of a 'male principle' of domination and destruction opposed by a 'female principle' of co-operation and conservation is an enormously powerful one."¹⁸ The attractiveness of such a clear-cut dualistic vision is, however, no guarantee of its usefulness or its truth.

I have described 'the myth of women's peacefulness'. By using the word 'myth', I intend to indicate a complexity of positive and negative aspects. The myth of women's peacefulness is a set of cultural beliefs with historical foundations; it is an abiding popular image. It seems to cross many cultural boundaries, making Fraser's claim that it is 'almost if not entirely universal in history' plausible. "Of all the biological mythologies that surround human behaviour and social arrangements the one that 'man' is inevitably aggressive, whereas 'woman' is not, is the most tenacious".¹⁹ Lynne Segal, who wrote that statement, spends much of her book *Is the Future Female?* trying to demolish what she describes as biological mythologies, in favour of better social and political analysis. But she recognises the continuing power of this particular tenacious myth. Sara Ruddick also describes many elements of the persistent belief in women's peacefulness, and notes its often unexamined juxtaposition of physical characteristics with biochemical analysis and social factors. She then continues with an unravelling of the myth. "Both the rhetoric and the theory run up against two facts: men are not so

¹⁷Ruddick, p.143.

¹⁸Segal, p.163.

¹⁹*ibid.*, p.180.

warlike and women are certainly not so peaceful."²⁰ The myth has been contested and declared false by some at the same time as it has been propounded by others, certainly for all of this century. Yet the very fact that it must be re-contested in every generation witnesses to its tenacity. McAllister notes of the volume she edited, "Some of the contributors believe that women are biologically or spiritually attuned to a gentler impulse than men. Others reject this as a dangerous notion."²¹ It is, however, a notion under ever stronger attack. Ironically peace movements have sometimes found problems with the link between women and peace since, where women and their roles have been seen as of less worth than men, there peace also has been downgraded in worth and importance. "A recurring problem for peace movements has been the accusation that they offer a weak, passive and negative alternative to war; that they are imbued with supposedly 'feminine' characteristics."²² The myth, I believe, needs to be broken, but its persistence demands now a careful attention to historical detail, alongside a recognition of the power of cultural images if we are to seek a more satisfactory model to inspire us towards a less violent world.

For the myth of women's peacefulness is used with moral force as a model which will inspire peace. In certain contexts the rhetoric is meant to be morally persuasive. If women are naturally more peaceful than men, then women should work for peace. If women are naturally more peaceful, their increased influence will make the world a better, more peaceful place, and men, therefore, should abdicate some of their privilege and authority to allow more space for women's influence. However, the force of this moral appeal breaks down if the myth turns out to be more false than true (bypassing the fact that the appeal has not worked). The myth of women's peacefulness cannot take the weight of all that some polemicists have wished it to bear. It cannot bear, for instance, women's conflicts in motherhood; it cannot bear women battering their children, or women who choose to be soldiers, or the fact that the majority of women, though not taking part in their countries' wars, have vigorously supported them.²³

²⁰Ruddick, p.151. Apart from the specific quotations noted separately, much of this analysis of beliefs about women in relation to peace is informed by Segal, chapter 5, and Ruddick, chapter 6. See below p.101f. for further discussion of Ruddick.

²¹McAllister, p.iv.

²²MacDonald's introduction in S. MacDonald, P. Holden and S. Ardener, *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987, p.21.

²³In addition to these examples, Susan Thistlethwaite sees the need to recognise where white women were colluders in and perpetrators of violence during the period of slavery in America. S.B. Thistlethwaite, *Sex, Race and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990. More controversially, Mary Daly refers to some women as 'token torturers', noting for instance that *women* dealt with the footbinding of other women in China. M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The*

Language linking women closely to peace encourages the sense that women are always only victims of violence. But the language of victimisation has a strictly limited use for women, and needs to be balanced with other images.²⁴ The myth also has to accommodate those female leaders of states who have not been seen to be peaceful enough, by denying their true womanhood. The argument is circular and puts the rhetoric of peace before the real lives of women, thus doing no service to women. Segal explains: "I am troubled by the belief in some intrinsic or inevitably greater pacifism in women than men, and how this fits our preconceptions as well as media attitudes which sensationalise and simplify the issues."²⁵ The complexity of the world we live in demands closer attention than this myth allows.

Rather than serving women's interests, or arising from biological necessity, I contend that the myth of women's peacefulness serves certain patriarchal social needs which probably conflict with the interests of women and men in peace, freedom and fulfilment. Among these social needs, or social processes, is the construction of maleness by the exclusion of women and womanliness. This construction reinforces and is reinforced by a connection between maleness and war, explained by the prevalence of male, rather than female, aggression. Women, the opposite of men, must not be associated with worthy male sacrifice in war; therefore they are associated with the absence of war, thus with peace. All that happens with constructions such as these is that fundamental dualisms between women and men, peace and war, life-giving and life-taking are simplistically reinforced and opposition between them ensured. The construction of maleness over against femaleness in the arena of warfare leads to the notion of a 'female' realm of home and family which it is the job of the male soldier to protect. (I suggest here more the construction of a male need to protect than a need for women to be protected.) This is part of what is meant to keep men on the battlefield where, despite the myth, they largely do not want to be. "As both Di Parkin and Cynthia Enloe have argued, women must be seen as helpless, nurturing and dependent to reinforce the discipline, coercion and threat of execution which keeps male soldiers on a battlefield."²⁶ Furthermore the need for reproduction in society necessitates the

Metaethics of Radical Feminism, London: The Women's Press, 1979.

²⁴Jean Bethke Elshtain discusses the use of language which locates women only as victims in the context of court cases about battering and abuse. She argues that the assertion of women's moral responsibility demands space for notions of women as oppressor alongside, even at the same time as, victim. "Battered Reason: The New Feminist Jurisprudence", *The New Republic*, Oct. 5, 1992.

²⁵Segal, p.168.

²⁶*ibid.*, p.174-175.

promotion and protection of the work of society's life-givers and this has largely been done by separating off and idealising the role of mothers. Birth and death become split along gender lines. Many may contend that the activity of war destroys the work of mothers, but rather than upholding the work of mothers by not making war, the social strategy has been to keep the life-givers protected and away from the realm of war, so that they can produce more children. Perhaps no one would consider arguing in quite such bald terms, but the process may still happen for all that. Where women have been separated from war, mothers have been far more so, and often women have been separated from it more on the grounds that they are potential mothers than that they are physically too weak, or too timid, for war. Women's physical separation from war leads to the assumption that they will automatically be situated away from all forms of violence.

I do not believe a moral appeal that will move human beings forward on a road to peace can be founded on the myth of women's peacefulness, based on a mistaken notion of biological determinism, or on fixed social roles which have trapped women.²⁷ If we want to work for peace, women and men together, we need a different model, and different reasons to motivate and inspire us. Those who wish to work for peace need a knowledge of the range of women's interactions with violence. This provides the necessary location in socio-historical experiences, and it provides examples of complexity for which the close linking of women with peacefulness and passivity does not allow. However, I do not want to use examples of what women have said and done simply in order to produce a category of 'women's experience' which trumps all other arguments. Nor do I set up a simple dichotomy between the 'unreal' myth or stereotype of women's peacefulness and 'real' experiences. Mary McClintock Fulkerson²⁸ questions feminists' generalisations about 'women's experience' which cover over women's differences, and she proposes instead giving closer attention to women's discourses instead of to women's experience, because it is a way of emphasising the culturally constructed nature of experience. Her work, she claims, leads to much greater attention paid to exact and varied subject positions, discursively and socially

²⁷I have deliberately used terms such as 'biological determinism' or notions of social determinism through fixed social roles, rather than the word 'essentialism' since I do not want to deny value entirely to arguments grounded in some account of human nature, including concentration on material existence and bodily reality, within a Christian framework. It is *particular* views of human nature that are problematic, not any view at all.

²⁸M.M. Fulkerson, "Contesting Feminist Canons: Discourse and the Problem of Sexist Texts", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 7:2, 1991; *Changing The Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1994.

constructed, from which women's practices are to be explained. Although I do not necessarily follow Fulkerson's approach to women's discourse in its detail, it does seem to me important to move away from notions of experience as somehow 'direct' and 'real' in ways that deny the complexity of how human beings respond to social roles and images, myths, stereotypes and generalisations. Determinism such as is demonstrated by the myth of women's peacefulness is always too simplistic. Attention to different discourses is one method for appreciating more than the simplistic picture. Telling a range of stories, for instance, is important in an ethic which would take seriously both complexity and particularity. I have paid attention to both women's discourse and women's experiences, through the different media in which both may be recorded. Thus interpretations of women's socio-historical experiences stand alongside women's narratives of their feelings, opinions and the details of their lives. This research therefore stands with all other work that aims to take women's discourse more seriously.

Anecdotally, I have noticed since undertaking this research and talking to people about it that my stated title 'women and violence' seems itself to arouse certain stereotypes. The usual assumption is that 'women and violence' refers to women's face-to-face, interpersonal encounters with violent people: i.e. it refers to rape, muggings, and domestic violence - all of which are forms of violence carried out against women. The reference, it is assumed, is to women's private lives and their personal safety, or lack of it, in the face of violent behaviour directed at them by other individuals. These assumptions are, it seems to me, part of the myth of women's peacefulness. They largely construct women as victims of violence, and they restrict women's involvement to the private sphere. Women are simply assumed not to be involved with violence in any other situation, for instance in war, or military preparations for war. I have continued to use the title 'women and violence', evoking such assumptions, in order to challenge them. My examples of women's discourse and experiences show a far greater range of relationship between women and violence than the myth of women's peacefulness will allow.

FEMINIST, THEOLOGICAL, ETHICAL

I need at this stage to explain my subtitle -'a feminist theological ethical study'. Grammatically, all three adjectives further describe and narrow the scope of the noun 'study'. All three are important to my understanding of what I am undertaking in this thesis with regard to the subject of women and violence. I have already delineated one

major direction of my study in seeking to combat the myth of women's peacefulness, which I see as a mistakenly deterministic view. Here I delineate the methodology by which I construct a different interpretation of women's encounters with violence, in wartime and peacetime. At its most general this study stands in the area of ethics. The two other adjectives used specify further my context and starting points. 'Theological' is the prior adjective of these two, specified by 'feminist', but not easily separated from it. This is a *theological* ethical study, undertaken from a feminist perspective, involving in particular the disciplines of feminist theology and feminist ethics. Chronologically, within the thesis, I start from an examination of feminist ethics - a non-theological starting point. My interest in feminist ethics, however, is governed by theological purpose.

A Theological Study

The work that I have done is theological because I am a theologian and a confessing Christian. My commitments are part of my study. In the chronology of the thesis it may appear that theology is 'added on' in chapter 4, when I develop feminist theological ethics, with its roots firmly in feminist ethics. That is, however, simply an order of presentation, not a statement about the significance of theology in relation to other disciplines. In fact in chapter 2 the necessary interweaving of theological concerns with the various aspects of the subject 'women and violence' is already evident.

The process in chapter 2 is of a theologian drawing initial theological conclusions from some theological and some non-theological research material. In the case studies, I am dealing with material that is already theologically interpreted in much of Dorothy L. Sayers' work and some of Vera Brittain's. I have also drawn specifically on the work of theologians commenting on Christian reactions to domestic violence as an illustration of one area within the subject of chapter 2 on which some theologians, chiefly feminists, are already hard at work. But largely in that chapter I am relying on non-theological empirical research and appropriating it for theological purposes. That indicates that I think such an appropriation is possible. In fact the work of Christian theologians throughout history has been to make specific theological conclusions about the human situation and the world in which we live, in relation to God in Christ. And the information about the world and the human situation on which they relied was that which was current in their own times, usually from thinkers who were not specifically theologians (even if our structures of academic study based on a number of different 'disciplines' would have been a strange language for many).

Perhaps this is especially clear in theological developments in Christian anthropology: in making theological conclusions about human beings, theologians appropriated certain philosophical and biological understandings of their day to describe what human beings were. A particular, infamous example, much cited by feminist theologians, is Aquinas' alleged appropriation of a mistaken Aristotelian biology to inform his version of the role of men, in initiation, and women, in receptivity.²⁹ In fact, more widely than this one example, feminist theologians have claimed that much anthropology in the Christian tradition has taken males to be the models of normative humanity, and probably elite males at that, to the disadvantage of women. In this thesis I have deliberately sought a range of historical and sociological information because that is what Christian anthropology continually needs. Inevitably this means making choices between materials that I consider more or less adequate. But this is the appropriate route to critique past notions of what human beings are and are meant to be, and to question whether what God is, and what God demands, have been interpreted in male-centred ways. Knowing that I too work in a limited cultural context, from a particular standpoint, there is yet the possibility of critiquing the cultural assumptions that have been made about women, and about what is good or bad for women. My critiques and my answers, too, are provisional and await further anthropological information and more enlightened theological interpretation. But I assert that this is an appropriate method for doing theology. Theology is about the whole of life, and life in its fullness for all, and, solicitously judged, theologians will take hold of a variety of sources for their work, so that non-theological information is examined and appropriated in theological perspective.

In chapter 4 the method is somewhat different. Having detailed and discussed some work in feminist ethics in chapter 3, I then discuss the work of theorists who see themselves working within a theological context. In their work the theological language is sometimes explicit and sometimes not, but the theological context becomes clear in my analysis both in detailed interpretation of particular pieces of work, and from attention to more than one piece of work by an author where it is possible to judge more widely. It seems to me that the feminist theological ethicists whose work I discuss in chapter 4 are often working in closest dialogue with non-theological feminist

²⁹Michael Nolan discusses this 'alleged' appropriation, claiming that Aquinas' work has been misunderstood at this point. "It may well have been nothing more than an argument *developed* by scholars who wished to embarrass Aquinas' Aristotelianism. In any case Aquinas took it seriously enough to argue no fewer than five times that it is a purely biological statement and that it does not imply that woman is defective in any true sense". Unfortunately the misunderstanding has been all too influential. M. Nolan, "The Defective Male: What Aquinas Really Said", *New Blackfriars*, 75, 1994.

theorists. Their second chain of communication is with feminist theologians. The move I wish to make, while continuing the dialogue with other feminist theologians, is towards communicating this work more explicitly to non-feminist theologians. At this stage it is probably presentation I am undertaking rather than any more developed dialogue. The consequences of presenting feminist work to non-feminist theologians cannot be fully worked out in this thesis and will take further explicit dialogue which begins, however, with this kind of presentation. But feminist theology is not a separate subject from 'mainstream' theology - that sort of separation simply allows it to be ignored. The kind of feminist-inspired work I present here is precisely what all theologians should be taking into account in the development of their theologies.

This is both a theological study and a feminist theological study. My references to systematic theology are frequently to systematics as critiqued and reconstructed by feminist theologians. Feminist theologians, in connection with liberation theologians, should be particularly wary of a split between systematics and ethics since it is so easy for such a split to be represented as one between theory and praxis. Feminist theology seeks, as I understand it, to be praxis-orientated and conscious of its responsibility to represent and listen to particular groups of people. I seek to critique feminist ethics from a feminist theological perspective which is explicitly Christian and confessional. My methodology of aligning the concerns of feminist ethics with a religious tradition may, and I hope does, work for other religious traditions as well, but my concern is with the Christian tradition.

A Feminist Study

My thesis is a theological study of avowedly feminist work, and is undertaken out of feminist commitment. Stated commitment is *not* a disadvantage in careful, rigorous theological work. A feminist perspective demands attention to women's experiences in particular as of worth and value. The questions of how to relate these to men's experiences - whether the 'worth and value' of women's experiences is equal to that of men, better, or so different there is no point of comparison - or how to relate the narration of women's experiences to past understandings of falsely inclusive so-called human experience, are often secondary questions for many feminists. They may, however be more important for theologians. From a feminist theological perspective, Rosemary Radford Ruether writes: "women, as the denigrated half of the human species, must reach for a continually expanding definition of inclusive humanity - inclusive of both genders, inclusive of all social groups and races."³⁰ Feminist

³⁰R.R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1983, p.20.

perspectives treat women as fully human, not as defective male, nor even simply in their 'otherness' from the male. To argue from a feminist perspective is to assert that past scholarship needs critique for not having taken women's experiences and concerns seriously. Ruether claims, "The uniqueness of feminist theology lies not in its use of the criterion of experience but rather in its use of *women's* experience, which has been almost entirely shut out of theological reflection in the past."³¹ Within the subject of women and violence, for me a feminist perspective is needed to uncover experiences and discourses which Christian theology has not been concerned to perceive, value or discuss. The Christian tradition has not taught a right attention to women in discussions of war and peace, or of self-defence or violent assault, for instance. A feminist study needs to be a work of critique and of construction. With women's history recovered, and new information about women's present situations within a range of cultures available, feminist study can develop new interpretations and evaluations, constructing theory which is responsibly related to women's lives. Feminist theorists have increasingly realised the extent to which such theorising must take account not just of gender analysis but of class and race factors as well, to build a complex picture of the opportunities, restrictions, experiences, aspirations, struggles and visions of women's lives.

But the complex picture has a political point. "One must first *locate* the female subject in creating a feminist political theory *for* and *about* her."³² Feminist analysis is not just for the sake of 'seeing', despite my own favoured metaphor of feminist perspectives; it is analysis for the sake of change, so that women are treated and regarded more justly than they have been, in actual societies and real circumstances. Desire for this kind of change must be the basis of an inclusive scholarship. This concern for change informs my decision in chapter 3 to explore the relationship of feminist ethics to feminist political theory, to examine in particular the dichotomy between public and private as it might illuminate the subject of women's experiences of violence. A concern for change must recognise, however, the complexity and difficulty of effecting change, which is itself a long-term historical process.

³¹Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p.13.

³²J.B. Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981, p.303. Also: "To take a human being as the object of political inquiry without patronizing, manipulating, or distorting her world must be every critical feminist thinker's concern", p.303.

While not denying the roots of feminist theological ethics in theological ethics, it has not been my primary concern to explore these; rather I have concentrated on the developing of feminist theological ethics out of feminist theory in general, and out of feminist ethics in particular, because I suspect this root is least known by theologians. In feminist theory more clearly than in many forms of Christian theology, attention is given to women's experiences, to embodiment and particularity, to wholeness and anti-dualism, to the value of all nature and to collaboration and relationship as primary modes of human interaction. I am not, however, interested in taking over feminist work wholesale without adequate critique. There is no doubt that some aspects of feminist ethics are inadequate from a theological perspective and I explore these both in critique of feminist ethics as it stands in chapter 3, and also in the way I construct feminist theological ethics in chapter 4, giving it a separate existence from feminist ethics while maintaining their connections.

Christian theological ethics develops the corollary of beliefs about God as revealed in Christ. Those feminists who would argue against the possibility of redeeming a wholly androcentric Christian tradition might suggest that feminist theological ethics could only develop the corollary of some form of goddess spirituality, if any realm of spirituality is recognised at all. I, on the other hand, believe in the possibility of *feminist* theology within the Christian tradition. For me, there are resources within the Christian tradition, of stories, images and concepts, which are hospitable to feminism. The critique of beliefs about God made by feminist theologians will affect the outworking of feminist theological ethics.

An Ethical Study

This study is ethical because one of the most important tools for me has been feminist ethics. It is not the business of this thesis, nor am I able, to engage in an extensive dialogue with many significant non-theological ethical traditions. Nor have I attempted to delineate the exact relationship between feminist theological ethics and other forms of theological ethics. Some of the traditional languages of ethics in general and theological ethics in particular (natural law, virtues, character, command/obedience, *agape*) appear in my work, or work I discuss; some could be applied (deontological, teleological), but I have not worked through the appropriateness of these terms in detail: that needs to be the subject of further work, after feminist theological ethics has itself been more carefully discussed. Here I have confined myself to indicating some themes of overlap or critique with non-feminist systematic theology and theological ethics, with the accent perhaps on the former. That accent is a function of my unease about a strong separation between systematic theology and ethics. Here I shall simply

highlight my position by brief reference to one non-feminist and one feminist theological ethicist.

Stanley Hauerwas³³ argues strongly against what he sees as the tendency in theological ethics to employ non-theological language for the sake of dialogue with non-theological ethicists. The consequence, he argues, is that there appears to be no distinctiveness to theological ethics, and therefore in the end no use for it. Hauerwas claims to work instead much more distinctively from within, and for, the Christian Church. For this reason he emphasises the doctrinal basis of his ethical reflection. "For...questions of the integrity and truthfulness of our theology cannot be separated from questions that are normally classified as social ethics. Questions of dogmatics cannot be separated from how we think about war, the holocaust, suicide, and a host of other questions."³⁴ Hauerwas stresses the importance of the Christian community, living with the gospel story, for the development of moral character. Christians learn to be disciples of Christ in the community of the Church, being formed by the narrative of the gospel. Hauerwas is particularly known for asserting that this discipleship must be expressed in the practice of non-violence.

This account of theological ethics has been critiqued by others on many grounds, not least that the stress on non-violence as a mark of the Church narrows the definition of Church in an inappropriate manner. Hauerwas has been accused of sectarianism in not choosing to enter into dialogue with non-theological ethics in a particular manner, and of fideism in his account of the Christian Church as a moral tradition. There are some parts of Hauerwas' work that I find helpful for the way I wish to see feminist theological ethics developing, while other parts do not help feminists at all. I, too, want to promote strong Christian foundations for theological ethics, and my attempt to establish feminist theological ethics as separate from feminist ethics is an indication of that. I agree with Hauerwas' refusal to separate what he refers to as dogmatics and ethics. But I also want to argue for a position part way between that of Hauerwas, and of those he critiques. I want feminist theological ethics to start from Christian

³³This exposition of Hauerwas' work is based on S. Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*, second edition, San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1985 and *Against The Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society*, New York: Winston Press, 1985. I have used Hauerwas' work in isolation from its context of influences as an illustration relevant to my limited purposes here. In a more detailed exposition, Hauerwas' stress on narrative would need to be seen in relation to Lindbeck's work, and his interpretation of moral traditions, moral character and the virtues in relation to MacIntyre's work. Cf. S. Wells, *How the Church Performs Jesus' Story: Improvising on the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, forthcoming PhD thesis, University of Durham.

³⁴Hauerwas, *Against The Nations*, p.9.

foundations, however much reconstruction there has to be first, and then to move outwards beyond the Christian community. This move does not have to entail leaving the Christian community and its discourse behind, as Hauerwas argues that it has in the past. While Christian ethics is dependent on Christian narratives, and is at its clearest and most coherent within the Christian community, it is not wholly alien to non-Christians. I do not believe that moral traditions are incommensurable, but nor are they transparently and easily translatable. I also hold to a belief in the operation of God's grace among those outside the Christian community, which allows a stronger relationship between theological and non-theological ethics than Hauerwas would accept.

Hauerwas claims that it has been assumed ethics is about law, principles and quandaries, and about values that are separated from facts, solely because ethics has been written outside the contexts of particular communities. He concentrates on the development of character and an account of moral virtues because that is what emerges for him from proper attention to context. This point of view must be significant to feminist theological ethicists who are concerned about relationships, context and communities, and who are critical of accounts of morality which present ethics as all about abstract principles. However, many feminist theologians' relationship with the Christian Church, their primary community according to Hauerwas' account, is far more difficult than he appears to allow. Hauerwas argues that the Christian community is necessary for Christians to live morally. But the Christian tradition and Christian communities have not always enabled women to live morally. Clearly there is an issue in interpreting Hauerwas' work about how the Church is to be defined (such as only allowing pacifism as true discipleship), but that does not by any means solve the problem for feminists. Feminists need to be allowed space for continuing critique of the Church and of the way Christians have told their stories and lived their discipleship of Christ.

The transition from chapter 2 to chapter 3 in my thesis needs explanation since it is apparently a move from historical investigation to the subject of ethics. One model of a move between historical investigation and ethics is Katie Cannon's book *Black Womanist Ethics*.³⁵ She critiques ethics based in notions of choice as inappropriate for people in situations of restricted choice, people whose oppressed socio-political position imposes certain roles and opportunities on them. In her book a description of

³⁵K.G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. (The capitalisation of 'Black' in this exposition follows Cannon's usage.)

the situation of Black women in certain historical periods functions as her description of ethics. She wishes to applaud what Black women have done in situations of oppression, when the opportunities handed to them were so few. She seeks the values by which Black women lived in such situations, and the dreams and visions that demonstrate what they hoped for and worked towards. Her book concludes with expositions of two male theologians' ethical visions developed out of Black people's situation in America. There is much of interest and of value in the model provided by Cannon, chiefly in how attentive she is to the context in which people lived. But, largely because of her critique of traditional ethics, she resists, it seems to me, any normative criteria for evaluating those strategies of Black women which she describes. The possible pitfall here is simply to label whatever Black women have done in these historical situations as 'right', with too little justification.

Cannon is wary of ethical models which concentrate on applying to each context principles which first 'exist' in their purest, strongest form outside all contexts (as one interpretation of what 'universalism' in ethics is about), and also of models which stress the self-chosen principles of autonomous individuals, individuals who can choose without regard to context and circumstances. I share Cannon's unease and her work provides an example of how feminist ethicists have critiqued the traditional enterprise of ethics. Like hers, my historical illustrations are attempts at attention to context, to the situations in which some women find themselves. But, unlike her, I do not want to stop at historical, or sociological investigation. My interest is not just in description but in interpretation and evaluation, believing that, contrary to some accounts of what it is to be objective, description, interpretation and evaluation cannot be separated. The positivist account of the naturalistic fallacy sought to demonise links between description and evaluation. 'Interpretation' is, it seems to me, the mid-term between description and evaluation, but they can only be separated linguistically. Description does not come uninterpreted, and interpretation is evaluation. Helen Oppenheimer³⁶ is one of many who find a dichotomy between fact and value unconvincing. She would rather speak of value-carrying facts. In her theological terminology, God has made a world of value-carrying facts. With specific reference to my own study, it is not enough to investigate 'women and violence' imagining that it is possible to do so without evaluation. I wish to use the kind of ethical evaluation which allows relationship and creative tension between socio-historical investigation, traditional accounts of morality and critique of those traditional accounts. There must be a circular relationship between

³⁶H. Oppenheimer, "Ought and Is", *Theology*, 76, 1973. For further discussion of Oppenheimer's work, see below, p.149.

normative criteria and the description of context in ethics - each affects and reshapes the other.

Parts of my subject have traditionally been treated by the theological study of ethics, most obviously the moral choices involved in the decision to go to war, seen in the debate between the just war theory and pacifism. Those choices have not often been associated with women, however. In fact I would argue that ethicists using both just war discourse and the language of pacifism have largely ignored the situation of women in relation to war. There has been some traditional theological ethical discussion of other forms of violence, chiefly murder, suicide and self-defence, but whether women are ever envisaged as protagonists in such discussions is open to question. The Christian Church's moral teaching has, in centuries past (and not so long past) justified a husband beating his wife, even where some restrictions of severity were imposed. Many ethicists now simply ignore that subject, or assume that it is wrong for a husband to beat his wife (or a wife her husband) and that there is no more to say, without any real engagement with the moral teaching of the past, or any attempt to understand why such behaviour occurs and what might be done to alter it. My study of women and violence is an ethical study because I investigate with the intention to evaluate, with the sense that to discuss violence must be to discuss issues of help or harm, of what is good and evil for human beings. However, the type of ethical study I am undertaking is specified by the terms 'theological' and 'feminist'.

Other parameters

A few further parameters are necessary to define the area within which I am working. The project of developing feminist theological ethics and the chosen subject area within which I explore the usefulness of feminist theological ethics constrain each other. The model of feminist theological ethics which I develop is fitting for the specific subject investigated, and that subject is not simply historical or sociological investigation *because of* the particular feminist theological ethical perspective through which it is examined. Thus neither feminist ethics nor feminist theological ethics is exhaustively detailed because they are not examined for their own sakes. Similarly the various sections in chapter 2 exploring some of the ways in which women encounter violence are also far from exhaustive, or even as detailed as they would need to be to stand as historical or sociological research. However, I do not intend to suggest that this ethical model is only valid for this particular subject: I hope it reaches further than that. But for now I am concerned to develop the model only as far as necessary to explore 'women and violence'. It seems to me that I do not have to demonstrate that my conclusions could not arise from other theoretical bases, or taking other accounts of experience and

praxis into account. But I do need to demonstrate that they arise out of the model I deal with.

My study is theological, and as such has a biblical basis. But it is not a specifically biblical investigation. Discussions and disagreements over the interpretation of scripture have an important place both in feminist theology and in debate about Christian notions of peace and justice, and Christian attitudes to war. I do not, however, focus on those discussions.³⁷

Finally, my research is limited on the whole to Anglo-American feminist work. I have not attempted to embrace Continental feminist writings: the work of French feminists at first hand is an obvious omission, partly on the grounds of my linguistic competence, partly for manageability of material and partly that such work is not so directly related to the narrower area of feminist ethics as would make it an obvious choice for inclusion. French feminist work is touched on implicitly, however, in brief discussions of postmodernism since much of the strongest use of postmodern theorising by feminists is represented by French feminists.

OUTLINE

In chapter 1 I have introduced the two strands of this thesis - challenging the myth of women's peacefulness, and developing feminist theological ethics - and the reasons for trying to deal with them together. I limit this investigation by taking from feminist theological ethics what is constructive for application to a particular subject which I believe is susceptible to ethical investigation. An ethical model cannot exist in abstraction; it comes alive and becomes relevant only if applied to the circumstances of people's lives. Choosing one subject for application acts as a focus and control. Subject and methodology, investigative model and application constrain each other. The initial reason for choosing both the subject and the method is that they developed from various personal interests and commitments. Christian faith, feminist perspectives, a commitment to peace politics, pastoral concerns and a belief that systematic theology

³⁷Some examples of material more directly related to the biblical text and relevant to the kind of subject I am investigating are: P. Tribble, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984 (especially chapter 4 on Jephthah's daughter); S. Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; R. Williams and M. Collier, *Beginning Now: Part One, Peacemaking Theology*, London: Dunamis, 1984; United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, London: CTS/SPCK, 1983 (Section I A); *Women, War and Metaphor, Semeia*, 61, 1993.

and ethics must develop in proper partnership are all represented here. To that end I have begun by describing what I call 'the myth of women's peacefulness', which links women more closely than men to peace. This is a pervasive and powerful myth, which is also dangerous inasmuch as it falsifies many women's experiences. I believe the myth needs to be challenged and new models looked to for more complex interpretations of the ways women encounter violence.

In chapter 2 I discuss a range of different ways in which women encounter and interact with violence, as victims, perpetrators, opponents and applauding audience. My approach is to provide a collection of illustrations to indicate the complexity and variety of this subject. In some ways this functions as a 'data' chapter, which informs the choice of material in my discussion of feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics. A particular emphasis in chapter 2 is the way in which the myth of women's peacefulness constrains women's actions, through the ways in which women's actions are interpreted. The myth informs particularly harsh evaluations of women's violence and also a trivialising of women's campaigns for peace and thus constrains other women's behaviour on the grounds of these examples. It achieves this through the assertion that it is 'natural' for women to be peaceful, so that no merit attaches to them when they are, but that they can be particularly condemned, as 'unnatural', when they are not peaceful in the accepted manner. There are sections in this chapter investigating violence against women in intimate relationships, women in the military, women who kill, and women's peace campaigning. In addition I examine how some women have argued about war, comparing the writings of four women at the time of the second world war.

Chapter 3 is an overview of work in non-theological feminist ethics. Feminist ethics has re-examined women's relationship to ethics, by critiquing the traditional images of women employed in ethical study and by taking women's experiences seriously as a proper subject of ethical investigation. I choose to look at feminist ethics by focusing on the work of Carol Gilligan and demonstrating the ways feminist ethicists have depended on, and branched off from, her initial work. It is particularly important to me in developing feminist theological ethics that the work of non-theological feminist ethicists is both appreciated, and critiqued. This process begins with critique of Gilligan's work (even if she herself is not best described as a feminist ethicist, since her own work is in developmental psychology). The arena of general interest in this chapter is the identification of what may be most useful from feminist ethics for feminist theological ethics, and for this I look particularly at the advantages and problems attached to language of an 'ethic of care'. More specifically I explore the work of Sara Ruddick who links an ethic of care, developed in her model of maternal thinking, to the practice of

peace politics. At this point it becomes necessary to look in more detail at other work that questions the dichotomy, or constructs links, between the supposedly 'private' realm best served by 'ethic of care' language, and the public realm of political decision and action. Therefore, I bring in the work of Jean Bethke Elshtain in political theory, because of her interests, from a feminist point of view, in the public/private divide, in ethical language, and in women's relationship to war.

In chapter 4 I build a model of feminist theological ethics by discussing work that I would describe with that label. The fact that this is my labelling is important as much of my project is to delineate an area called 'feminist theological ethics', having many affinities with feminist ethics, but ultimately separate and independent because of its theological focus. The chapter begins with the recognition that feminist theologians claiming that there are grounds for critiquing the Christian theological tradition are very often making specifically ethical claims. I then tackle the difficulties of distinguishing feminist theological ethics from feminist ethics, and suggest an initial model of their relationship. There follows a much closer discussion of the content of various examples of feminist theological ethics, some that are oriented clearly towards the Christian theological tradition, some which concentrate on moral philosophy and some which focus on contentious ethical issues. Feminist theological ethics is in an early developmental stage, and a relatively small amount of work has been written. It is only fair to add therefore that my picture of feminist theological ethics cannot be a stable one: at this stage a small amount of new work could change the picture considerably.

Finally, in chapter 5 I draw the two strands of the thesis together in some conclusions which attempt to find answers to a few of the questions I have raised. In summarising the theoretical guidelines or model with which I have worked, I demonstrate that my conclusions do arise out of the feminist theological ethical model I previously discussed. In particular, I emphasise the theological aspect by discussing some of the theological images which must underpin my conclusions. I suggest that the situations I have discussed, in conjunction with the theoretical considerations I have taken into account, lead to a better picture of the interaction of private and public in acts of violence or in peacemaking. They lead also to an affirmation of the position of women in the military for as long as we continue to believe standing armies are a necessity, and to a broadened perspective on the effects of war which guides us to ask much tougher questions of ourselves and our leaders, before God, if we are ever to engage in tragic, defensive, last resort warfare.

CHAPTER 2 - WOMEN AND VIOLENCE: HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

FRAMEWORK

Much of this chapter will be reporting on a wide range of women's experiences and stories, women's writing, and research about women. I hope the range, and particularity, in this chapter will themselves demonstrate that I do not intend to sweep all women together into an easy, uniform whole, since this is precisely where I perceive the problem to be with previous treatments of women and violence, war and peace. I need only quote Ruth Pierson here: "There has not been a consistent women's response to war and revolution any more than there has been a uniform feminist position on women's relation to organised violence".¹ This holds true for other forms of violence as well as war and revolution. Issues of women's differences have been hard for feminists to work on and to appreciate, because they reveal where feminism went badly wrong in the past. But it is tremendously important that we recognise the links among women *and the discontinuities* so that the real choices women make and the interactions they manage with biology and environment might be more fully revealed.

This chapter is not exhaustive, and is not meant to be. It is, I hope, illustrative. The subjects I have chosen to explore, even briefly, do not tell the whole story. My aim is to describe and explore, at various degrees of depth, some women's experiences. To that end I have used a variety of genres and discourses, particularly in my sources. Case studies narrow a field and allow for depth of exploration; in other sections a more general sweep of data was appropriate. The chapter illustrates that women stand in a variety of relationships to violence. They are victims, perpetrators, opponents - as are men. Some perhaps obvious subjects are not touched on at all, for instance rape (as a separate subject, apart from its occurrence in war), the fear of violence many women live with in a variety of cultures; day to day life under the oppression of a violent government regime, and doubtless many more.

I have given this chapter, as the thesis, the title 'Women and Violence' and therefore need to give some definition of what I mean by 'violence'. The core of the concept of violence which I shall use is the notion of dominating force used to inflict physical harm. From this core radiate associated notions. I explore some of the associated areas

¹R. Pierson, "Did your mother wear army boots?" Feminist theory and women's relation to war, peace and revolution", in S. MacDonald, *et al.*, eds., *Images of Women in Peace and War*, p.225.

in order to see what may be problematic about that core notion. I am quite deliberately testing boundaries and looking for variety. However, despite wanting to push at boundaries, I am conscious of limits. I am suspicious of concepts of violence which seem to throw the net of 'violence' so wide that almost every human interaction can be included, from heterosexual intercourse to any attempt at persuasion.

Obvious examples of violence are usually interpersonal encounters; even our model of the collective violence of war is based on interpersonal encounters in which soldiers seek to kill one another. However, the example of war which is still, I believe, paradigmatic of violence demonstrates the ways in which my core notion of violence needs to be expanded, beyond interpersonal encounters. The actual inflicting of physical harm is a central aspect of war, but the *intention* to inflict harm is also crucial, as are the goals that such 'harm' serves. These need to be examined in order to give meaning to individual acts in which force is used to inflict physical harm. From the meanings given to particular acts of violence emerge questions about how they should be valued morally, and whether all violent acts should be measured alike, or not.

I have called wartime a time of collective violence, because country 'fights' against country, and violence goes beyond individuals. I would also argue that the wish to inflict physical harm and the preparation of resources to inflict death and injury go far beyond the individuals who actually commit acts of violence. This is why, in one section, I discuss women's roles in wartime, though they do not all appear to be directly causing, or reacting to, violent acts. In wartime, violence is pervasive as a motive for more than directly violent acts. The same is true of civil war and revolution.

The definition of a state of war may itself be problematic. A country is at war when its sovereign authority has declared war, and it is no longer at war once peace, or perhaps even a ceasefire, has been declared. But we are increasingly being called to recognise that the time of preparing for war is not unequivocally to be defined as 'peace'. The definition of a period of history as 'the Cold War' highlights this. So my discussion of women's experiences includes women's campaigns for peace. Discussion of war and violence involves discussion of peace, but this need not mean that war and peace are conceived as simple opposites. What is needed in a discussion of women's differing relations to violence is a more complex conception of the relation of war and violence to peace. Thus I want to remain open to the possibilities that violence may bring about a greater peace, a state of 'right relationship'; that passivity may contribute to destructive violence, and that what is labelled 'peace' may be destructive and harmful.

I move out from my core concept of violence (though demonstrably, I hope, keeping in touch with it) in not drawing a thick line between physical violence, and verbal or psychological abuse. This expansion of the core notion *does* depend on relationship to it. In my discussion of violence against women in the home, I find it important to include psychological abuse as part of the violence studied because it is so intertwined with physical and sexual violence, and it is often contributory to women feeling disempowered to halt violence against them, because it destroys self-esteem. Threats of violence are an important part of an atmosphere of violence; the expectation of violent acts cannot be separated entirely from the committing of violent acts. Comparison of the role of threat in domestic violence, and in the structure of nuclear deterrence might therefore be fruitful. This example shows that I am not observing the distinction between 'public' and 'private' violence. For the moment I state this, because the links between examples of violence in different spheres are part of what I wish to explore.

As well as 'violence' there is mention in the chapter of 'aggression'. I do not wish to equate the two. But we understand aggression as the motivator of violence. Lorenz defines aggression as the fighting instinct against our own species. He separates this, for instance, from killing for food.² There are many arguments over Lorenz's notion of instinct, but they do not undermine the link between aggression and violence. The link is particularly relevant to my discussion of *women* and violence. Again and again in this chapter, it will become obvious that women's experiences are given meaning within a web of ideology about women's social and sexual roles. The concept of aggression, in particular, is gendered in Western popular culture and this popular image affects the interpretation of women's relationship to violent acts, whether as victims or perpetrators. Women's roles in wartime and peacetime, and their reactions in the face of violence directly threatening them as individuals, are influenced by broader notions of appropriate behaviour. The sociological data in this chapter stands alongside my attempts to elucidate the structure of meaning by which it is interpreted.

In using the phrase 'appropriate behaviour', I have moved into the area where moral judgements are made. Historical and sociological research are not without their moral judgements, and these are more and more clearly exposed by some of the feminist research that is going on now. But my work is more explicit than that about ethical judgements. I do not come to this study with a personal pacifist commitment which states unequivocally that all violence is wrong. I also certainly do not believe that all coercion is wrong, which is the more extreme position which some would hold. As long

²Lorenz, *On Aggression*, London: Methuen, 1966, introduction.

as we do not know how to 'cure' psychopathology, we must coerce some people by keeping them in prison or hospital for life. This does not mean that we cannot question the conditions under which they are kept, or the definitions of psychopathology we use, or whether mistakes have been made over some cases, or what it means to define somebody as 'a threat to society'. Medical practice is often about doing physical harm to a patient, in order that a greater harm may be prevented. We would not want to define the harm as 'wrong' in that case, though again we may have questions about decision-making and consultation, and about how far doctors may go (and what resources they may use) in order to save a life, or to keep someone alive for a little while longer. Most people would not want to describe killing in war as 'wrong' *per se*, though there may be many questions to be asked about the conduct of war and particular actions of soldiers in war. But to my core definition of violence as the use of force to inflict physical harm, I add the ethical standpoint that such harm is to be questioned: it must face the test of needing to be justified. In discussing many different kinds of violence together, I do not imply that there are no distinctions to be made: not all violence is to be regarded as ethically identical.

As a Christian theologian I take that ethical standpoint - that violence is to be questioned - as necessary to uphold the integrity of every human being made in God's image. That integrity, and that status in relation to God, demand a high standard of justification for inflicting physical harm on our own species.³ Theologians have differed tremendously in exact definition of that standard. Most have accepted different standards in the conduct of soldiers in wartime from any other conduct. Many have accepted different standards for men and for women. Christian attitudes to violence cannot be easily or simply pinned down. As an authoritative source the Bible contains no blanket condemnation of violence, although there are multiple narrative voices attesting to hopes for an end to violence, and to different attitudes to the conduct of war.⁴ Many Christians have condemned all violence outright, on the basis of their understanding of the teachings of Jesus. Most have denied justification to any personal violence, even including self-defence, and have granted justification only in the case of just wars. But any discussion of violence reverberates around the most cherished themes of Christianity, though I shall not be able to touch on many of them. Apart from the already mentioned Christian ethical stands on pacifism and just war, study of peace, war and violence is affected by our understanding of the teaching of Jesus, and how we

³I have not considered in this context the issue of human violence towards other species. It is beyond the scope of this work.

⁴See for instance S. Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*.

'apply' the gospel to our own lives; it intertwines with our reflections on the suffering and death of Jesus, and on what is demanded of the disciple of Christ as expressions of love and self-sacrifice. Discussion of the Kingdom of God, the parousia, and the concepts of *shalom* and *eirene* demand reflection on what is not peace. I do not suggest that notions of violence are necessarily central to all the above, but there are connections that I feel are too often ignored.

Theological reflection in this chapter is necessarily present, but kept to a minimum. In that way I can signal hints and suggestions on which to build in later chapters, with the aid of a more developed feminist theological ethical model.

CASE STUDIES⁵

I begin with three brief case studies, examining the lives and writings of three women, focusing on their reactions to war. This chapter will end with a further case study to explore another particular woman's attitude to a broader range of violent situations. Vera Brittain, Virginia Woolf, and Simone Weil were contemporaries to the extent that they all experienced both this century's 'world wars'. Though not identical in age or social background, there are interesting similarities between them. All three lived through World War I, but experienced it in vastly different ways. All three reflected on war in the years between 1918 and 1939; all three at one time espoused pacifism; all three rejected Nazi fascism. Yet their conclusions and consequent reactions to the outbreak of World War II differed, and it is that contrast that I shall set out. All three also reflected on Christianity, all are interesting for their response to their gender identity. I have chosen these three women as examples partly at random, because they interested me, but also because of these similarities and contrasts in some of the subjects about which they reflected and wrote.

Vera Brittain

Vera Brittain's⁶ consciousness of war began with memories of patriotic songs in the Boer War. But she was first celebrated for her reflections on the horror and waste of

⁵Versions of the material in this chapter on Vera Brittain, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy L. Sayers can be found in J. Craske, "Christianity, Feminism and Peace", *Feminist Theology*, 6, 1994 and "Peace and War, Violence and Justice in the Work of Dorothy L. Sayers", *Proceedings of the 1994 Seminar of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society*, 1995.

⁶My sources for this exploration of Vera Brittain's thought are her own writings: two volumes of autobiography and an edited collection of the letters she wrote to 'peace lovers' during World War II. Using these texts, it is important to remember when they were written. *Testament of Youth* was

the first world war. In *Testament of Experience*⁷ she reflects back on her purpose in writing *Testament of Youth*⁸, as a necessary addition to the volumes on the war being written by men: "I began to ask: 'Why should these young men have the war to themselves? Didn't women have their war as well?'" (*TE*, p.77) "I wanted...to show that war was not glamour or glory but abysmal grief and purposeless waste, though I acknowledged its moments of grandeur" (*TE*, p.80). She thus writes of personal experience and personal loss in the 1914-18 war. Much of her narrative of the horrors of the front line is a secondhand account of her fiancé Roland's experience, from his letters to her. She faces the different experiences men and women have of war and the separation it causes between them, as well as the different viewpoints of the soldiers (and nurses), and the civilians back home. She was, then, in an ambivalent position among the groups she saw, experiencing war as a woman, but also as a non-civilian. The physical horrors of war are narrated as she saw them through nursing the wounded.

In view of her later pacifism, her narrative reflections in 1933 on the role and problems of pacifists in the first world war are revealing. She comments that she knew very little of the story of pacifism at that time. She further examines the 'magic' of war: "It is, I think, this glamour, this magic, this incomparable keying up of the spirit in a time of mortal conflict, which constitute the pacifist's real problem - a problem still incompletely imagined, and still quite unsolved" (*TY*, p.291). Anger at the terms of the Treaty of Versailles reinforced her view of the war as waste, and influenced her to campaign during the nineteen-twenties for a position of collective security via the League of Nations. It was in the convictions of this period that she wrote: "To rescue mankind from that domination by the irrational which leads to war could surely be a more exultant fight than war itself" (*TY*, p.656).

In *Testament of Experience*, Vera Brittain explains how at a peace meeting in 1936 she was speaking on the same platform as Dick Sheppard and found herself more convinced by his pacifist stance than by her own position on collective security. "In that moment I saw that my study of peace had been too superficial; to delegate responsibility to a set of fallible politicians at Geneva was to over-simplify the problem of human violence and repudiate personal guilt" (*TE*, p.167). She recognised instead her own need to be allied

published in 1933, reflecting on her life up to 1925. *Testament of Experience* was published in 1957 as a study of the quarter century 1925-1950.

⁷V. Brittain, *Testament of Experience*, repr., London: Virago, 1979 [1957]. Referred to in the text as *TE*.

⁸V. Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, repr., London: Virago, 1978 [1933]. Referred to in the text as *TY*.

to pacifism, as a spiritual creed, as a principle, not a policy, "...the belief, for which Christ died, in the ultimate transcendence of love over power" (*TE*, p.170). The figure of the human Jesus was very much the model for her pacifism. Many people embraced pacifism at the same period (Brittain became a PPU sponsor in 1937); not so many carried that pacifism forward throughout the second world war, in the face of the full threat of Nazi Germany's militarism. In her letters to peace lovers (not just to pacifists) she explained what she understood pacifism to be: "Pacifism is the very reverse of that 'peace at any price' political defeatism which those who most rabidly misrepresent it endeavour to maintain; it is a way of life, beginning with a personal affirmation of love"⁹.

Throughout the second world war, Vera Brittain maintained at first a weekly, then a fortnightly letter to those who wished to subscribe to it. Her letters to peace lovers were comments on the course of the war, suggestions as to what peace lovers might do and issues for them to consider. In them she challenged bombing strategy, and curbs on free speech, she questioned the policy of fighting on until 'unconditional surrender', recommended books to read, reflected on her own experience, and protested at the horrors of war, demonstrating a vivid sympathy for those whose lives were torn apart by the war whether British, German, French, Dutch, or the Japanese victims of the atom bombs in August 1945. Beyond the letters, she was also involved with practical relief work in London, and with the Food Relief Campaign, against the blockade of Occupied Europe. Her conclusions about the war would always be seen by some as naive; at times they were prophetic. Always they looked forward, beyond the war, to the rebuilding of peace, warning of the factors that might hinder that rebuilding.

Though pacifist throughout the war, Vera Brittain would not describe herself as an 'absolute' pacifist, one who refused to have anything to do with the war at all. This is clear from the relief work she did, mentioned above. When discussing war work in her letter of 8 May 1941, she agreed with the registration of women for war work, to give them the right publicly to object, but wrote that she herself would do certain sorts of war work, such as social service or first aid. In fact her sympathies distinctly did not lie with the most extreme forms of pacifism: "Die-hard pacifism seems to me as insufferably relentless, complacent and unimaginative as any other form of die-hardism" (*TP*, p.74). This was at least partly due to her observation that both absolute pacifists

⁹V. Brittain, *Testament of a Peace Lover*, eds. W. Eden-Green and A. Eden-Green; London: Virago, 1988. Referred to in the text as *TP*.

and militarists argued against the possibility of mitigating the horrors and suffering of war (*TP*, p.198).

In her introductory letter Brittain consciously situated herself as a woman writer, writing not for women alone, but seeing the issues of war from a woman's perspective. She explained that others had written to her already with woman-centred ideas for peace. She linked her anti-fascist convictions specifically to her feminism, having lectured before the war on "The anti-feminist reaction in Europe": "Even if there had been no war, no Jewish persecutions, no concentration camp at Dachau, I need not explain to any other lifelong feminist my reasons for detesting the Nazi regime" with its "fascist doctrines which emphasized a woman's functions at the expense of her citizenship" (*TP*, p.21). She was also quick to seize on the ambivalences of a discriminatory point of view, noting the government's lack of conviction that a woman's place is in the home at the periods when it wanted her to do war work. It was largely in such practical, social terms that her feminism was expressed.

One of Brittain's stated aims in her letters to peace lovers, and in her more direct campaigning during World War II, was to protest against any destruction of 'Christian' values in the actions and propaganda of war. For some these would be described as humanist values: protests against bombing German civilians, the attempts to keep some relief work going, the refusal to hate or to see the enemy as an inhuman mass, the rejection of retaliatory actions. Vera Brittain, however, expressed these in specifically Christian terms, with the life of Christ uppermost in her reflections. "It needs Christ himself to remember constantly the seventeen-year-old pilots compelled by their masters to this horror of indiscriminate ruin, and to say of them - as of our young men who are raining nightly death upon the French coast and the Ruhr: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'" (*TP*, p.53). The Christian content of her letters became a focus of criticism for some, and she took some space justifying her stance. She argued that people needed something beyond themselves, to prevent any sense that they were standing alone, and that a spiritual element was necessary for a whole perspective (*TP*, p.144). Her reflection on the course that led up to war is explicitly Christian: "The fact that unchristian values had driven mankind to the edge of the abyss seemed to supply incontrovertible testimony that an opposite policy - the way of God, the road of the Cross - would produce an opposite result" (*TP*, p.167). Her own experience of humiliation as a writer during the war was also something she pointed to, which brought her to reflect on the spiritual concepts of redemption and vicarious suffering.

Vera Brittain's pacifism and her Christian faith were closely linked. Rather, though, than one developing out of the other, it would be more fair to say they developed in parallel. It was the impression made on her by the religious stance of Sheppard, Lansbury and Soper that moved her decisively towards a commitment to pacifism. But her expression of her pacifist commitments comes more easily than any developed theology.

Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf's background was anti-war; her aunt was the leading Quaker, Caroline Stephen, but my exploration of Woolf's own thought must begin with her book *Three Guineas*.¹⁰ Published in 1938, conceived originally as a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas* is ostensibly a treatise on the prevention of war. Woolf's answer to the challenge made to her to join a society campaigning to prevent war was that women may very well have a different approach to preventing war from that of men. Her central argument links the phenomenon of militarism with the subordination of women and the book was heavily criticised from first publication by those who could not accept that the struggles of women for a better position in society were in any way relevant to the anti-fascist struggle and to the prevention of war. Militarism for Woolf is rooted in a male fixation to retain a dominant position, including dominance over women. In particular she notes that the insistence that the only place women should be is in the home, certainly not competing or working with men in their workplaces, is a typical key note of Nazi propaganda. This is dictatorship, for Woolf, and precisely what she wishes to oppose. She completes the picture by showing that comments in British newspapers about women's place in society exactly match Nazi propaganda.

Ultimately Virginia Woolf argued that since women have been treated as outsiders to male society, they should remain an Outsiders' Society, totally uninvolved in war, as in other aspects of masculine society. The outsiders "would bind themselves to remain outside any profession hostile to freedom such as the making or the improvement of weapons of war" (*TG*, p.129). Rejection of war by women would be a method of preventing war. Critics of *Three Guineas* claim the book idealises women and does not take sufficient account of women's collusion in militarism. Woolf did, however, move towards recognition, asserting that women supported militarism because they had married into the male warmongering system and would continue to do so till they had economic independence and the space to think for themselves (*TG*, p.45-46).

¹⁰V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*. Referred to in the text as *TG*.

This method of rejecting war is not one which Woolf necessarily labels pacifism. Since women are not recruited to fight in war, one of her footnotes states, "This marks a prime distinction between the sexes. Pacifism is enforced upon women. Men are still allowed liberty of choice" (*TG*, p.196). 'Pacifism' is thus used by her as a male term when it has associations of choice (though still in approval as she notes "the growth of pacifism among the male sex today" (*TG*, p.205)). This does not mean that women do not work for peace, even if their work goes unnoticed,¹¹ but it is work from a different social position and different perspective from men's. Others, however, interpret her terminology differently and freely use the word 'pacifist' either of Woolf herself,¹² or of women alone. "In a way the critics of *Three Guineas* were correct in thinking that the book is not really about preventing war. The solution to war is easy; pacifism. But according to Virginia Woolf only women are pacifists, and mainly for the wrong reasons and in the wrong ways"¹³. Woolf is, however, aware also that women could and do fight if the instinct in them is 'sanctioned', so her generalisations about women also have limits.

But would Woolf have described herself as pacifist? And in what sense is her position derived from experience of war? The political, anti-militarist proposals of *Three Guineas* are a factor for Woolf later in her life. She makes very little comment about the first world war; for the first eighteen months of it she was seriously mentally ill and for much of the rest she must have been recovering, and learning to engage with the world again. She does not appear to engage with the war until she deals with the effects of war in the character of Septimus Smith who becomes mentally ill because of his sense that the war has destroyed his capacity to feel, in the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. (There might be grounds for arguing that her own detachment from the first world war is one factor in her sense of all women's detachment from war.) Sybil Oldfield argues that the form of Virginia Woolf's novels is in itself a demonstration of why war has to be rejected because her portrayal of intense individuality is an expression of the belief that every individual life matters: "What is not so often recognised is that Virginia Woolf's

¹¹Woolf notes Cyril Joad's injunction to women to work for peace rather than for their own rights (*TG*, p.49). Her footnote is: "Since the number of societies run directly or indirectly by Englishwomen in the cause of peace is too long to quote...it is unnecessary to take Mr Joad's criticism seriously, however illuminating psychologically" (*TG*, p.179).

¹²E.g. J. Marcus, ed., *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, University of Nebraska Press, 1983; in her introduction, p.3.

¹³N. Black, "Virginia Woolf and the Women's Movement" in Marcus, ed., p.191-192.

obsession with the irreducible, multi-faceted contradictions and flux of human personality was intimately connected with her implacable opposition to war".¹⁴

At the period when she wrote *Three Guineas* she was clearly still opposed to war, enough to be labelled 'pacifist'. However, according to Oldfield, at the outbreak of the second world war she renounced her pacifism, painfully and reluctantly, seeing no way to be both anti-fascist and anti-war.¹⁵ However, her ultimate rejection of war was her suicide in March 1941. This was at least how Vera Brittain interpreted the act of suicide in one of her letters to peace lovers which discussed the news of Woolf's suicide and what Brittain knew of Woolf herself. "Her end was perhaps a kind of protest, the most terrible and effective that she could make, against the real hell which international conflict creates for the artist" (*TP*, p.69-70). It is significant that the rebuke to those who seem embarrassed at this end to Woolf's life comes from a committed pacifist. She is able tentatively to make political sense of Woolf's suicide. According to Poole's biography, the war seemed to presage destruction in many ways for Woolf personally. She could envisage no future and seemed unable to write. She was particularly appalled at the thought of dying in an explosion and her suicide was a way of choosing the violence which ended her life prematurely.¹⁶

There is no doubt in Woolf's writings about the links she found between feminism and anti-militarism. What a Christian feminist may not relish is the further link between her vision of the Christian Church and her understanding of militarism. All she sees of Christianity is that it has been used to reinforce the subordination of women. Christian feminism would not be for her a logical possibility, as she saw no framework within Christianity as it has developed to support a positive view of women and their rights in society. The only possibility might be to return to the words and figure of Jesus and create from them a new religion which does not resemble historical Christianity.

Simone Weil

McLellan begins his biography of Simone Weil by commenting on the paradoxes of her life, one of which was: "a pacifist, she fought in the Spanish Civil War".¹⁷ Her earliest

¹⁴S. Oldfield, *Women Against The Iron Fist: Alternatives to Militarism 1900-1989*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989, p.108.

¹⁵*ibid.*, p.121.

¹⁶R. Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982, p.276f. He notes also that Virginia Woolf and her husband Leonard had a suicide pact arranged in the event of Nazi invasion.

¹⁷D. McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p.1.

experience of war was of her own and her brother's naive patriotism during World War I, writing and sending rations of chocolate to soldiers at the front. She rejected that kind of response to war, however, because of her anger at the terms of the Versailles Treaty which she recognised, even at the age of ten, as a deliberate humiliation of the conquered. During her time in education she became a pacifist as a consequence of other beliefs and commitments. Her influential philosophy teacher, Alain, was a pacifist, as part of his whole political stance, and Simone Weil followed his politics as extrapolated from his philosophical perspective. Even by 1925, McLellan claims, "The influence of the war had turned her into an active pacifist and her instinctive sympathy with the constrained already led her to side with the most deprived sections of society".¹⁸ As a radical student she joined the organisation "Will For Peace", organised and signed petitions (e.g. for disarmament after the Kellogg-Briand pact of 1928), and protested against the Ecole Normale Supérieure's programme of compulsory military training, all to the embarrassment of the school authorities. "The alliance between politics and brute force was repugnant to her. But all that was humanitarian, anarchist, syndicalist or revolutionary had an irresistible appeal to her".¹⁹ The pacifism she practised at the beginning of the 1930s was thus learnt as an essential part of the anti-state political radicalism of the 1920s. These activities continued, again to the disapproval of the authorities, when she became a philosophy teacher. In October 1933, for example, she was involved in a protest against President Lebrun who was seen to be in the pockets of the arms manufacturers, when he came to unveil a war memorial at Saint Etienne.²⁰

When the Spanish Civil War began in 1936, she commended the French government's non-intervention, because she saw the decision to fight as one that must be made by the individual, so that it was a free decision. The decision she made was to reject her earlier pacifism and go to Spain on a journalist's pass, intent on joining the militia against Franco. Her short-sightedness and clumsiness meant she was really unfitted for fighting and an accident caused by her poor sight ended her participation without her really having come face to face with the realities of fighting and killing. What she did find there, in stories told to her, were atrocities and lack of humanity on both sides of the war.

¹⁸McLellan, p.9.

¹⁹J. Cabaud, *Simone Weil: A Fellowship in Love*, Harvill Press, 1964, p.47.

²⁰*ibid.*, p.96-98.

Whether or not she immediately identified herself as pacifist again after her brief experience of the Spanish Civil War, in 1937 she wrote an essay entitled "Ne Recommençons Pas la Guerre de Troie", translated as "The Power of Words". In 1933 she had written of war as an instrument of oppression whoever used it, particularly in the hands of the State. In "The Power of Words" she attacked contemporary wars as "conflicts with no definable objective".²¹ "The lack of any precise objective led to a measuring of the conflict solely in terms of the sacrifices it demanded".²² War's 'objectives' were simply undefined words - abstract nouns, empty of real content and dangerous when related to power. Her article stands out against nationalism, sees no difference in the methods of communism and fascism, despite their different labels, but takes no particular line on individual pacifism.

In a later essay, "The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force", Simone Weil asserts that, "The true hero, the true subject, the centre of the *Iliad* is force"²³ which enslaves both victim and perpetrator. Her essay explores the horrors perpetrated in war, but shows a belief also that force must overstep itself, carrying retribution and destruction with it. The ability to see the human misery created by war - which includes a different kind of horror and humiliation for women from that which it holds for men - is the pre-condition of love and justice. It is a theme she sees carried from Greek poetry and tragedy on into the gospels. The essay is a profoundly anti-militaristic piece of work, written in 1939 at the period when she was again having to question her own pacifism. "For her, opposition to Fascism was an opposition to all forms of authoritarianism and any recourse to war was a selling-out to the logic of military prestige and power inherent in fascism itself".²⁴ Yet the years 1936-9 did see her move from pacifism, to fighting, back to pacifism and on to an anti-pacifist stance.

Having apparently recommended that Czechoslovakia should accept German domination rather than that France should go to war (because she was so acutely aware of the suffering war would bring), Germany's actual invasion of Czechoslovakia ended her pacifism. "Weil's conclusion did not go so far as to state, as she did later, that her

²¹S. Weil, *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, ed., S. Miles, London: Virago, 1986, p.239.

²²Cabaud, p.74.

²³Weil in Miles, ed., p.183.

²⁴McLellan, p.124.

former pacifist stance was mistaken - only that it was no longer applicable".²⁵ She saw her own obligation from then on as to be involved in the fight against Germany. From the time she and her parents fled Paris, she was looking for an opportunity to be sent on a mission to occupied France. Leaders of the Free French saw her unsuitability for that kind of involvement, and, despite her frustration, used her political thinking and writing instead.

Weil pressed for a group of women to be sent to the front to nurse, to boost morale as well as save lives. "And why, anyhow, asked Simone Weil, should a woman's life be regarded as more precious than that of a man, 'especially if she has outlived her prime youth and is neither wife nor mother'?"²⁶ The scheme is typical of her thought at the time, for these women would be victims, and the specification of the kind of women, without attachments, is clearly meant to include herself. However, this project was never accepted. A project for the demonstration of courage without killing could be interpreted as a spin-off from her pacifism, even while she supported the war. It is interesting as a project for women from a woman who appeared to take very little account of her gender identity. As a child, she was encouraged by her mother in "what she considered the manly virtues". She "spoke later of the misfortune of her being born a woman and seemed determined to ignore her gender",²⁷ wearing often unflattering, asexual garments, as if she thereby covered over any distinction or discrimination to be accorded her.

Weil's reflections on war and its conduct during the period from 1939 to her death in 1943 were fewer than her proposals for after the war, though the amounts are no doubt structured by the kind of work the Free French gave her to do when she arrived in London. Thus, most of Weil's writing at the end of her life focused on political structures and possibilities for France once the war had been won. The concern for justice in peacetime is as strong as it was in the 1934 publication *Oppression and Liberty*, but, because of her subsequent religious experiences, her proposals are placed in a supernatural context. This, as in *The Need For Roots*, continues her suggestions of earlier, more explicitly anti-militaristic, work in condemning nationalism. In the face of "the uprootedness caused by the rise of the nation as, together with money, the only

²⁵McLellan, p.142

²⁶Cabaud, p.193.

²⁷McLellan, p.5.

bond of attachment between individuals",²⁸ she proposes a language not of rights but of obligations to fulfil a range of physical and spiritual needs.²⁹

Simone Weil's death, as that of Virginia Woolf, has frequently been interpreted as a kind of rejection of war. The coroner's verdict of suicide by self-starvation makes her death sound more deliberate and more consciously chosen than most commentators would accept, but it is clear that she did protest at eating, as well as perhaps finding it physically difficult to eat, while victims of the Nazis were starving. There was also a strong strand of asceticism in her personality throughout her life. This depth of sympathy with the victims of war establishes her as anti-militarist, even if she would not by the end of her life describe herself as pacifist. Her relationship to pacifism is different from many women, because for her it was possible to choose whether or not to fight, in the Spanish Civil War. This means at least that in the years 1936-9, when she called herself pacifist, she did so in conscious opposition to the vision not of other people fighting 'for' her, but of fighting herself, even though her military experience was in fact minimal, so that she did not, for instance, know what it was to kill. There are, therefore, different stages even in her pacifism, as well as different phases in her reaction to war, dependent on the historical circumstances of the time.

Summary

Brittain, Woolf and Weil clearly develop very different frameworks for their work, and their conclusions about war are correspondingly diverse. Their work illustrates that there is no single response to war, even amongst women of relatively similar social circumstances. Vera Brittain's response to the second world war was shaped by her experience of nursing and of bereavement in the first; it was developed alongside her understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus. Her pacifism does not seem to have been informed directly by her feminism. For Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, anti-militarism and feminism were inextricably linked. The Christian Church was, for her, also enmeshed in the web of masculinism and militarism which she wished women to oppose. Yet, in the realities of the political situation after the outbreak of war, she could see no other way to oppose fascism than military intervention. This, too, was Simone Weil's conclusion. But for her, political radicalism was the primary concern, not

²⁸McLellan, p.252.

²⁹This strand echoes into the present as in Linda Woodhead's work in feminist theological ethics. L. Woodhead, "Feminism and Christian Ethics" in T. Elwes, ed., *Women's Voices: Essays in Contemporary Feminist Theology*, London: Marshall Pickering 1992. This essay is discussed below, p.129. See also note 19, chapter 4, for reference to Simone Weil's essay "On Human Personality".

adherence to pacifism for its own sake. By the end of her life, her writings projected towards peacetime, showing her opposition to the chaos of war through political proposals for the rebuilding of France. They were increasingly informed by the Christian spirituality she developed.

A political point is worth noting. The two British women lived through the change of women being given the right to vote. Weil, the Frenchwoman, never had that right, though it did not stop her involvement in political campaigning. But it is an example of the variety of relationships women may have to political structures and to political campaigning (including, of course, to decisions about military matters made within political structures) which both affect and are affected by expectations of women in society.

Some difficulties have arisen over describing these women as 'pacifist'. This is an indication of the ambivalences, heightened in wartime, of women's relationship to pacifism. It is possible to define pacifism in a broad sense, as the refusal to take part in anything that promotes or enables war or military preparation, and in such a broad sense the definition can be applicable to men and women. When Sheppard began to gather public support for an absolute pacifist stand, he aimed his campaign at men rather than women, since he thought women already showed support for the cause of peace. However, in this choice of direction, and in any narrower definition of pacifism (as not being prepared to fight), there may be also the underlying assumption that women cannot be pacifists since they do not choose not to fight, if their country deems that they will never be required to fight. Women's relationship to pacifism changes in a case such as Simone Weil's where at one point she chose to fight (or at least to join up to fight); and it would be different again in a country which conscripted women as well as men. In a country where women are not conscripted to fight, however, women may choose, as Vera Brittain did, to define themselves as pacifist. Others may choose no label and find more freedom to comment on issues of war and peace when their comments do not have to be defined as pacifist or not.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Many women encounter violence day in and day out in their homes. The home is supposed to be the place of safety, still women's particular place and context for so

many. But the home is a dangerous place for many women and children;³⁰ the family may be a far from harmonious context. Therefore, the label 'domestic violence', if it is read correctly, is highly disturbing. The word 'domestic' carries connotations of cosy calmness, and perhaps gender associations also, which contrast sharply with the word 'violence'. But, problematically, this label does not highlight the role of the agent of abuse, and has no reference to the gender of the usual perpetrator or victim. It may also be used to describe the abuse of children or, increasingly, elderly people. When this subject rose to prominence as an issue to be tackled in the 1970s, the familiar term was 'battered woman', which indicates the severity of what happens to women, or 'wife beating', which implies the agent of abuse. The latter term reflects the almost exclusive attention given at first to violence in marriage relationships but it is clear now that it is not just wives who are battered, partly reflective of a rapid rise in cohabitation. However, research suggests that the abuse under discussion is connected with many of the traditional assumptions and roles surrounding the social institution of marriage. Many relationships which are not legally marriage relationships are still modelled on those aspects of marriage.

Debate has often centered on the label 'victim', with many wishing to substitute the label 'survivor' instead. The two words have different associations of agency, 'survivor' emphasising women's agency in overcoming the abuse of which they were not agents. 'Victim' appears too passive a word to refer to women who, it is increasingly being shown, use a wide variety of active measures to deal with their experiences of abuse. However, Kirkwood points out that there may well still be a need for the word 'victim' to allow women to see the process by which they were victimised, by another's agency, in order to be able to place the blame away from themselves. She also prefers the term 'survival' to 'survivor', because her own research has shown that recovery from abuse is a process, rather than a simple state.³¹

Researchers and activists often use differing definitions to delimit their subject when discussing the abuse of women in intimate relationships. The abuse which all include is physical attack. This may mean anything from a single slap or punch, to being beaten

³⁰I do not intend to deny that men encounter violence day by day, on the streets, and even in the home, but my chosen focus for the purpose of this study is on women. Although the vast majority of relationships in which battering takes place are heterosexual, it is also important to note that women are beginning to find ways of speaking out about battering in lesbian relationships, to the dismay of those feminists who have idealised lesbian relationships.

³¹C. Kirkwood, *Leaving Abusive Partners*, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1993, p.135-137.

up. It may result in a variety of injuries from bruises to internal injuries, and even death (though in view of the assertions of many batterers that their behaviour is out of their control, it is significant that death is not the usual result). Sexual violence is also a feature of a large number of cases of abuse and assault by husbands and lovers. It is a tool by means of which a woman is degraded and humiliated.

The physical aspects of battering are the easiest to quantify and are, therefore, the usual focus of attention.³² However, such a focus excludes the emotional and psychological abuse that often form the terrifying context for acts of physical violence. Kirkwood distinguishes in her analysis between the emotional scars left by physical abuse, and abuse enacted at the emotional level. Verbal insults, manipulation, insisting on fulfilment of impossible demands lead to degradation, loss of self-esteem, and the objectification of women. She concludes, from her research, "It is evident from the interviews that recovery from emotional abuse was far more integral to the women's experiences than was recovery from physical abuse".³³

Abusive relationships continue for varying lengths of time. A violent incident may, rarely, be a one-off; some women leave a relationship after one violent action towards them. More usually the violence in a relationship escalates over time and may even end with the death of one or other partner. Some women leave the relationship after years of abuse, but many of the controversies over domestic violence centre on why women stay with abusive partners, and what factors make it hard for them to leave. Furthermore, leaving the relationship does not always end the abuse. The controversies are, however, turned around by Ann Jones: "If researchers were not quite so intent upon assigning the pathological behaviour to the women, they might see that the more telling question is not 'Why do the women stay?' but 'Why don't the men let them go?'"³⁴

Statistics on the incidence of domestic violence are problematic. Many claims are extrapolations from small samples. Some researchers use crime statistics - domestic violence accounts for a quarter of all violent crime in Britain - but, in using these figures, police categorisation of incidents and likely under-reporting must be taken into

³²K. Yllö and M. Bograd, eds., *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1988. In this book, the editors explicitly state that they are only discussing physical violence.

³³Kirkwood, p.44-45.

³⁴A. Jones, *Women Who Kill*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980, p.299.

account. Statistics calculated from random surveys must be examined closely to determine what is actually described by those surveys, from the particular questions asked of respondents. Yet, taking all the problems into account, what does seem clear from statistics and from the experiences of people working with the victims of domestic violence, is that the incidence of abuse is much higher than people wish to believe, occurring across all classes, races and religions.

Battered women were 'discovered', publicly, in the 1970s. There is no suggestion that women were not being abused within home and family before that, but public attention and definition has a history. The 'battered women's movement' has its history within second wave feminism.³⁵ In Britain, a community centre for young mothers was opened by Erin Pizzey in Chiswick in 1971; responding to perceived need, it soon became the first women's refuge. Other refuges were soon opened in other British cities. In America, women's refuges emerged out of anti-rape work and consciousness-raising groups within the women's movement. The experience wherever refuges have been opened has been that, despite poor conditions, places in them are oversubscribed. This has been one of the reasons activists in the movement have given for their intuition about the size of the problem, since only those women with fewest resources of their own turned to refuges. Funding for refuges was at first entirely voluntary, but some public funding has been made available in many countries. Funding, though welcome and necessary, is often dependent on the funding body's demands being met. Issues of funding are noted by Schechter and Dobash and Dobash as the catalyst for controversy on a range of issues, particularly decision-making structures and relationships with professional services.

An important focus of the battered women's movement has always been political campaigning. Refuges have provided space for women to talk together, to raise consciousness, to seek explanations for domestic violence, and to take action from the grassroots, campaigning for change. The movement has been important, not just for individual women, but for showing up society's attitudes to battered women. Pizzey writes of her discovery of the reactions of social workers, health service professionals, police and the judiciary in the course of seeking to support women. For instance she complains at hospital staff treating symptoms alone, whatever they suspect about the

³⁵This brief history of the battered women's movement is dependent on E. Pizzey, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*, London: Penguin Books, 1979; S. Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, London: Pluto Press, 1982; and R.P. Dobash and R.E. Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992.

causes of the symptoms. Much campaigning activity has focused on trying to change attitudes in the criminal justice system. This campaigning clearly differs depending on the particular country's justice system. In Britain, the struggle has been to have assaults on wives and girlfriends acknowledged as a serious criminal offence, and not just a matter for the civil courts.³⁶

Research about domestic violence highlights the importance and the politics of interpretation. Attempts to analyse and explain the battering of women in intimate relationships can be generally categorised under 'psychological' and 'sociological' headings. Then there are feminist explanations, sometimes seen as a third area of explanation, and sometimes seen under the previous two categories. Psychological research into domestic violence tends to focus on individual traits, those of the perpetrator or victim. Focus on the perpetrator seeks to explain what is presupposed to be deviant behaviour. Such approaches have been criticised for not explaining why battering is far more likely to be male than female behaviour, and why the 'deviant' behaviour is only demonstrated towards the partner in the domestic context, as is usually the case.

The first psychological research into domestic violence against women, focused on the victim's personality traits, offering 'female masochism' theories. Suspicion of these theories from America in the 1940s and 1950s has extended, in feminist circles, to any other theories which seem to blame battered women for their plight. Some avowedly feminist work is caught in this criticism, such as Lenore Walker's work on the cycle of violence, 'learned helplessness' and the 'battered woman syndrome'.³⁷ The notion of 'learned helplessness' has been particularly controversial, interpreted to mean that the victim of battering learns to be passive and helpless, staying with her abuser, rather than trying to escape from the situation. Walker's own definition of 'learned helplessness' is not so insidious ("Learned helplessness describes the process by which organisms learn that they cannot predict whether what they do will result in a particular outcome...It does not mean they learn to behave in a helpless way."³⁸) but her behaviourist outlook

³⁶In America, police policy has often been determined on the grounds of supposed risks to police. "It is ironic that on the one hand, the police tended to dismiss domestic disturbances as family 'spats' that a woman could handle on her own and, on the other hand, have judged themselves to be in such probable danger that it was extremely risky to interfere". O.W. Barnett and A.D. LaViolette, *It Could Happen To Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993, p.39.

³⁷L. Walker, "The Battered Woman Syndrome is a Psychological Consequence of Abuse", in Gelles and Loseke, eds., *Current Controversies on Family Violence*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993; Walker's work is also discussed in detail in Barnett and LaViolette, and in Kirkwood.

³⁸Walker, in Gelles and Loseke, p.134-135.

makes too straightforward a link between cause and behavioural effect, without taking into account the thinking, however confused, and the choices, however apparently limited, of the human subject. Critics of Walker's 'battered woman syndrome' (a subset of symptoms of the more widely recognised 'post-traumatic stress disorder') see an element of victim blaming in the suggestion that all battered women have similar psychological symptoms, though I think that Walker's case is fair in that she sees these symptoms as consequences, not causes, of abuse, and leaves room for recovery.

Sociological research on 'family violence' has been even more controversial, particularly in the work of Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz. When these researchers published *Behind Closed Doors*,³⁹ they gained massive publicity for their claim that there were as many battered husbands as battered wives in America. They came to this conclusion from a large national survey analysing incidents of violence in the domestic context on their own Conflict Tactics Scale. Extensive and damaging critiques have been made of what this scale, and the survey as a whole, really measured. The scale enables the counting of incidents of violence without any attention to their context, intention or meaning. No distinction can be made between self-defence and attack; no attention is paid to the injury or lack of it resulting from the action; frequency is downplayed. (What few critics point out is that the reason for this seems to be the authors' presupposition that every act of violence can be viewed in the same way because any act of violence is wrong.) Researchers other than these three think it likely that at least 90% of spousal violence is husband-to-wife, with 5-10% wife-to-husband, the latter figure *including* violence in self-defence.

Feminist research into domestic violence is distinguished by its gender analysis. Feminist researchers want to explore why (discounting claims of equivalence for the reasons outlined above) the overwhelming pattern of domestic violence is that men beat their female partners. "Instead of examining why this particular man beats his particular wife, feminists seek to understand why men in general use physical force against their partners and what functions this serves within a given society in a specific historical context".⁴⁰ Two of the most prominent feminist perspectives situate "battering as a part of women's oppression within the family, and ... woman battering as a specific example

³⁹M. Straus, R. Gelles and S. Steinmetz, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*, Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980.

⁴⁰M. Bograd, introduction to Yllö and Bograd, p.13.

of male violence against women".⁴¹ The work of Dobash and Dobash was particularly crucial as the first research which used male domination as an interpretative tool.⁴² *Violence Against Wives* traces the stages of violent relationships, arguing that the seeds of wife beating are present in traditional assumptions about the cultural practice of marriage. Feminists argue that battering develops from a man's belief in his right to punish his wife, the belief that male authority in the household is supreme and must be maintained, and that the wife's role is to provide domestic and sexual services.

Feminist research which developed from grassroots activism in aiding abused women, describes the social factors that make it hard for women to leave abusive partners. Thus the social structures of housing provision, employment for women, levels of pay for women, and childcare provision all demand examination. So does the criminal justice system, the likelihood of women's physical safety after they leave abusive partners, health care provision and laws on divorce. It is also feminist research that has undermined the notion of the passive battered woman, highlighting the great variety of strategies women use to lessen abuse, to draw attention to their plight, to change their own awareness of their situation, and to escape abuse. Feminist research is openly and avowedly political: it is not 'objective' and uncommitted, but is *for* women. This has provoked a healthy debate on the ethics of research.

All the research explanations answer certain questions, largely dependent on the questions originally asked by researchers. But there are particular questions that need to be answered by those theories that attempt the broadest explanations of why violence is perpetrated so often by men on the bodies of women in intimate relationships. They need to attend to why battering happens in so many relationships, and why it happens predominantly to women as do the feminist explanations that theorise about men's oppression of women. But where feminist explanations may be weaker is in answering the question of why, if these dynamics of male oppression are so apparently universal, such violence is not a feature of all heterosexual, marriage-like relationships.

How might a feminist theologian reflect on this issue?⁴³ Christianity has been depicted as fostering sexism, creating the conditions for domestic violence, and then ignoring it

⁴¹Kirkwood, p.23.

⁴²R.E Dobash and R. Dobash, *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against The Patriarchy*, New York: Free Press, 1979.

⁴³The paragraphs below on a theology of power and language about suffering are followed up in chapter 5, p.168-169 below.

pastorally. Increasingly there is Christian literature which states quite clearly that the abuse of women in intimate relationships is wrong. Much of this literature has a strong pastoral focus.⁴⁴ But domestic violence also raises fundamental questions for Christian doctrine. The alleged complicity with sexism which has been identified in Christianity centres on Biblical injunctions to wives to be submissive to their husbands. Feminist theologians whose root notion is that women as well as men are made in the image of God have re-read these injunctions. Alsdurf and Alsdurf, for instance, argue there can be no passivity or submission in the face of abuse, but rather a 'tough' love that demands righteous behaviour and change from the abuser.⁴⁵ 'Domination' and 'submission' are the problematic terms and they are terms about relative power. There is, thus, work to be done on the theology of power in Christian doctrine. We need to emphasise the power of God as power for creativity and empowerment, rather than hierarchy, control and domination, and to balance it with the image of the vulnerability and powerlessness of Jesus on the cross. But this is a balance - an image of vulnerability and powerlessness alone will not be helpful for abused women who need to find the power which will free them from the abusive situation.

The most difficult area relating to domestic violence is the interpretation of Christian teaching about suffering, both the suffering of Jesus on the cross, and of Christian disciples. Joanne Brown and Rebecca Parker argue that Christianity can be of no use to women while the doctrine of the atonement is at its heart.⁴⁶ They condemn many different theories of the atonement for adhering to the notion that there can be some good in suffering, because there is some good in Jesus' death on the cross. What they have to say is important, though Mary Grey's work⁴⁷ on a feminist theology of redemption answers some of their questions. However, Brown and Parker work with

⁴⁴E.g. M.D. Pellauer, B. Chester and J. Boyajian, eds., *Sexual Abuse and Assault: A Handbook for Clergy and Religious Professionals*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1987.

⁴⁵P. Alsdurf and J.M. Alsdurf, "Wife Abuse and Scripture", in A. Horton and J. Williamson, eds., *Abuse and Religion*, New York: Free Press, 1988.

⁴⁶J.C. Brown and R. Parker, "For God So Loved The World?" in J. Brown and C. Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989, p.3.

⁴⁷M. Grey, *Redeeming The Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition*, London: SPCK, 1989. Her exposition of redemption is about re-creation and the process leading to wholeness, concentrating on women's needs for wholeness, using the insights of process theology. Her project is "first, to establish that the 'raw stuff' of the world is relational; secondly, to show how right relationship is at the heart of the redemptive process; and thirdly, to show that this is in fact the creative divine process at work in history from all time", p.31-32.

the common, and to my mind mistaken, assumption that there is a straightforward comparison possible between Jesus' death on the cross and the suffering which disciples face. They also assume that it is Jesus' *suffering* which is pronounced good in itself in doctrines of the atonement, rather than, for instance, his refusal to deny his message, or what his death and resurrection achieved.

Christian teaching has been committed to life-long marriage, and hostile to divorce in many traditions. The prohibition on divorce has often come before any thorough discussion of the theology of marriage. Though they are being abused, Christian women have all too frequently been told that the sanctity of marriage comes before all else, and they will be to blame if they walk out of an abusive marriage, thus breaking the marriage covenant. Mitzi Eilts⁴⁸ agrees that marriage is fruitfully understood by the model of covenant, but she goes on to explore that model, pointing out that, in the Hebrew Bible, when Israel departed from their side of the covenant, God declared the covenant broken. Using this model, it is the abusive husband, not the abused wife, who breaks the covenant, and it is right and proper for the wife in those circumstances to declare the covenant broken. A theology developed from this model labels the perpetuation of abuse more sinful than divorce.

Feminism has much to say about the evil of patriarchy. Christianity has a framework for speaking about evil which is often missing in secular philosophies. But there is also a framework for change, in a scheme of redemption. Perhaps it is this insistence on the possibility of change which means Christian theology can acknowledge pervasive evil, and yet avoid the rhetoric of blaming all men, irredeemably, for a patriarchal society and for domestic violence.

Finally, Christian theology has a resource in its witness to the reality of forgiveness. Yet this potential resource has often been a liability as well. For some strands of Christian tradition have portrayed forgiveness as an immediate salve, a lightning bolt from God, with little reference to what human beings do or how they feel. To use Bonhoeffer's term, 'cheap grace' seems to have come before the truth and 'costly grace' of repentance and transformation. Recovery from abuse is a process, and forgiveness has its place in that process, but usually not at the beginning. 'Forgiveness' may be the right word to describe the final 'letting go' which enables someone to get beyond the experience, which they will, however, never forget. Recovery with forgiveness appears to be most likely where there is repentance on the part of the offender (real, costly repentance),

⁴⁸M.N. Eilts, "Saving the Family: When Is Covenant Broken?" in Horton and Williamson eds.

and where justice has a place. The knowledge of forgiveness as itself a process, and as part of a process of healing, may be valuable in thinking again about the grace of God experienced in the lives of all Christians.

Along with other feminist theologians, I want to critique the way the Christian tradition has been complicit in accepting, even demanding, the submission of women, creating the opportunity for abuse. But I still believe there is a rich vein of Christian resources which can aid women resisting abuse. Feminist theologians must critique and construct, must educate, but above all must break the silence, so that the Christian churches become a part of the healing process.

WOMEN WHO KILL

In this section I examine some work that has been done on women who kill, *outside* the context of legitimated violence in the military or in wartime. The discussion could begin from several positions: from the stories of women who have killed, biographically or autobiographically narrated; from sociological or criminological data and theory, or from more general work on aggression in women, and in humans generally. This discussion uncovers layers of popular ideology, often generously mixed in with supposedly objective research, which does not always match with women's experiences.

Research on aggression often seems, at its crudest, to rehearse endless variations on the nature/nurture debate. The different conclusions - for instance Montagu's criticisms of Lorenz for placing too much emphasis on genetic determination and not enough on the learning of overt aggressive behaviour⁴⁹ - seem to me to reflect the breadth of definition of aggressive behaviour rather than opposition over particular examples, although human similarity to and difference from other animals is also a cause of dissension. But that leads to the problem of whether the discussion is really about *human* aggression. Is the discussion of 'human' aggression going to be at all relevant in the exploration of why some women kill? Popular ideology, I have suggested, assumes that women are less aggressive than men. Montagu purports to discuss human aggression, but the occasional slips in his language (discussing African Pygmy tribes: .."occasional chastisement of one's wife is as far as any form of violence goes"⁵⁰) are

⁴⁹A. Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression*, Oxford University Press, 1976, chapter 1; K. Lorenz, *On Aggression*.

⁵⁰Montagu, p.178 - also a revealing quote for his attitude to domestic violence!

just one indicator that his normative image is of male aggression. Segal shows that she understands the same thing from Lorenz's classic work: "Lorenz's belief [that almost all human conduct is to do with innate aggression] is hardly surprising, when almost anything which men habitually do in their positions as the most powerful group in society is included in Lorenz's ill-defined and imprecise definition of 'aggression'".⁵¹ Many feminists would, I'm sure, also look at this debate with some suspicion of any language which smacks of determinism, whether it makes women appear to be innately aggressive or, more usually, not. Mary Midgley is more helpful here, arguing that we can talk of human nature, of genetic inheritance and social causes without implying that our individual actions are determined.⁵²

It seems that women's violence is not expected, and therefore not much studied when it does occur. Criminologists have largely ignored women until very recently. Those cases of violence that do hit the headlines, probably because they are the most frequent, often involve women who have been subjected to violence by partners. Certainly women are statistically more likely to kill their intimates than strangers. Angela Browne based her American study, *When Battered Women Kill*, on interviews with forty-two women charged in connection with the death or serious injury of their male partners, compared with a 'control' group of women who had been abused by their partners but had not killed or attempted to kill them. She discusses the patterns in relationships which ended with catastrophic violence on the woman's part, seeing the roots in traditional romantic myths involving male/female roles, and particularly issues of control. "Men's abuse of their mates is sheltered within romantic traditions that assign women the roles of response and submission and men the tasks of initiation, seduction, and control."⁵³

Her comparison of the two groups of women and what they say about their relationships leads Browne to conclude that the major difference between the two groups is not the women, but the behaviour of the men concerned. Perhaps obvious - and yet not the usual focus of initial investigations. Here certain perceptions and ideologies are at work: the focus of discussion is on what is expected of women. For instance, the difficulty women have with the justice system when they plead self-defence as the reason for their violent actions, reveals that women are not supposed to act

⁵¹L. Segal, *Is The Future Female?*, p.182.

⁵²M. Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*, Harvester Press, 1978, cf. particularly her introduction.

⁵³A. Browne, *When Battered Women Kill*, New York: Free Press, 1987, p.179. In this she follows Dobash and Dobash, *Violence Against Wives*, see above, p.48.

effectively to defend themselves. Browne notes also that in court cases the question of why women killed often becomes the question of why they stayed: "In cases in which the battered woman kills her abuser, the burden of proof usually falls on the woman to show why she did not leave the relationship, even though legally she need only demonstrate that she was in danger and was legitimately standing her ground in her own home".⁵⁴ What is revealed in the cases Browne discusses is the underlying moral image of women: "in our society, women who commit violent acts are more typically seen as crazy or irrational than as behaving responsibly".⁵⁵ What is at issue is not the crime, but the woman herself, and the image of other women which she represents or transgresses.

The final chapter of Ann Jones' *Women Who Kill* also examines the cases of women, particularly recently, who have been accused of killing the male partners who abused them. Throughout her book Jones is concerned with the gender stereotyping and the myths about gender revealed in public opinion, in court practices and in the sentencing of women who kill. To explore this, she discusses a broad sweep of American history to reveal patterns of murder committed by women - though it is on occasions difficult to know whether she is revealing or imposing the pattern of types of crime. She shows the way in which infanticide was treated at one time as the most horrific crime a woman could commit, and how, over the years, it was reduced in seriousness in comparison with the killing of an adult. She traces the spectre of the poisoning wife, and the fear of the unfaithful wife conspiring with her lover to murder her husband. She reveals the way women have been viewed by the courts through popular defences to the charge of homicide, for instance the 'lack of motive' defence, in which women were pronounced 'not guilty' because the court could not believe that a woman would ever have a motive for such a crime.⁵⁶ Jones' work demonstrates decisively that the non-normative woman is labelled 'bad', and is to be punished severely; particularly the woman who does not conform to society's norms of sexual behaviour for her. But she also cuts through

⁵⁴Browne, p.174.

⁵⁵*ibid.*, p.176.

⁵⁶These are the kind of assumptions that Jones believes lay behind the Lizzie Borden case, and her narrative shows her attitude to them, especially as they reveal additional class prejudices as well. "Lizzie Borden owed her life largely to those tacit assumptions: ladies aren't strong enough to swing a two-pound hammer hard enough to break a brittle substance one-sixteenth of an inch thick. Ladies cry a lot. Ladies love to stay home all the time. Ladies are ceaselessly grateful to the men - fathers or husbands - who support them". None of these things were ever assumed of the female Irish servant suspected of the murder. A. Jones, p.231.

another myth, that women are only aggressive or violent in self-defence. She examines plenty of cases where the motive for murder is something other than self-defence.

This is also Alix Kirsta's concern in her recent book, *Deadlier Than The Male*.⁵⁷ Knowing that the subject 'women and violence' usually elicits information on women as victims of violence, she deliberately examines the other side of the coin: women as perpetrators of violence. She blurs the boundaries somewhat between the words 'aggression' and 'violence', although she is unequivocal that aggression in women, as in men, is part of our survival instinct and needs to be viewed positively. Her argument is that female aggression *can* lead to female violence, just as surely as male aggression *can* lead to male violence, and this will become more apparent as the myth that women are 'naturally' non-aggressive continues to break down. She challenges many feminists with this argument: "Those howls of feminist outrage that greet any suggestion that women may have an equal tendency to violence gives the game away about just how much blinkered hypocrisy still skews the central premise behind much radical feminism".⁵⁸ She refutes any suggestion that women's violence, *en masse*, should be interpreted as men's responsibility. Yet she is also clear that the cases of violence she discusses are *abuses* of the positive potential of aggression. It is not women's potential for violence that Kirsta fears, but the moral vacuum, "the suspension of moral vigilance, the weakness and failure of certain numbers of us to live, as philosopher Mary Midgley puts it, as well as we are capable of".⁵⁹ Kirsta does not condone or justify the horrific cases she explores.

Kirsta begins her discussion by examining "The Angry Women: The Rise of Machisma" and "The New Female Criminal". This issue hit the headlines with tabloid references to "burly girlies" after the alleged mugging of an actress. An article in *The Guardian* reflecting on the incident begins, "Boys do it, so in this time of equal opportunity why not girls? Juvenile female gangs are on the rampage, if reports yesterday after the alleged mugging of actress Elizabeth Hurley can be believed."⁶⁰ Kirsta notes the strong

⁵⁷A. Kirsta, *Deadlier Than The Male: Violence and Aggression in Women*, London: HarperCollins, 1994.

⁵⁸*ibid.*, p.5.

⁵⁹*ibid.*, p.169.

⁶⁰Report by Angella Johnson in *The Guardian*, 25th November, 1994. The report of this incident is followed by an article on teenage gangs of young women in Brighton, particularly revealing for the anti-feminist attitudes of a female social worker at a youth centre who is quoted as saying, "Girls started to think - why shouldn't we do it too. Why shouldn't we go around thumping students? You could see them as tomorrow's feminists." The title of the article is also significant - perhaps showing

underlying suspicion of feminism revealed in the near hysteria about acts of female criminality: "The subtext [of press coverage is] inevitably ... 'Give women more freedom and *see what you get?*'" (italics in original).⁶¹ Her investigation suggests that the incidents of criminal behaviour to which the media draw such attention are far more to do with class, race, and the poverty which attaches to these, than to changing sex roles. Kirsta goes to the heart of images that are apparently taboo in our society's picture of women. As do Browne and Jones, she deals with women who kill their abusers, but she also discusses female murders which have apparently nothing to do with abuse and are simply examples of appalling cruelty, such as the kidnap, torture and murder of Suzanne Capper: "We delude ourselves if we really believe women's cruelty or ability to revel in gratuitous violence to be any less than men's".⁶² There is also discussion here of women who kill children, women who physically abuse male partners, female serial killers and sexual abusers.

Throughout, Kirsta's chief concern is to destroy any myths about what women are or are not capable of, and at the same time to demonstrate how those myths are operative in the treatment of offenders. She uncovers a continuing, underlying belief that women's criminality comes from maladjustment to their 'appropriate' social role (a standard feature of criminological and psychological speculation about female criminals in the early years of this century). For instance, a disproportionate number of women are sentenced to 'treatment' (usually drug treatment) in special hospitals, as opposed to punishment, for their violent offences. The implication is that women are still not being held fully responsible for their crimes. This is what Kirsta wishes to attack: "surely to deny that they [women] are capable of the full range of human experience, emotion and impulses, good and bad, is profoundly insulting, diminishing women as multidimensional and fully functional beings?"⁶³ She reveals the worst side of women for, it seems to me, precisely the right purpose. As the feminist theological ethicist tackles this issue, there must be no attempt to make excuses, as if women were not responsible for their actions. At the same time, this kind of research, giving a clearer picture of cases where women are violent, allows us to question the factors that lead women into violence, and what lies behind the reaction they receive. The theologian

that the journalist has a greater understanding of the position of women than the social worker: "Rude Girls rule - but only on periphery".

⁶¹Kirsta, p.3.

⁶²*ibid.*, p.135.

⁶³*ibid.*, p.6

will want to interpret this subject from a perspective which acknowledges the reality of evil in human beings, and the tragedy, pain and waste which can be the result of people's choices. But the possibility of injustice being meted out to women, because of myths about the behaviour that is proper to them, must also be faced, particularly if those myths are supported by Christian teaching that women should be submissive.

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

In recent years, many people have argued that women should be allowed to join the armed forces on equal terms with men. The argument has been used by liberal feminists as part of their demand for equal rights for women, even extending to the demand for the 'right' of women, in America, to be conscripted. The film *Private Benjamin* is one image of the result: an empty-headed upper-class young woman almost accidentally volunteers for the army, bumbling her way inexpertly through boot camp. The film is a comedy, and women soldiers are something of a joke. There has been much recent media coverage in Britain of women who were pushed to resign from the forces now receiving large compensation awards. The image of 'scrounger' seems to predominate in some media portrayals, with little regard for the employment practices of the armed forces, demanding the resignations of women who became pregnant and refused to have an abortion. One woman forced out of the RAF had her feelings summed up: "She feels she was discriminated against not only when she was ordered to leave because of her pregnancy, but throughout her time in the RAF."⁶⁴

But the military is generally seen as men's sphere, not women's. Kate Muir begins her book *Arms and the Woman* with a quote from Nietzsche (1883): "Man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior: all else is folly".⁶⁵ Women warriors are treated as the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, even where women are part of the military, there are still rules banning them from going into combat, which demonstrate women's 'exceptional' status. This status also explains the hiddenness of women who are dependent on the military in other ways, either in support services, or because they are married to soldiers. But in history and in myth women and the armed forces *have* been linked. Military forces have been for centuries

⁶⁴Report in *The Guardian*, Jan. 10th, 1994. On woman ex-army officer I talked to did, however, feel that the compensation payments were extremely unfair since women knew the rules of employment and knew what would happen if they became pregnant.

⁶⁵K. Muir, *Arms and the Woman*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1992, p.13.

dependent on the presence of women to provide food, clothing, nursing and sexual services to troops. The 'camp followers' image is of prostitution, but women often followed husbands who were in the army. Labelling such women 'whores' gave an excuse for them to be controlled.⁶⁶

The legend of the Amazons is still powerful as the predominant image of female warriors. But their legend depended not simply on their exploits as warriors, judged alongside those of any other warriors, but on the threat to order they represented as *women* fighting. The Greeks who wrote of the Amazons placed them geographically on the edges of their known world, and described them in contrast with the ideal Athenian lady.⁶⁷ The question of women's relationship with armed forces, inevitably it seems, becomes a question of sex and gender roles. "Where war is defined as a male activity, and where highly-valued masculine characteristics are often associated with war, a female warrior must be seen as inherently unsettling to the social order".⁶⁸ But historical examples can be found, both of individual women, often dressed as men, in regular fighting forces, and of groups of women fighting, sanctioned by their society, either in extraordinary circumstances or as an extraordinary unit. Thus, Dahomeyan women in West Africa in the nineteenth century provided the royal bodyguard, and even a central part of that kingdom's military elite;⁶⁹ women in Inka society probably went beyond their traditional ritual role near the battlefield, to fight the Spanish invaders in sixteenth century South America,⁷⁰ Kikuyu women formed part of the guerrilla troops in the Kenyan Mau Mau revolt.⁷¹ One of the latest archaeological discoveries of terracotta warriors in China included a cavalry of female warriors, thought to date from the Western Han dynasty, almost 2,000 years ago. Antonia Fraser notes how important historical examples of women warriors have been, particularly for the 'warrior queens' she discusses: it has seemed important for women to prove there have been antecedents to their military actions, to give them validity.⁷²

⁶⁶Cynthia Enloe develops this line of argument, about the military's control of women, in *Does Khaki Become You?*, London: Pandora Press, 1988.

⁶⁷A. Fraser, p.19f.; I. Kirk, "Images of Amazons: Marriage and Matriarchy" in MacDonald, *et al.*, p.30.

⁶⁸Macdonald, *et al.*, p.6.

⁶⁹Muir, p.83f.

⁷⁰P. Dransart, "Women and Ritual Conflict in Inka Society", in Macdonald *et al.*

⁷¹T. Kanogo, "Kikuyu Women and the Politics of Protest: Mau Mau", in Macdonald *et al.*

⁷²A. Fraser, p.10

One example of the individual, disguised, woman soldier is provided in *The Female Soldier; or, the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*, published in 1750.⁷³ Hannah Snell was born in 1723, and dressed as a man and joined the army in 1745 to find the husband who had deserted her. She spent time in the army and then in the navy from 1745 to 1750, without her sex being discovered. The most interesting thing about the text of her story is the narrative voice - that of her publisher - which interprets the story to a more high-brow readership than those who would have been used to the exploits of the woman soldier in lower-class popular ballads.⁷⁴ Many of her military exploits are the standard stuff of ballad, but the narrator's chief concern is with a certain portrayal of Hannah Snell's womanhood, including his prurient interest in the fact that she 'kept her virtue' throughout her adventures.

In this century women have been allowed to join the armed forces, at first in auxiliary roles, under the exceptional circumstances of wartime, to free more men for combat roles. Pip Beck tells her own story of her memories of wartime in the WAAF, during the second world war.⁷⁵ Her predominant attitude seems to have been a hero worship of the airmen, and a sense of herself *as a woman* taking pride in the men going off to war. Her book demonstrates little sense of the reality and humanity of the enemy, but shows some of the factors that attracted a young, single woman to the armed services. Yet the book also highlights the restricted training and duties open to women, and the hostility they encountered from many men. This is echoed in work by D'Ann Campbell on the attitudes American women in the forces faced in World War II. Rank and file men held to the traditional pattern: 'nice' girls would be at home, being protected.⁷⁶ With huge numbers of male casualties, Soviet forces in the second world war enlisted women who were trained separately from men. Some were infantry soldiers, some fought in mixed tank units and some formed elite all-women air crews.

⁷³H. Snell, *The Female Soldier; or, the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*, repr., University of California, 1989.

⁷⁴"The narrator's reading identifies her as 'one of the tender Sex, who are afraid of Shaddows, and shudders at the Pressage of a Dream' (15); and yet Snell's *story* presents a life of manifestly forceful and direct actions. The conjunction of these two strains creates in *The Female Soldier* a fascinating and tellingly incongruent texture". D. Dugaw's introduction, *ibid.*, p.vii.

⁷⁵P. Beck, *A WAAF in Bomber Command*, London: Goodall Publications, 1989.

⁷⁶D. Campbell, "The Regimented Women of World War II", in J.B. Elshtain and S. Tobias, eds., *Women, Militarism and War*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1990, p.116.

Yet the expectation remains that women should not engage in combat, despite increasing debate. The myth of women fighters in the Israeli army hides the peacetime reality that women are in non-combat roles. Increasingly attention is being given to women's experiences of the roles they are allowed in modern peacetime armies. Muir explores women's experiences in the different branches of the services, using British and American examples on the whole, but comparing these with statistics and experiences from other European countries and Canada. She examines the problems that women's physical differences from men cause for those who opt to join the infantry, and the particular fears and potential problems of women in the navy, living in closer physical proximity to their male colleagues on board ship. There are still frequent tales of sexual harassment and general hostility affecting women in military training and in postings.⁷⁷ The American drill sergeant's customary use of language which forces the male recruits to prove they are not 'wimps' or 'women' is now notorious. A recent newspaper report on the experiment of mixed basic army training in America demonstrates however, that women can 'buy in' to the same ideology: One woman recruit "said the women, often challenged to do better by the men, found ways in turn to motivate them... 'In the field, I'd go behind a guy who was having trouble and say, 'Hey, you won't let a girl beat you, will you?'"⁷⁸ Despite fears to the contrary, the woman quoted, and many women like her who choose to enlist, does not intend to destroy any stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Muir suggests that once a generation has gone through in the forces who are used to seeing women there, things will settle into the same routines.⁷⁹ I think, however, that if women are taken seriously as soldiers, instead of simply being seen as second-class men, the ideologies of militarism may have to change, in ways we cannot foresee.

The issue of women and combat roles has been confused by the Gulf War, although military command and governments appear to be trying to ignore it. In the second world war, when women worked in anti-aircraft batteries, the work they did was defined as non-combat, while only the work of the men firing the guns was defined as a combat role.⁸⁰ Since the women in this situation were as likely to be killed or injured as the men, this should effectively have undermined the notion that the reason for women

⁷⁷This is borne out by personal conversations with Susan Wing who spent almost 30 years in the British army, rising to the rank of Colonel (one of only six women of that rank when she left in 1992).

⁷⁸Report in the *Washington Post*, reprinted in *The Guardian*, Nov. 24th, 1994.

⁷⁹Muir, p.232.

⁸⁰Enloe, p.123.

not being in combat roles is that they might be better protected. However, "[t]he taboo on women firing weapons was, and is still, designed not to protect women but to protect the mythology, morale, motivation, prestige and privileges of the male soldier, to uphold the idea of the inevitable masculinity of combat".⁸¹ In the Gulf War, women were not allowed into combat zones, and there was fear about how the public would react to the phenomenon of women coming home in bodybags, particularly in America. In fact the reaction was not as sensational as expected. For, despite not officially being in combat, women were killed. Those who received even more publicity were those who were captured. Muir notes, "This time, being a POW was better for women - in the next war it could be the opposite"⁸², for women were beaten less than men, and there is no comparison between the treatment handed out to them by Iraqi soldiers, (despite an accusation of sexual assault while in custody) and the way Kuwaiti women, for example, were treated. In reality, the Gulf War allowed very little geographical space between combat and support roles, with men and women in camp together, and with women driving and flying supplies to front line units. It is to be remembered also that women medical staff in all wars have had to be close to the front, and consequently in danger.

In any discussion of women in the military, historical and sociological research interacts with popular ideology. Questions about whether women can be sufficiently aggressive to kill are often answered in such a way that a prior ideological commitment to the answer "No" is revealed. The real question raised by the presence of women in the armed services is "if soldiering is the ultimate seal on manhood, does it lose its significance if women do it too?"⁸³ From the research I have looked at, it seems at present impossible to explore the experiences of women as soldiers: they have to be looked at as the experiences of *women* soldiers. It is not concern over whether it is physically possible for women to fight, or even whether they should fight, that is really at the heart of anxiety about warrior women, but a concern over gender roles and women's sexuality.⁸⁴ This is why women soldiers must be interpreted as exceptional,

⁸¹Segal, p.174.

⁸²Muir, p.48.

⁸³*ibid.*, p.21.

⁸⁴This may not seem entirely fair to those feminists who argue against the presence of women in the military because of their opposition to militarism. For some radical feminists who argue in this way, however there is still an issue about appropriate gender roles for women, even though those roles are valued in a more positive light than the corresponding male roles. But those who do not wish to see women in the military because they do not wish to see men or women colluding with militarism must face whether they take their argument to the logical and fair extreme of recommending that no one

and women involved with the military in any way subject to military control. Underlying popular ideology is the sense that men's killing can be sanctioned, but that women's killing is always disorderly and out of place with their 'natural' role.

In particular, control is exercised over women's sexual identity. In the second world war, women who worked in the armed forces, as opposed to doing any other war work, had the reputation of being sexually available to the men. That has persisted into the present. Alongside this is the attention given to discovering and dismissing from the forces women who are lesbian, or who are accused of lesbian sexual activity. Muir reports a British male naval captain discussing the fear that women on board navy ships were all going to turn out to be lesbian, or were all rapidly going to become pregnant. He pointed out it couldn't be both!⁸⁵ Issues about women's role and sexuality are behind the sense of incongruity over military motherhood. It was pictures of mothers in uniform tearfully kissing babies goodbye that raised some of the most heated debate at the time of the Gulf War. The debate has been re-ignited in Britain by the revelations about the thousands of women dismissed from the armed forces (until 1990) - in an attempt to ignore the problem of soldiers as mothers, I would suggest. The image of woman as life-giver vies with the image of soldier as life-taker. The soldier who is a father does not seem to evoke such problematic connotations.⁸⁶ This, of course, reveals the lack of seriousness with which fatherhood is taken in our society - ironically, when Christianity proclaims God as 'Father'.

As a feminist theological ethicist, I wish to take questions about women in the military on a par with those about men. Conclusions theological ethicists come to about the necessity for armies or the justification of war must be relevant to the modern situation where both men and women serve in armed forces. Their reflections must take into account how gendered our current images of war, of peace, and of soldiering still are. History, myth and autobiography, as well as Christian theology and tradition are the materials with which we work in such discussions.⁸⁷

should serve in the armed forces.

⁸⁵Muir, p.69. Muir also has a chapter examining the sexual image of the woman soldier evident in many tabloid newspapers.

⁸⁶This is interesting when one considers the presence in Western culture of the Judaeo-Christian story of Abraham nearly sacrificing his son Isaac. Much Christian interpretation of the story has emphasised Abraham's obedience to God and ignored the moral problem the story highlights of the father as life-giver and life-taker.

⁸⁷For more conclusions about women in the military as evaluated through feminist theological ethics, see below p.181f.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN WARTIME

This section is a survey of some of the experiences which are the lot of women in a time of war. Wartime seems supremely the occasion to focus on men: male soldiers and decision makers. It is a time of collective violence, even though many individuals concerned with the war may never experience violent incidents. The dominant western ideology, defining women's status in both wartime and peacetime, is that where women are counts as the 'home front'. There women are to be protected along with children. This ideology is in itself a product of the well-defined battle front,⁸⁸ where women should not be visible, for it has little relevance in lands which have been regularly invaded, as is true of some countries in Europe. There, 'our' home front is the enemy's battle front, and the only ones who do not label it as such are 'our' soldiers. Furthermore the advent of large-scale bombing of civilian areas made the notion of protection problematic. This has only been intensified in the nuclear age, when no area can be seen as well-protected in the face of nuclear weapons. But the propaganda directed at women in wartime constructs their function on the home front, to 'keep the home fires burning', and thus renders invisible the vast range of roles women take up in wartime. Most of the specific data in this section is focused on Britain and on the two world wars.

Dorothy Sheridan, editing an anthology from the Mass-Observation archives, covering World War II, argues that it is in particular twentieth-century warfare that has shifted women from passive to active wartime roles, even if they are not by any means centre stage.⁸⁹ This is most obvious if it is taken to refer to the public and increasingly organised role of women as war workers. Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield describe in depth the life of women as Britain's war workers.⁹⁰ The story of women war workers is a story of the dichotomy between industrial need and popular ideology. For women working outside the home still strained the popular views of appropriate gender

⁸⁸To nuance this argument, a distinction may need to be made between the battle front, which includes support services, women as well as men, (though I would argue women are still meant to be invisible here) and the front line, which in most wars, including the Gulf War, is the area from which women are banned.

⁸⁹D. Sheridan, ed., *Wartime Women*, London: Mandarin, 1991, p.1.

⁹⁰G. Braybon and P. Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*, London: Pandora Press, 1987.

roles, despite the fact that many working-class women always had been employed out of financial necessity. But popular views governed the expectation, fulfilled more at the end of the first than the second world war, that women would be immediately 'demobilised' from their wartime jobs when the war ended, so that things could get back to 'normal'. Attitudes to home and paid work roles stayed remarkably consistent, despite the experiences and contributions of women war workers,⁹¹ suggesting that their wartime roles had been seen as to do with war, not employment.⁹²

During both wars, women were at first simply urged to take up industrial work, *after* it became clear that there was a labour shortage. In the first world war the 'urging' became more urgent with shortage of munitions in 1915. In the second world war British women were compulsorily registered for war work, and a proportion conscripted from 1941. The problems faced by the women, in industry and in services, were remarkably similar in both wars: resentment from male colleagues, suspicion of their abilities from male employers and supervisors, poor pay and conditions, particularly long hours, with no consideration taken of their additional role working in the home, and lack of childcare provision. The health risks of munitions work were also notoriously underplayed. Lack of childcare provision, in particular, as even now, was caused by the clash between the need for women's work outside the home and the strong belief that mothers should still not work.

The protectionism of male trade unionists sometimes blocked the passage to employment of women workers, trying to keep them as long as possible out of men's jobs. Sometimes that same protectionism occasioned bargaining for equal pay for women workers, on the grounds that, otherwise, women might be kept on after the war, as cheap labour, thus destroying men's jobs. Braybon notes, of the first world war, "It was hard for skilled men to believe that women could do similar work, after they had spent their lives accepting the current view of women as careless, temporary workers".⁹³ This is echoed by Summerfield writing of the second war: "Many employers had to be convinced all over again that women were no less competent".⁹⁴

⁹¹Braybon and Summerfield, p.1.

⁹²See below, p.185, for my argument that many of the supposed 'problems' of women in the military need to be re-defined as issues of employment rather than questions about women's relationship to violence or their capacity for aggression.

⁹³Braybon and Summerfield, p.53.

⁹⁴*ibid.*, p.157.

Yet, despite the evident problems, Braybon and Summerfield, as well as Sheridan delving into the Mass-Observation archives, find ample evidence that many women enjoyed their role as necessary workers during both wars. Some women (perhaps those farthest removed from the personal tragedies of wartime) recalled principally the companionship, sense of freedom and self-discovery, and the pride they could take in doing valuable work. For many young, single women, war work meant they had more money and a social life for the first time. Sheridan notes, "It is very clear from the accounts of VE Day that many women, especially the younger ones, were ambivalent when war ended".⁹⁵ As for whether war work changed women's role, "Perhaps the most that can be said about the war period is that it began to raise women's expectations of what might be possible. After all the young women of the war period were the mothers of the 1970s generation of feminists".⁹⁶

The Mass-Observation archives provide valuable vignettes as well as an overview of how some women reacted to the experience of wartime.⁹⁷ Mass-Observation's regular reports were used as reliable indicators of morale, and morale among women was taken very seriously. Women had an important effect, therefore, upon the war effort, upon the ways in which it was possible to sustain the legitimated, collective violence of war. Mass-Observation thus underlines the interconnections of public and private life, and the effect of women's private lives on the public business of decision-making about war. A report from Mass-Observation in 1940 stated: "The material, ever-present things of life - prices, blackout, running a home, evacuating her children, worrying about her men - these things are the first impacts of war, the factors which colour the ordinary woman's desire to win the war and faith in leadership".⁹⁸ The interest of much of the Mass-Observation archive material is its particularity. However much we generalise about the demand for women to expend their energy for men in the home, in addition to war work, this kind of comment can still appear, from a volunteer war worker, about a

⁹⁵Sheridan, p.3.

⁹⁶*ibid.*, p.194.

⁹⁷Sheridan notes the restrictions of what the archives can reveal. Mass-Observers were self-chosen, so many would have been people who were comfortable writing, and who had the time and privacy to keep detailed diaries. Few of those who chose to write were working-class. But she thinks it significant that many *women* chose to write for Mass-Observation: "The degree to which some women feel discounted as public beings makes them grateful to be able to write for Mass-Observation and to have their ideas taken seriously"; *ibid.*, p.7-8.

⁹⁸*ibid.*, p.111. For further discussion of the significance of these interconnections of public and private life, see below, p.171f. (the section 'Violence Public and Private'), particularly p.175.

soldier lodging with her: "He's a good example of a 'mother's darling' - must have been waited on hand and foot, like so many North-country men. Afraid he'll miss it here. My menfolk have to be self-reliant - I don't believe in making a slave of myself for any man."⁹⁹

The fact that women's private lives are critical to the prosecution of war is underlined by Claudia Koonz in her study of women in Germany under Nazism.¹⁰⁰ Koonz argues that very many women's conservatism, and their suspicion of the changing role of women in the Weimar republic, led them towards allegiance to Nazism. Women, as well as men, made Nazism possible, for women had to be imbued with Nazi ideals about motherhood, and the production of a racially fit race. Koonz chronicles also, as far as she can, the extent to which women resisted Nazi ideology and practices. Resistance also was not just a male phenomenon.

Issues about what daily life may be like in a war zone, and how people - civilians and soldiers - may be treated by enemy soldiers have all been raised afresh for us in the spectacle of renewed war in Europe, in the civil war and disintegration in the former Yugoslavia. Civil war always seems to be regarded as the worst form of war - which in itself demonstrates our belief that there may be 'better' and 'worse' in war, and that we expect there to be limits to conduct in war. It is against that background that we have seen again the rise and fall of the scandal of rape in wartime. On one level this is one example of women's experiences of victimisation in war.¹⁰¹ But it is also a particularly significant example, for access to women has been used over centuries as a traditional reward of war. Women are part of the spoils of war. Brownmiller's analysis of rape by soldiers in war, in *Against Our Will*, concentrates on the continuum which links this phenomenon to countless other rapes of women outside the period of war. "In the act and in the excuse, rape in war reveals the male psyche in its boldest form, without the veneer of 'chivalry' or 'civilisation'."¹⁰² She does not, however, analyse rape in war in the context of its illegality, public outrage (however muted or short), and the prosecution of some culprits.

⁹⁹Sheridan, p.152.

¹⁰⁰C. Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, London: Methuen, 1988.

¹⁰¹Lynne Reid Banks, in her novel *Casualties* (London: Penguin Books, 1987) describes the situation of two young Dutch sisters raped by the collaborator who lodged with them. She describes them as war victims, thus aligning their pain with the public situation of war around them; p73-76.

¹⁰²S. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, London: Penguin Books, 1976, p.33.

It is relatively easy to argue that rape by soldiers of 'enemy' women has always been a part of war. History and myth both bear the traces of this side of women's pain. Rape is a symbolic conquest. Antonia Fraser discusses the rape of the daughters of Boadicea as a part of the Roman policy of domination over subject peoples, noting "the rape of the royal female as a ritual act to signify the suppression of a people is one with obvious psychological connotations".¹⁰³ Rape is meant as a particular insult to enemy *men* who, it demonstrates, cannot protect 'their' women. Thus the ideology of war as being about men's concerns and men's quarrels is reinforced; women are marginalised through the abuse of women's bodies. The issue of enemy soldiers' treatment of women came to modern public attention in the plight of Bangladeshi women whose husbands rejected them after they were raped by enemy soldiers. Women twice victimised - even abused a third time by the publicity. For rape in war is the subject of publicity and propaganda. Accusations of German atrocities in both world wars included accusations of rape, which were later said to be wildly exaggerated. This is the 'rise and fall' pattern of such accusations, used by all sides in modern warfare. Again this was highlighted in Bosnia. An article by Linda Grant in *The Guardian* began: "Eight months ago, in a maternity hospital in Zagreb, a British journalist and a French camera crew degenerated into an undignified tussle over the bed of a teenage girl who was pregnant after being raped by a Serbian...Rape in Bosnia was the hottest story of the new year."¹⁰⁴ The article asks what help was available for the women once the initial media interest wore off, and once people began to disbelieve the figures about how many women had been raped.

There is, however, the danger that rape in war is separated off as an outrage from other things that women experience in wartime. Nor is it easy to delineate rape in war in such a way as to separate it from wartime prostitution. This was highlighted when the Japanese government admitted, 40 years later, that "the Japanese army had forced Korean and other Asian women to provide sex for its soldiers before and during the second world war...Until recently Japan had claimed the women became prostitutes of their own accord."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³A. Fraser, p.62.

¹⁰⁴Report in *The Guardian*, August 2nd, 1993.

¹⁰⁵Report in *The Guardian*, August 5th, 1993.

Women's roles in wartime are imposed by war narratives. This is Nancy Huston's argument in her article "Tales of War and Tears of Women"¹⁰⁶. These narratives may be oral stories, newspaper reports, government propaganda, historical fiction, autobiography etc. "The struggle for exclusive occupation of the field of discourse is as vital as the struggle for exclusive occupation of the field of battle; the difference is that the former outlives the latter."¹⁰⁷ Narratives constitute women as audience in wartime; women are the ones who do not see the fighting, but have to react to men's actions in war. Women are to perform the roles of mothers, daughters and lovers of soldiers; they are to be nurses, or workers; they are to mourn and weep, for themselves or their men; they are booty or inspiration or recreation; they are the reason for fighting. But Huston's discourse itself needs the discourse of historical research set alongside it, so that we can examine the imagery and ideology of what women are supposed to be, together with the great variety of what women actually do and experience in wartime. Justice for women, with which the feminist theological ethicist is concerned, demands a better picture of the reality of women's lives. In wartime, women are essential to the prosecution of war; they are workers, homemakers, initiators, victims and survivors.

WOMEN'S PEACE CAMPAIGNING

When 36 women, and a few men and children, walked from Cardiff to RAF Greenham Common in 1981, they began by far the most famous recent peace campaign by women. But the permanent peace camp that was set up unexpectedly at the end of that walk was itself the spur for finding out more about the considerable history of peace campaigning by women. Dorothy Thompson points out, however, that to investigate the neglected history of women's peace campaigning is not to suggest that the influence of women has been greater than that of men.¹⁰⁸ It is always a small proportion of women or men who participate in peace movements, and an even smaller proportion when the country is actually at war.

This section is, again, not an exhaustive account of the history of women's peace movements, but is illustrative of various historical points of interest, in order to draw

¹⁰⁶N. Huston, "Tales of War and Tears of Women" in *Women and Men's Wars*, J.H. Stiehm, ed., (*Women's Studies International Forum* special issue) Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982.

¹⁰⁷*ibid.*, p.274.

¹⁰⁸D. Thompson, "Women, Peace and History: Notes For an Historical Overview", in R. Pierson, ed., *Women and Peace*, p.36.

out some significant issues about 'women and peace'. Much of the historical research in this area has been explicitly critical of the standard histories of pacifism and peace movements which have concentrated almost exclusively on men as peace campaigners. In many histories of pacifism, there seems to be an implicit definition of pacifism as men-only, since only men have been able to register their pacifism in the form of conscientious objection. This is, however, a somewhat disingenuous and unexamined assumption, since many of the leaders of the pacifist peace movement have been men who for reasons of age, health or occupation, would not have been liable for conscription either. Jill Liddington criticises Martin Ceadel's *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945*,¹⁰⁹ for instance, for its miserly reference to individual women campaigners for peace, and to women's campaigning organisations.¹¹⁰ In fact Ceadel does allow women to be labelled 'pacifists' and he does mention some names of well-known women peace campaigners such as Maude Royden and Vera Brittain, but only in relation to largely male organisations. Certainly the major women's organisation, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is not seen as significant in his book. The historical research done in the last few years illuminating women's roles in campaigning is important in broadening the picture of what the history of peace movements has been, making that history humanly inclusive.

Liddington's book traces women's peace campaigns in Britain from the Female Auxiliary Peace Societies of the 1820s. She traces the resistance to the Boer War from Emily Hobhouse and Kate Courtney, because of the conditions in British concentration camps, and their fellow-feeling for 'enemy' women and children. But a large section of her work and that of other historians of this subject is concentrated on the first world war,¹¹¹ exploring the connections and discontinuities between women's campaigning for the vote, and for an end to war. Although many argued in the nineteenth century that when women were allowed to vote they would vote for peace and against war, the outbreak of the first world war split those who had worked together for women's suffrage. In Britain, the majority of the militant Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, and of the more moderate National Union of

¹⁰⁹M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.

¹¹⁰J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820*, London: Virago, 1989, p.4, p.133. Similarly, Parkin's fascinating book on British CND was plainly produced in an era when gender was not recognised as a significant category for investigation. F. Parkin, *Middle-Class Radicalism: The Social Bases of the British Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament*, Manchester University Press, 1968.

¹¹¹Most of my summary of historical research is attributable to Liddington, S. Oldfield, *Women Against the Iron Fist*, and A. Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women*.

Women's Suffrage Societies, put their country first, as they saw it, and supported the war effort. Others, however, more influenced by an internationalist outlook, campaigned for an end to the war, and criticised their country's involvement.

The overview here is largely from a British perspective. But mention of the internationalism of many of the best known campaigners inevitably invites mention of the women of many nationalities who tried to express their internationalist sentiments and focus their efforts for peace by organising a conference at the Hague in 1915. (Most of the British delegation never arrived, the British government refusing them passage out of England.) The women at the conference deliberately did not discuss blame for the war, but possibilities for ending it. On the final day, they took the decision to send women as peace emissaries to the representatives of government, to discuss ways to bring about peace. The conference was a significant attempt to make a difference: it was one side of peace campaigning. Out of it emerged what became the WILPF, which still continues. Liddington supplements her account of the campaigning by women who had the power and influence to make this kind of conference possible, with the story of the Women's Peace Crusade, which was much more of a grassroots, working-class women's movement.¹¹²

The *rhetoric* of campaigning has been a significant and controversial side of women's campaigns for peace. The use of feminine imagery, derived from women's supposedly common experiences in a society which assigns women certain roles, has always been popular. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland*, published originally in 1915, dramatises the belief that women are more peace-loving than men.¹¹³ I have described such beliefs as 'the myth of women's peacefulness', used in peace campaigning with motivational force, encouraging women to act out what they, supposedly, *are* by nature. Arguments about women being motivated to work for peace for the sake of their children would not be expressed if they were not true for some women. The controversy has arisen, from early on, out of the assumption that these arguments will hold true for all women. Rhetoric is meant to be a means of persuasion, and the use of feminine imagery *is* designed to be relevant to women other than those who use it as their own reasoning process. (And it *is* a reasoning process.) But it must not escape attention that other women use their position and experience as mothers to support

¹¹²Liddington, chapter 6.

¹¹³C.P. Gilman, *Herland*, repr., London: The Women's Press, 1979 [1915]. The utopian society pictured there is entirely female and, to the surprise of the three men who discover it, entirely harmonious and peaceful.

war, or certain preparations for war. On one occasion when I was at a small anti-nuclear protest outside a U.S. Air Force base in Norfolk, I remember the counter demonstration, led by Olga Maitland, of 'Women and Families For Defence'. In addition, particularly in the beginning of second-wave feminism, there was a deep suspicion of feminine imagery, which implied an inevitable distance between men's and women's experience. At the end of the 1970s, feminism and peace campaigning seemed to have little in common.

In 1980 the peace movement re-emerged, focusing opposition to the siting of American nuclear missiles in Europe. By the end of 1981, there was recognisably a women-led peace movement as part of that, centred on the camp at Greenham Common. The decision to set up a permanent peace camp at Greenham was arrived at by degrees. Initially some women stayed, at the end of the 'Women for Life on Earth' walk, because of the lack of publicity accorded the walk. From then, for several years,¹¹⁴ changing groups of women lived at various points around the perimeter fence of the RAF base leased to the American Air Force. This camp inspired many others, in Britain and worldwide. 'Greenham' was a campaign, but it increasingly focused on more than just a particular class of nuclear weapons. It was a campaign designed to oppose a range of forms of militarism, and in particular to demonstrate how militarism affected women in all areas of their lives.

The life of the Greenham Women's peace camp was always defined by publicity. It reached its positive height on 12th December 1982 with 30,000 women at the 'Embrace the Base' demonstration. This was followed by the blockade of the base on December 13th, and then the mass trespass into the base which ended with women dancing on one of the missile silos in the dawn of New Year's Day, 1983. The media image of the camp - which was and is a significant part of the camp's cultural meaning - was usually focused on the failure of the women living there to perform their social role adequately, their living conditions, their sexuality: focused on anything in fact except the issues they wished to highlight. The camp was associated with radical feminism, and the suspicion this aroused was plain in the publicity surrounding the decision in February 1982 that

¹¹⁴The vague 'several' years stands because the rumours of the complete demise of the Greenham Common Women's peace camp proved to be false on so many occasions. Even in the latter stages, if the camp at one gate of the base was abandoned, other camps might well remain, and there were disagreements among the women living at various of the camps as to whether the protest ought to be ended. Effectively most publicity had ceased even before the Cruise missiles were at last taken away from Greenham. However, I did find a report on the peace camp as late as 1993 (incidentally quite an inaccurate piece) in *The Guardian*, November 27th 1993, reporting on the decision about to be taken, it was said, to end the camp.

the camp should be women-only.¹¹⁵ Still Greenham's enduring image will also be the example of women working together, in imaginative protest actions, witnessing to a new sense of individual and collective power, even in the face of the full force of the British criminal justice system.

As with the rhetoric of campaigns from earlier years, the use of imagery in their protests was one of the most controversial parts of this particular peace campaign led by women. Judith Williamson and Kate Soper represent the two sides of the debate, as illustrated by extracts of their work in Frazer *et al.*, *Ethics: A Feminist Reader*.¹¹⁶ Williamson attacks campaigning tactics which rely on myths about femininity questioned by the women's movement. She also argues that the focus on motherhood, on families, on women as life-givers, is ultimately an individual and not a social analysis. Her point is to deny that anything in our political identity is 'natural'; social analysis and social change will not be achieved, she feels, by a focus on women's traditional biological or social roles. On the other hand, Soper's work uses women's experiences of reproduction as authority for the articulation of a new understanding of power. Clearly the links between feminism and peace campaigning are not straightforward. The separatism of women's peace campaigns, as well as their rhetoric, is controversial. Many women have always campaigned for peace alongside men in a variety of peace organisations, suspecting the motives of those who argue for separatism. Greenham Common was a reflection both of divisions within the peace movement and of divisions within feminism.

Liddington describes peace campaigning, by women in Britain, from 1820 to the 1980s. But one of the points that she makes most strongly is that she does not thereby mean to imply that there has been unequivocal continuity in such campaigning. She describes peace campaigning in general as cyclical. Women's peace campaigns have responded to new sets of circumstances with new campaigning ideas. After all, to imply that women's peace campaigns are all similar is to note only the sex of the people taking part, and to reduce women once again to their biology. I have done little in this section to distinguish between women who would describe themselves as pacifists, as anti-militarists, or who would limit their peace campaigning to the issue of nuclear weapons.

¹¹⁵Lynne Jones chronicles the media images of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in her essay "Perceptions of 'Peace Women' at Greenham Common 1981-5: A Participant's View", in MacDonald, *et al.*

¹¹⁶J. Williamson, "Nuclear Family? No Thanks", and K. Soper, "Contemplating a Nuclear Future" in E. Frazer, *et al.*, eds., *Ethics: A Feminist Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

This is partly because I have wanted to keep in view a wide range of women's work for peace. It is also because those distinctions have relevance largely to particular sets of circumstances, and should be allowed to be attached to their historical setting. Even a principled absolute pacifism has to be related to the contemporary world and has social meaning only where this is achieved.

A feminist theologian might note with particular interest the resurgence of spiritual imagery in actions at Greenham Common. For many women campaigning for a swift peace in the first world war, Christian conviction was a fundamental source of their internationalism. But Rosemary Radford Ruether notes that, even by that period, peace campaigning, feminism and Christian commitment were pulling apart from each other.¹¹⁷ Those whose pacifism was rooted in their Christian conviction did not necessarily share viewpoints on the position of women in society with those who called themselves feminists. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, many feminists found a need for the expression of spiritual convictions as part of their peace campaigns, though those convictions would not often be couched in the traditional language of Christianity. Elements of what now seems to be subsumed under the heading 'New Age movements' were more in evidence, particularly imagery about connection to life and to the earth. Still, as a Christian theologian, I look at the examples above and want to affirm imaginative efforts at peacemaking, and protest at the possibility of mass destruction, while asking where the Church is in relation to these women's actions. Christian services held regularly at Greenham Common testify to some Christian people's belief in that form of protest, while 'the Church's' pronouncements on peace issues - usually by the leaders of individual denominations - tend to be discussions on the supposedly 'rational' plane, which is only one mode of discourse.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

"War is a judgement that overtakes societies when they have been living upon ideas that conflict too violently with the laws governing the universe." So wrote Dorothy L. Sayers in her essay "Why Work?" This section is an exploration of some of Sayers' reflections on peace, on war, and on other forms of violence. Inevitably for her, since she lived through war, she reflected on war in the context of her creativity and her faith.

¹¹⁷R.R. Ruether, "Feminism and Peace" in B.H. Andolsen, *et al.*, eds., *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985, p.66-67.

Such reflections are found most explicitly in her essays, lectures and articles, but they are also present in her novels and plays.

Dorothy L. Sayers' arguments about what war and peace might mean to the country in which she lived are largely a product of explicit reflection on the situation at the time of the second world war. But her work shows that she could reflect on other people's experiences of World War I even though it did not deeply affect her at the time. She had no close relatives or friends of the time killed, but her husband, Atherton Fleming, whom she met in 1925, had been considerably affected by his experiences as soldier and journalist, twice badly gassed and unable to return to family life immediately after the war, so that his first marriage ended in divorce. Sayers used his experiences in her portrait of the war veteran Captain George Fentiman in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*. In this novel, contrasts are drawn between different kinds of soldier and different types of war experience. There are the old soldiers, such as Colonel Marchbanks, who were not involved in the war. There is Major Robert Fentiman who was involved but seems to have been unaffected long term, able to treat it as an 'old-style' war. And then there is George Fentiman, the portrait of a soldier physically and psychologically damaged by his horrific wartime experiences. The contrast is poignantly expressed at the beginning of chapter 2, after General Fentiman has been found dead. "It was doubtful which occurrence was disagreeable to the senior members of the Bellona Club - the grotesque death of General Fentiman in their midst or the indecent neurasthenia of his grandson. Only the younger men felt no sense of outrage: they knew too much".¹¹⁸ The reference shows the younger men's reaction to grotesque death, and to the after-effects on the survivors.

Sayers' detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, was involved as a soldier right through the first world war and the effects, particularly of being buried alive in a shell hole, remain with him. In the first few novels there are hints of nightmares and nerves as a result of shell-shock, but it is only as World War II drew nearer that Sayers wrote the biographical note which gave a fuller account of Wimsey's distinguished service and trauma, followed by a nervous breakdown over two years following the war. In *Gaudy Night*, Sayers shows also the camaraderie of war and the respect of soldiers for each other in the sequence of reminiscences between Lord Peter and Padgett, the Shrewsbury College porter. She portrays soldiering as an honourable and devastating wartime occupation.

¹¹⁸Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, repr., London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989 [1928], p.10.

Sayers uses the language of children's fairy stories and moral tales, in bitter satire, to assess the political situation in the 1930s, during the build-up to war. She is scathing about what she describes as the 'Voice of Enlightenment' or Progressive Humanism, which includes the voices of pacifists, of those calling for great arms reductions, or upholding the policies of appeasement, or even those who criticised the peace terms made at the end of World War I. In "They Tried To Be Good", she writes:

"Britain has never liked war, but she had always supposed that war in a just cause was right and seemly. Now...the Voice of Enlightenment informed her that the whole thing had been, not merely useless ('War settles nothing'), but naughty. A just war was as wicked as an unjust war. War itself must be outlawed and abolished. So said the Voice, reinforcing itself with all the numinous authority of the Sermon on the Mount and all the reasonableness of Progressive Humanism".¹¹⁹

In reflecting on the rights and wrongs of war, then, Sayers pits herself against pacifism and emerges on the side of some form of the 'just war tradition', firmly within mainstream 'catholic' morality. She uses this tradition to justify the violence of war. She appears to see the just war tradition summed up in the criterion of a 'just cause' for justifying the decision to go to war.

Part of her antagonism to pacifism, then, is that the Voice of Enlightenment, of which pacifism is a part, takes no account of deliberate evil and assumes naively that all nations and peoples want the same goods, and that those goods are compatible. At the heart of Sayers' theological realism is a strong emphasis on sin; any theology or any secular discourse that underestimates sin and evil is inadequate for her. Evil can be changed, but the price has still to be paid. This is the conviction from which her arguments about war are drawn. But she is also antagonistic to pacifism out of sheer practicality. She gives the analogy in personal, rather than public terms. In the essay "Forgiveness", she claims that priggish forgiveness "shares with pacifism the serious practical disadvantage of so inflaming the evil passions of Jones that if the injured party had malignantly determined to drive Jones to the devil he could scarcely have hit upon a surer way".¹²⁰ Pacifism is thus dismissed as provocative, not solving anything. In the essay, Sayers can envisage crimes committed by Germany that may be unforgivable if

¹¹⁹Sayers, "They Tried To Be Good" in *Unpopular Opinions*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1946, p.98.

¹²⁰Sayers, "Forgiveness", *Unpopular Opinions*, p.13.

what the Allies and Germany think of as 'right' and 'wrong', good and evil, remain incompatible.

Though I have commented on the Christian sensibility on which much of Sayers' argument about war depends, Sayers' reflections on the war, as a whole, relate ambivalently to much of the Christian tradition, which may be a reflection of the fact that the just war tradition is not the only response to war which has arisen out of the Christian tradition, and therefore is not straightforwardly related to Christian theology. Sayers' arguments spring partly from Christian theology, chiefly from her standpoint of 'realism' about sin and evil. Her slighting reference to "all the numinous authority of the Sermon on the Mount" is a quick dismissal of pacifists' appeal to the commands of Jesus to turn the other cheek and not to resist evil. But it is not in any sense an argument against them. There was, according to her reading of the gospels, no meek and mild Jesus; her picture of Jesus isn't of someone preaching a simple gospel of love and pacifism. Sayers disagreed publicly with the Bishop of Chichester when he appealed for a commitment from both sides at war to end night-bombing of civilian towns, wanting protection for non-combatants. Sayers responded, "If we mean towns with a *wholly* civilian population, that may or may not include towns where war-industries are carried on, but it must mean towns where there are no anti-aircraft defences".¹²¹ This argument must mean that she sees 'just cause' as a more important criterion within the just war tradition than the protection of non-combatants in the conduct of war. Perhaps the presence or absence of explicitly Christian terminology when she mentions just war criteria stems from the different audiences to which she addresses herself. When she argues that the two sides fighting each other are not both Christian by her definition, she describes Britain simplistically as a Christian country. This allows her to call the war a war of religion, between Christian and pagan, which is a use of holy war/crusade language. She avoids the extreme fanaticism of that tradition, however, by using the criteria of the just war tradition. Yet that image of Britain as a Christian country is not one she always uses. Varying addressees and purposes in her work mean that her arguments are not always easy to reconcile.

War, for Sayers, forces people to question all their most basic principles and beliefs. That is why it may give room for theology, and opportunity for the Church. The

¹²¹This argument which Sayers put against the Bishop of Chichester is detailed in Hone, p.124. He does, however, confuse the issue with what I presume is an authorial comment, though it could be mistaken for Sayers' conclusion: "Bishops should have high and holy motivations, but they may sometimes be naive. If one is to premise Christian principles, then how does one justify war to begin with, let alone the patterns of bombing?" Hone has missed the point of what Sayers believed about war.

reflection thus generated provides a context of hope for the survivors of war; hope for a better society. This is her offering toward the building of peace. This includes reflecting on economic life: .."False Economics are one of the root causes of the present War".¹²² She uses a vivid image in her discussion of a society built on waste: "The glut and waste that used to clutter our own dustbins have been removed to the field of battle. That is where all the surplus consumption is going to".¹²³ Ostensibly she is referring to armaments, but there is an association also with the waste of life on the battlefields, and a littering of bodies.

To reflect on war is to reflect on the most obvious manifestation of corporate violence, and this Dorothy L. Sayers does most clearly in her essays and talks. In her novels she deals with violence in a different way: primarily in incidents of murder. In the mannered style of the detective story, the violence of the murders to be investigated is largely impersonal even where it is allowed to be gory. The reader is not allowed too close to the personality of the victim, in order to keep the focus on the puzzle. In Sayers' novels, however, violence against the investigators is taken much more seriously and the reader is allowed to become more involved in the human consequences, as for instance, when Lord Peter Wimsey is shot in *Clouds of Witness*, or, even more so, when Annie tries to strangle Harriet Vane in *Gaudy Night*.

I have discussed 'domestic violence' in its modern sense. Sayers also recognised the reality of the issue in her portrayal of Mrs Grimethorpe in *Clouds of Witness*, published in 1926.¹²⁴ This character is introduced in an atmosphere of fear, in a chapter entitled "-And His Daughter, Much Afraid", begun with the quotation "The women also looked pale and wan", from *Pilgrim's Progress*. The fear is underlined by the viciousness of Mr Grimethorpe's response to Lord Peter's inquiry about his daughter: "And if I thought she weren't...I'd strangle the bitch and her mother together" (p.90-91). As Lord Peter leaves, he hears "the woman's voice, uplifted in a frightened wail" (p.93), and when he turns, "The woman said something, and her husband turned furiously upon her and struck her to the ground...[Peter] stood still, and waited till she had picked herself up and gone in, wiping the blood and dirt from her face with her shawl" (p.94). Grimethorpe is shown to have reason for his possessive jealousy: his wife has had a brief affair with the Duke of Denver, responding to him because he showed her

¹²²Sayers, "Why Work?" in *Creed or Chaos*, London: Methuen, 1947, p.48.

¹²³*ibid.*, p.50.

¹²⁴*Clouds of Witness*, repr., London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988 [1926].

kindness. But it is Mrs Grimethorpe to whom the reader's sympathy is directed. Every instance of Grimethorpe's brutality to his wife is put in the context of his capacity and threat to murder her. When Peter manages to talk to her alone, he asks: "'Why don't you leave this man? He is openly brutal to you.'/ She laughed./ 'Do you think he'd leave me alive while the law was slowly releasing me? Knowing him, do you think so?'/ Wimsey really did not think so" (p.206).

In the scheme of the novel, Grimethorpe is made to pay the price of his violence to his wife. Mrs Grimethorpe is not simply made to disappear back to her violent husband, as a mere minor character or plot device. Instead he attempts to shoot the Duke of Denver, and in the subsequent chase he is killed. The accidental violence of Grimethorpe's death is a sort of justice. It is an example of Sayers using violence in the cause of justice. But the violence Grimethorpe metes out to his wife is portrayed as entirely negative, entirely wrong. There is no principle that can justify that violence.

Sayers continues to ask questions about the relationship between violence and justice in her detective novels, thus in a different context from her discussions on war. Lord Peter Wimsey asks Mr Tredgold, the vicar in *Unnatural Death*,¹²⁵ whether justice will necessarily bring violence in its train, when he realises that his investigations have precipitated murders and attempted murders which would not have happened if no investigation had taken place. He is advised that he must continue to bring people to justice - meaning to the due processes of law in society. In *Gaudy Night*¹²⁶ the question is given a less personal and more academic turn, which is in the end more devastating being less easy to escape on personal grounds. When Miss Barton insists that "her social principles were opposed to violence of every description", Miss Edwards replies, "You can't carry through any principle without doing violence to somebody. Either directly or indirectly. Every time you disturb the balance of nature you let in violence. And if you leave nature alone you get violence in any case" (p.323). This argument comes when the reader has already had a warning about the dangers of fanaticism over principles, which "have become more dangerous than passions. It's getting uncommonly easy to kill people in large numbers and the first thing a principle does - if it really is a principle - is to kill somebody" (p.317-8). It seems that violence is inevitable, however wary of it people may choose to be. Wimsey uses a Biblical allusion to underline the point: "there's one thing in the Bible that seems to me to be a mere statement of brutal

¹²⁵*Unnatural Death*, repr., London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989 [1927].

¹²⁶*Gaudy Night*, repr., London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990 [1935].

fact - I mean, about bringing not peace but a sword" which follows his assertion that, "Like you and every member of this Common Room, I admit the principle [of intellectual integrity coming first] and the consequences must follow" (p.430). Despite the consequences, even violent ones, the implied author is prepared to uphold principles. Justice and intellectual integrity are the values which Sayers wishes to work with. Violence is not the worst thing she can imagine, so non-violence is not a principle to uphold. The holding of the right principles matters very much to Sayers, and the consequences of such commitment must be accepted. Violence can be justified in certain circumstances by reference to the rightness of certain principles. Different kinds of violence are to be treated differently. But that leaves questions about which principles, and in particular in this context, what is meant by justice.

It is further understood in Sayers' detective novels that, just as violence is the beginning of the detective's investigation of a murder, so violence may be its end. For the criminal justice system which forms the context for these stories includes capital punishment - civil violence. This does not go entirely unquestioned in the novels. It is questioned in two different ways. In *Gaudy Night* Miss Barton, whose opposition to all violence I quoted above, attempts to engage Lord Peter Wimsey in a discussion about capital punishment (p.321f). However, the questioning is less than genuine because the implied author undermines Miss Barton's position by having her opposed to any form of punishment - the position is taken to an extreme rather than treated seriously (as is the character of Miss Barton).

The question of the consequences of capital punishment - the legitimated violence of social justice - arises in a more personal way in its effect on Lord Peter Wimsey. This is most graphically portrayed in *Busman's Honeymoon*. Having achieved the conviction of the murderer, Wimsey becomes more and more nervous and depressed, asking the convicted murderer to forgive him, as if he personally were the executioner. The novel ends with Wimsey finding relief in tears, in his wife's arms, trying not to hear the chimes of the clock which will tell him the moment of execution. The 'biographical note' on Lord Peter explains: "You can't get murderers hanged for your private entertainment. Peter's intellect pulled him one way and his nerves another...At the end of every case he had the old nightmares and shell shock over again".¹²⁷ This note interestingly links the violence of capital punishment to the violence of war; it does not condemn either, but shows up the human consequences which must be endured if such violence becomes necessary, as Sayers seems to imply it will.

¹²⁷*Gaudy Night*, p.445.

The link of violence and justice is further explored in *The Just Vengeance*.¹²⁸ That phrase, from Dante, describes the atonement from God's side: the violence of the Cross seen as a just punishment for human sin, yet at the same time unjust because it is the ultimately innocent one that suffers. This modern miracle play gives voice to the cries of innocent sufferers, but finds an ultimate answer to suffering in a freely chosen human response to carry the Cross and thus be part of the process of redeeming evil - part of the 'just vengeance'. In the dialogue of this play, issues of what one kills for and what one might die for are debated; they are presented as too complex for black and white answers, with the only possible answer, and that not an easy one, in the Cross. The play takes place in the moment of an Airman's death, and he represents the bombing in which guilty and guiltless die. Such bombing seems unjust, but the demand for justice which sounds like hatred and vengeance is not the solution of God either.

In exploring the problem of justice, the play offers a critique of justice. The humans in the play come to the conclusion that they must ask not for justice but for forgiveness. The Airman demands, "if there is going to be judgement, I want justice" (p.25), and then watches the play of human history till Eve says: "But what sort of dreadful thing/Can be the vengeance of the innocent,/Who, being all wronged, need not subtract the score/Of his own debt from the appalling total" and "When you call for justice/You would make God your bailiff, to collect/Your legal dues; but not your almoner,/Still less your judge...Children take heed,/And do not pray for justice: you might get it" (p.44). For the play sees the process of salvation ending justice as understood in human terms: "Instead of your justice, you shall have charity" (p.79). Within the human sphere justice is the important value; from a Christian stance love and mercy are fundamental. The question remains, for me, whether this critique of justice supports or undermines the ways in which Sayers accepts the justification of some forms of violence in her society. Violence may happen, and may be justified, through the search for justice; yet Sayers also expresses doubts about human conceptions of justice. Christian concepts of love and mercy are needed to shape a godly justice.

CONCLUSION

This range of data and reflection is illustrative of the information with which theologians need to work in developing systematics and ethics. My choice of material

¹²⁸*The Just Vengeance*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1943.

has been governed by the fact that these are *women's* experiences and reflections. But that does not mean that a simple, one-dimensional picture has emerged. Instead I have highlighted a complexity of experiences and opinions, sometimes contradictory. Women do not all think alike or behave alike, or have the same life experiences. Nor do they make the same moral choices. But it is still worth asking questions about the category 'women' precisely because the interpretations imposed on women in the context of western culture have so often assumed them to be the same. My range of illustrations demonstrates that women do not have a straightforward relationship with experiences of violence, war and peace. This variety of experiences demands attention and more critical interpretation from theological ethicists. I search for a model for such interpretation initially in the work of feminist ethicists. I then need to bring a theological perspective to bear on that work.

CHAPTER 3 - FEMINIST ETHICS

DEFINITIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Rosemarie Tong¹ recently produced what one reviewer described as "an approachable and understandable overview of a variety of distinct but related perspectives which pose significant challenges to traditional thinking about ethics".² The link between these 'distinct but related perspectives' is that they are all woman-centred. Since Tong's book is an introduction to such perspectives, she categorises them in a way that highlights the links and contrasts between many approaches. Her most important distinction is brought out by her title, *Feminine and Feminist Ethics*, though the book also includes a third sub-category of lesbian ethics. In the light of that, the title for my chapter appears monolithic. However, I do not in any way wish to deny the great variety of approaches and conclusions which can be discussed under the heading 'feminist ethics'. I simply do not categorise them in the way that Tong does.

For Tong, feminine approaches to ethics focus on women's unique moral voice, on themes of nurture, care, compassion and relationality. Feminist approaches to ethics, on the other hand, are those which specifically set out to oppose patriarchal domination. A good example of the latter category seems to be the definition offered by Claudia Card at the beginning of *Feminist Ethics*: "Feminist ethics is born in women's refusals to endure with grace the arrogance, indifference, hostility, and damage of oppressively sexist environments. It is fueled by bonds among women, forged in experiments to create better environments now and for the future, and tried by commitments to overcome damage already done."³ Implicit in Tong's categorisation is a preference for 'feminist' over 'feminine' approaches. She makes a significant point when she argues that the tradition finds it much easier to deal with feminine approaches than feminist or lesbian ones which are far more disturbing.⁴ However, her distinction between these two broad lines of approach is difficult for two reasons. One is that it is unfair to some of the feminine/maternal approaches (given the value judgements she makes) to argue

¹R. Tong, *Feminine and Feminist Ethics*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993.

²Review by R.S. Dillon in "Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy", *American Philosophical Association Newsletters*, 94:1, 1994, p.73.

³C. Card, ed., *Feminist Ethics*, University Press of Kansas, 1991, p.4.

⁴Tong, p.226.

that they have little interest in changing the status quo, or only do so at a tangent from the main issues. Those scholars whose work may lead to continued oppression of women can be critiqued separately on those grounds. The second reason why Tong's division is problematic is that it mirrors a distinction between morality and politics which most feminist ethicists are implicitly or explicitly challenging. I shall refer again to this distinction or boundary later in the chapter, and to the way in which it connects with a particular construction of the boundary between the private and public spheres which is restricting to women.

In discussing the background to contemporary woman-centred approaches to ethics, Tong draws on women's writing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The question of 'women's morality' has been a part of philosophy for centuries, in discussions of what women should be and do; whether moral character and moral thinking are different for women and for men. The ways in which this question has been answered are linked to women's social and political status.⁵ Illustrating how women have themselves responded to questions about women's morality, Tong briefly explores the work of such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Beecher, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, showing the very different conclusions they reached. When Claudia Card, on the other hand, discusses the background to contemporary feminist ethics, she focuses on recent advances in feminist philosophy, exploring a particular tradition of lesbian reflections in ethics. The tradition one feels a part of - or which one creates - may of course reflect an important political choice. For instance, in their recent collection of feminist ethics, Frazer, Hornsby and Lovibond⁶ construct the tradition of feminist ethics by beginning each of their three sections ("Women's Condition", "Ethics and Gender Difference", and "Towards a Feminist Ethic") with extracts from early twentieth century activists such as Cicely Hamilton, Margaret Sanger, Alexandra Kollantai and Emma Goldman.

Tong structures her discussion of feminine and feminist ethics by dealing with the historical background she wishes to highlight, moving on to philosophical issues of epistemology and ontology, before discussing feminine/maternal ethics, and then feminist and lesbian ethics. My chapter surveying feminist ethics is structured somewhat

⁵Genevieve Lloyd discusses how women have been regarded in Western philosophy, and how the whole philosophical tradition has itself been gendered: G. Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*, London: Methuen, 1984. Jean Bethke Elshtain describes the links between political philosophy and women's social and ethical status in *Public Man, Private Woman*. See below p.107f. for a discussion of Elshtain's work.

⁶E. Frazer, J. Hornsby and S. Lovibond, eds., *Ethics: A Feminist Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

differently. I begin with the work of Carol Gilligan, because it seems to me that so many of the questions for feminist ethics have been framed and influenced by her work. Her work is by no means the beginning of feminist ethics, but it has proved a significant point around which to structure discussion. Through critique of Gilligan's work, I explore developments in feminist philosophy and feminist ethics. Towards the end of the chapter, I move on to discussion of the relationship between feminist ethics and political theory. Here I examine the work of Jean Bethke Elshtain, because her work provides me with some of the bridges I need. She is a political theorist, who is interested in the issues of feminist ethics, and has also written on various topics which connect with my specific interest in women and violence. As I look for an ethical model that can deal with the kind of experiences I outlined in chapter 2, my major 'building block' towards a feminist theological ethic is non-theological feminist ethics. My second, smaller building block is the work of Elshtain.

IN A DIFFERENT VOICE

Carol Gilligan's research in developmental psychology has commanded attention ever since it was first published, initially in an article in 1977 and as a book in 1982.⁷ She challenged much of what was assumed in her own field, and many of her conclusions have since become common background in other fields, particularly moral philosophy and, increasingly, feminist theology. However, I believe some of her conclusions have been used in too simplistic a way.

Gilligan's conclusions grew out of her increasing dissatisfaction with the scheme of moral development suggested by Lawrence Kohlberg. Gilligan's own empirical research led her to question whether Kohlberg's model could be an adequate description and evaluation of her discoveries about women's moral reasoning. Kohlberg's model has three stages of development, each with two levels. In the pre-conventional stage, the basic focus is on the self and how to satisfy the self's needs without incurring punishment from others. In the conventional stage the child or adolescent is more concerned about pleasing and helping others, is attached to conventions and conforms with the social order. In the 'higher'⁸ reaches of moral development (Kohlberg's

⁷C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982.

⁸'Higher' is an entirely appropriate word within Kohlberg's strongly hierarchical theory. Cf. Joan Tronto's discussion of Kohlberg's elitism in *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, New York: Routledge, 1993, p.64-76.

postconventional stage), the adolescent or adult reasons in terms of rights agreed by society, and finally in terms of decisions of his⁹ own conscience which conform to self-chosen ethical principles of justice. Kohlberg's scheme, like many other aspects of psychological theory, was constructed on the basis of all-male samples. With male experience therefore described as if it were normative human experience, it was found in subsequent experiments that women's reasoning did not always match with the higher levels of men's moral judgements. Rather than concluding that the problem was with women, Gilligan argued that the problem was in the theory.

Listening to women talking about morality, and their own experiences of moral decision making, Gilligan put forward what was at first a modification of Kohlberg, suggesting a possible different developmental route for women in the final, postconventional stage of moral reasoning. *In A Different Voice* describes what Gilligan found in terms of a 'different voice' or a different 'moral orientation'. She concluded that there were two possible tracks of moral development, associated with either an ethic of justice and rights or with an ethic of care and responsibility. Secondly, she concluded that these two moral orientations were largely gender-associated, with men employing the ethic of justice almost exclusively, but women often using an alternative ethic of care. The major controversies about her work have been to do with the relationship between the two orientations, and with her assertions about gender association.

In her research, Gilligan claimed that women preferred to solve moral dilemmas by imagining more than the few stark details of a hypothetical dilemma: i.e. women were solving problems by contextualising. In the contexts they envisaged, she claimed, the maintenance of relationships between people was the chief area of concern, and detachment from other people the chief dilemma. This formed the basis of her description of an ethic of care. Thus she characterises two perspectives, "A justice perspective draws attention to problems of inequality and oppression and holds up an ideal of reciprocity and equal respect. A care perspective draws attention to problems of detachment or abandonment and holds up an ideal of attention and response to need."¹⁰ The care perspective on which she focuses is about perceiving people in their own terms, and using the power of that knowledge to help, not to hurt.

⁹Where male-only pronouns are used in this chapter, they refer to theory which feminists have claimed is more appropriate for men than for women and men.

¹⁰C. Gilligan, J.V. Ward and J.M. Taylor with B. Bardige, eds., *Mapping The Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, p.73.

Gilligan proposed a new understanding of women's moral development, in three stages which mirror those of Kohlberg. The first stage consists of caring for the self and being concerned with individual survival. The transition to the second stage begins when the moral agent labels the first stage as selfish. The second stage which emerges from this transition is characterised by the concept of responsibility and care for others. The transition to the third stage begins with the recognition that problems arise because of the exclusion of the self from the concept of care. Gilligan interprets this transition as a recognition that the concept of care has been (oppressively) equated with self-sacrifice. The transition is marked by a shift of concern from goodness to truth. Thus in the third stage, the stage of moral maturity, there is a concern for self and for others built into the self-chosen principle of care. "Care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgement that remains psychological in its concern with relationships and response but becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt."¹¹ The third stage involves a difficult balancing of care for others and for self, and Gilligan notes that complexity seems to be a characteristic of women's search for moral solutions. She contrasts this with what she believes to be a simplistic absoluteness in Kohlberg's postconventional stage.¹²

Gilligan's model of women's moral development links morality with ego development. For her, the concept of self, the value put on self, and the consequent understanding of relationships are the factors which influence moral development: "we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others, and...we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate other from self".¹³ Where she links moral development with concept of the self most strongly, there Gilligan also implies most distance between the perspectives of justice and care. Yet this is contradictory in that her model of alternative moral development includes an element of the justice perspective in a morally mature care perspective. "Development for both sexes would...seem to entail an integration of rights and responsibilities through the discovery

¹¹Quotation and elaboration of the stages of moral development as outlined in Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, p.74.

¹²Jürgen Habermas disputes the validity of Gilligan's distinction. He claims that she has misrepresented Kohlberg's definition of moral maturity, since excessive rigorous application of principles without regard to the context are deficiencies, not norms of the postconventional stage. This distinction is possible in his work because he (like Kohlberg) puts greater stress than Gilligan on the difference between moral judgements and actual moral behaviour. Cf. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p.179-180.

¹³Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, p.63.

of the complementarity of these disparate views".¹⁴ In some places the two voices are complementary; in others they are quite clearly over against one another.

At the beginning of *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan sounds a strong cautionary note. Her association of the 'different' moral voice with women is not to be taken as absolute, but it does emerge from the heart of her empirical observations.¹⁵ However, Gilligan does not always heed her own note of caution. Her empirical observations suggest that men almost exclusively use the justice perspective in seeking moral solutions, while women use the justice perspective in approximately a third of cases, the care perspective in similar proportion, and a mixture of the two in the remaining third. Yet when Gilligan goes on to explore the possible origin of these orientations, she uses the psychoanalytic model of Nancy Chodorow which posits a different developmental pattern in women and men arising out of their different experiences of attachment to and separation from their principal carer, the mother. Inasmuch as this model is stressed, determinism becomes an element in Gilligan's work, alongside empirical observation. There is tension between empirical observation which reveals some gender association of two different moral orientations, and the kind of theorising which implies an absolute gender distinction. This may be an inevitable contradiction in work which is torn between the description of a moral voice and a new account of moral development, which Gilligan chooses to label 'women's' development.

INITIAL CRITIQUE

There are questions to be asked about Gilligan's presuppositions, research methods, and interpretation of results. Some of these questions are taken up in an issue of *Social Research* which is focused on the questions raised by Gilligan's research. Mary Ann O'Loughlin¹⁶ examines the presuppositions behind a research project crucial to Gilligan's theory. In the interviews with women making decisions about abortion, reported in *In a Different Voice*, O'Loughlin points out that Gilligan treats the notion of moral choice as unproblematic and individual. She discusses the issue of fertility control as if it were unequivocally a woman's responsibility. O'Loughlin accuses Gilligan of assuming that such responsibility is somehow biological. This does not give enough

¹⁴Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, p.100.

¹⁵*ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁶M.A. O'Loughlin, "Responsibility and Moral Maturity in the Control of Fertility - or, A Woman's Place is in the Wrong", *Social Research*, 50:3, 1983.

attention to social context for O'Loughlin: "...to Gilligan, it is women's levels of moral maturity which explain their decisions, not the circumstances they are or have been in, or the other people involved and their responses."¹⁷

John Broughton uses transcripts of the interviews on which Gilligan's conclusions are based to question her interpretation of interviewees' responses. Examining one particular interview, he remarks, "It must be acknowledged that almost all of the values and beliefs central to Gilligan's theory of women are to be found in this interview. Nevertheless, almost all of the 'rational' concepts that she attributes to men are to be found there too!"¹⁸ Broughton's article is an extreme reading of Gilligan, I would argue, inferring an absolute and prescriptive gender dualism in her conclusions. But much of the problem with Gilligan's work is that it can be read in many different ways, some of which are ultimately inconsistent with each other, as in the relationship she posits between an ethic of justice and an ethic of care. However, Broughton's methodological criticisms are echoed by Dianne Romain.¹⁹ She also feels that Gilligan is too confident in her summaries of her subjects' views. Interpretation of a person's response is an act of power, and may impose greater clarity, or easier classification, than is justified. This is particularly so if researchers are simply listening for particular clue words and expressions in order to categorise a response in one of two ways only - ethic of care or ethic of justice. Gilligan was very aware of the role of the interviewer and the problematic setting of the interview when she critiqued some of Kohlberg's work, but seems less aware of the power relationships implicit in certain aspects of her own research - less in the interview itself than in interpretation.

Similarly, interpretation based on a relatively small amount of research is problematic. This is the scientific issue of statistical significance - whether enough information has been gathered for significant theorising. Early theorising is apt to cover over the complexity of results. For instance, too concrete a statement of the gender association of an ethic of care or an ethic of justice²⁰ obscures the interpretation of the results of

¹⁷O'Loughlin, p.570.

¹⁸J.M. Broughton, "Women's Rationality and Men's Virtues: A Critique of Gender Dualism in Gilligan's Theory of Moral Development", *Social Research*, 50:3, 1983, p.604.

¹⁹D. Romain, "Care and Confusion" in E.B. Cole and S. Coultrap-McQuin, eds., *Explorations in Feminist Ethics: Theory and Practice*, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.33-34.

²⁰An example of what I mean by "too concrete a statement" is this: "Gilligan hypothesised (1) that there are two distinct modes of moral judgement - justice and care - in the thinking of men and women; (2) that these are gender-related...". N.P. Lyons, "Two Perspectives: On Self, Relationships, and Morality", in Gilligan *et al.*, *Mapping The Moral Domain*. This statement of Gilligan's findings is

women's responses, when Gilligan claimed only that women used the care perspective in a third of cases. A strong gender association is based on the assumption that those women who did not exclusively use the care perspective - who used the justice perspective or a mixture of the two - were socialised into using 'male' moral reasoning. This *is* an assumption and it is not one which Gilligan herself unequivocally allows: "Care focus, although not characteristic of all women, was almost exclusively a female phenomenon in three examples of educationally advantaged North Americans".²¹

The selected subjects in most of the research which Gilligan reports in *In a Different Voice* are disproportionately educationally advantaged. Such subjects are perhaps more likely to be articulate. This raises the question of what is actually being measured in her work: women's moral reasoning, or their articulation of it, or their reactions in hindsight to their own moral actions. Gilligan appears to ignore this issue, however, as well as the extent to which her results are affected by the class and race factors that are implicit in educational attainment. Varying orientations towards the dominant culture's discourses about 'right' and 'wrong' might correlate to some extent with educational factors, for instance. Gilligan's refusal to take account of race in her subject samples, because race was not a variable she chose to focus on, begs the question of whether race might have been of significance in the results. Many commentators on her work have noted that she seems to assume the uniform category 'woman' without allowing for other significant differences.

Some of the above questions and criticisms are addressed in later research work reported in *Mapping The Moral Domain*. A larger amount of research, taking Gilligan's work as a focus and a presupposition, helps to nuance and complicate some of her results and interpretations. Some of the work focuses on comparisons which take into account race and class variables, such as the work on young unmarried mothers in different social settings, or the work on urban adolescents' perceptions of morality. Questions about how to understand women's experiences, or how women interpret their own experiences, in a patriarchal society, are explored in research about how women relate concepts of self and role expectations. Violence is also a focus in some of this research, since the perpetration of violent acts is an area of acknowledged empirical sex differences. Discussing adolescents' responses to the moral dilemmas in two fables, Kay Johnston reports gender differences, but admits they did not entirely map out as

too simplistic, but common.

²¹C. Gilligan, "Prologue: Adolescent Development Reconsidered" in Gilligan *et al.*, *Mapping The Moral Domain*, p.xix.

predicted.²² However, Gilligan's article with Grant Wiggins reaffirms a strong gender association: "To the extent that biological sex, the psychology of gender, and the cultural norms and values that define masculine and feminine behavior affect the experience of equality and attachment, these factors presumably will influence moral development."²³ The editors' afterword asserts, "The hypothesis of a different voice, defined by a focus on care concerns and associated empirically with women, is borne out here across a variety of circumstances and settings".²⁴ That seems to me too definite and simple a statement to reflect accurately the variety of findings reported in this volume. The great danger in the volume is the extent to which Gilligan's prior findings, often simplified in summary form, are taken as a presupposition of every other piece of research.

Many of the critiques in the already mentioned issue of *Social Research* focus on inferred evaluations in Gilligan's work. Gilligan begins with empirical description, as she moves from initial findings to a model of women's moral development, she describes apparent norms. Her description then becomes normative itself for many using her work. But it is the much debated move from description to prescription that causes most difficulty. The use of a hierarchical model of moral development implies evaluation. Debra Nails reads Gilligan's work as prescriptive in the sense that it describes the moral voice that women *should* have: "a girl child who sees a moral dilemma as 'sort of like a math problem with humans' (a response of one of Gilligan's male sixth graders) is viewed as somehow less feminine than one who emphasizes the relationships between the characters of a hypothetical dilemma".²⁵ As James Walker discusses the same problem, also inferring that Gilligan thinks the care perspective better for women, he highlights why this is disturbing: "What should we make of any discovery that the conditions for such a moral desideratum were coextensive with the continued oppression of women?"²⁶

²²D.K. Johnston, "Adolescents' Solutions to Dilemmas in Fables" in Gilligan *et al.*, *Mapping The Moral Domain*, p.68.

²³C. Gilligan and G. Wiggins, "The Origins of Morality in Early Childhood Relationships", in Gilligan *et al.*, *Mapping The Moral Domain*, p.116.

²⁴*ibid.*, p.289.

²⁵D. Nails, "Social-Scientific Sexism: Gilligan's Mismeasure of Man", *Social Research*, 50:3, 1983, p.663.

²⁶J.C. Walker, "In a Diffident Voice: Cryptoseparatist Analysis of Female Moral Development", *Social Research*, 50:3, 1983, p.666.

This same problem has been seen in many areas of feminist work, not least in much radical feminist writing. If we re-value, positively, some quality that women have developed under the socio-historical conditions of patriarchy, do we reinforce women's oppression? Gilligan describes what she finds, with apparently little interest in the fact that she is describing socialised experience. Women's interest in relationships and attention to self-sacrificial caring can be interpreted as a sign of women's restricted roles in society, a reflection of their oppression. If this is so, it becomes relevant to ask whether a focus on caring can ever be a corrective to oppression, or whether it is simply a continuation of all that has ever been expected of women in patriarchal societies. Thus the issue is whether Gilligan's work helps or harms women; whether she simply describes what the situation is, or whether she prescribes the status quo for women. What she certainly does not do is seek much in the way of change. The editors of *Mapping The Moral Domain* claim in their 'afterword' that psychological theory and culture in general don't know how to cope with gender differences. Genevieve Lloyd points out that, on the contrary, the concept of women having a different intellectual structure from men is a central part of the western philosophical tradition. She claims further that the concept is itself formed within that biased tradition.²⁷ However, it is only fair to add that Nails' and Walker's critiques depend on a reading of Gilligan's work as unambiguously prescribing the care perspective for women. This is only one possible reading. For Gilligan does also recommend a greater balance for women between care for others and for self, which may challenge the status quo for some women. This stands alongside the debate already highlighted as to whether she perceives a need for women (and men?) who are morally mature to use both care and justice perspectives.

Many of these critiques of Gilligan's work are very important and underused. They undermine any simplistic summary which attempts a strongly dualistic interpretation: the discovery of two moral orientations to be understood as over against one another, and an extreme gender association which ignores other differences between people. However, Gilligan's work is important in positive ways as well. Her work has encouraged a broadened understanding of moral reasoning, challenging what is left out of the Kohlbergian picture. She insisted that new concerns and different sentiments should be seen as part of moral psychology, and not be excluded. Her work has also led to a re-examination of the realm of unchosen obligations and relationships, helping to re-establish these as a concern of moral theory. "Her challenge is that the essence of

²⁷G. Lloyd, "Reason, Gender, and Morality in the History of Philosophy", *Social Research*, 50:3, 1983, p.491f.

morality may in fact be its perspective-bound, relational quality".²⁸ The controversy surrounding her work has itself been important, for it has led to more empirical research and more philosophical thinking, to the greater development of feminist philosophy and feminist ethics.

FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Feminist philosophy and feminist ethics (this and the following section) are not rigidly separated - not even as much as is implied in using two different sections to discuss them. However, for the sake of convenience, I discuss first the issues explored by moral philosophers, about conceptions of the self, and the boundaries of the moral realm. Then I explore, in the next section, how ethicists have developed and critiqued the idea of a care perspective in more specific ways. The debate about the relationship between justice and care perspectives necessarily straddles both sections.

Gilligan's work has been understood by feminist and non-feminist philosophers as a challenge to the liberal notion of justice which Kohlberg, for instance, accepts as the highest point of morality. Gilligan's is by no means the only or the first critique of the liberal tradition. This tradition has its origins in the political theory of such as Locke and in Kantian philosophy, and has been reasserted in John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. This view of moral reasoning constructs the moral agent as an autonomous, rational subject, able to detach himself from his surroundings in order to engage in abstract reasoning about universal moral principles which can then be applied to particular situations. The liberal notion of justice exalts ideals of universality and impartiality as the route to fairness, to justice. The 'other', whom the moral agent affects by his decisions, is envisaged as like the self. This view of moral reasoning applies, in some versions, only to public life, with private life governed by non-moral considerations of 'the good life'.²⁹ The universal principles which form the centre of the liberal moral vision are interpreted as personal rights to justice, or fair distribution, and to privacy, or non-interference.

²⁸S.F. Parsons, "Feminism and the Logic of Morality: A Consideration of Alternatives" in Frazer E., et al., eds., *Ethics: A Feminist Reader*, p.392. Parsons' work is discussed below, p.140-142.

²⁹The irony here is that the public/private divide can be used in this way to distinguish between what is right (what is moral) and what is (merely) good, but it can also be the structure for a Machiavellian banishing of moral concerns from the public to the private realm. The splitting of moral considerations from evaluative questions to do with the good life is the core of Habermas' critique of Gilligan's work. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p.178.

In their introduction to *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, Griffiths and Whitford distinguish between traditional philosophical discussions of the self, built on the liberal tradition's anthropology, and the feminist-inspired articles in their volume. "Where standard discussions of the self talk about memory and unity, brain transplants, the rational agent acting on his beliefs and desires, or the self in its public aspect as citizen, here the self is looked at in the context of the past history of a person, unconscious or fantasy relationships with others, the importance of feelings, or the body."³⁰ One argument against understanding moral reasoning solely in 'justice' or 'rights' terms questions whether the liberal picture of the rational, discrete, autonomous self is adequate. A picture of the self as self-in-relationship, formed, constrained and developing in the context of social relationships, serves to critique the reality, possibility or desirability of a self understood as detached from others in such matters as moral reasoning. Thus an increasing emphasis on self-in-relationship (in psychology and philosophy, as well as in other fields) ties in with the greater priority given to the social context of moral reasoning, to the relationships within which moral decisions are made and moral actions carried out, as in Gilligan's model. Far from positing the autonomous, rational subject as the ideal moral agent, a care perspective questions such a subject's sensitivity and awareness, qualities which are seen as essentially moral. This perspective also allows the community context of moral development and moral behaviour to be taken into account.

However, it is not helpful to jettison entirely the liberal tradition of moral reasoning built on the liberal view of self. Jean Grimshaw, applauding much feminist work in this area, also issues cautions.³¹ She notes that many of the images of what women could be, in radical feminist work for instance, are of the self undoing conditioning by rational awareness and learning. "And implicit in these assumptions about the self, I think, is a conception of autonomy."³² She sees the positive nature of these images, while also pleading for a feminist notion of the self which admits inconsistencies, and the confusions of the unconscious. Thomas Hill³³ also argues for the retention of aspects of the liberal view of the self and moral reasoning: impartiality (in specific situations, not

³⁰M. Griffiths and M. Whitford, *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, Macmillan Press, 1988, p.11.

³¹J. Grimshaw, *Feminist Philosophers*, Wheatsheaf Books, 1986.

³²J. Grimshaw, "Autonomy and Identity in Feminist Thinking" in Griffiths and Whitford, p.95. Cf. also J. Rose, "Femininity and its Discontents" in Frazer *et al.*, for the following point about the problems with a unitary view of self, seen from the point of view of feminist psychoanalysis.

³³T.E. Hill Jr., "The Importance of Autonomy" in E.F. Kittay and D.T. Meyers, eds., *Women and Moral Theory*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1987.

as a rule of life); the right to make moral decisions for oneself; the ideal of self-government in moral progress. None of these aspects of autonomy, he argues, is inconsistent with an emphasis on care and compassion. When arguments like these admit complexity, it is possible to talk much more fruitfully of people's differences, and possible also to challenge apparently unitary notions of 'women's experience', unmediated by social and linguistic constructions, while at the same time recognising the significance of feminist criticisms of a narrow interpretation of the liberal tradition.

In "The Generalized and the Concrete Other"³⁴ Seyla Benhabib critiques the liberal tradition, engages with Gilligan's work, but does not wish to eliminate a justice perspective entirely. "Benhabib's constructive proposal is that we should develop a moral epistemology regulated, as in liberalism, by the ideal of universality, but responsible also to the concrete reality of all the individual lives which a different (and better) social order would have to bind together".³⁵ She argues that there is basic incoherence in the Rawlsian notion of the self behind a 'veil of ignorance' (the self making decisions about social distribution as if not knowing the particularities of one's own social position, so that the self could not be privileged). Such a self, unsituated, cannot 'know' anything. She distinguishes between the 'generalized other', who is the abstract bearer of rights, and the 'concrete other'. The latter concept allows us to understand the self and the other in contextual and relational terms, and in particularity: "...the concrete other is a critical concept that designates the ideological limits of universalistic discourse".³⁶ The 'concrete other' is more clearly in accord with Gilligan's characterisation of the other in the care perspective. It is within this context that Benhabib argues that universalism can be retained, regulated by the particular. This work is one example of the ways in which philosophers have explored the relationship between notions of justice and care.

Lawrence Blum³⁷ examines the ways in which 'impartialist' critiques of Gilligan's work model relations between justice and care in moral theory. The critics he discusses all conclude that a justice perspective is still valid, and still more important than a care

³⁴S. Benhabib, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other" in Frazer *et al.* An updated version of the article, with a fuller discussion of Susan Moller Okin's criticisms, reprinted in Benhabib, *Situating The Self*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

³⁵Editors' introduction to Benhabib's article in Frazer *et al.*, p.268.

³⁶*ibid.*, p.287. Further feminist discussions on this subject are referred to below, p.104-105.

³⁷L.A. Blum, "Gilligan and Kohlberg: Implications for Moral Theory" in *Ethics*, 98:3, 1988.

perspective, where a care perspective is acknowledged. According to Blum, impartialist contributions to the justice-care debate may insist that a care orientation is not distinct since it can be easily subsumed under a justice perspective, so that somebody supposedly acting out of a concern for relationship is actually acting from universalizable principles (the characteristic of the justice tradition). Alternatively some argue that care considerations are distinct from the justice perspective, but so distinct that they do not belong to the realm of moral concerns, only to the personal realm.³⁸ Others see a care perspective as inferior to justice considerations, or as only valid when it can also be justified from a universal standpoint. None of these affirm the strengths of a care perspective.

Blum's own argument in favour of the care perspective as genuinely moral, distinct from the justice tradition and of value in its own right, centres on the need for the moral agent to have understanding of a situation, informed by a concern for relationship, prior to any application of principles. He argues that the qualities and characteristics needed in order to do this are themselves part of moral reasoning and development. He rejects impartialist positions for being too narrowly rationalistic, not seeing the importance of emotion and commitment in moral reasoning, for instance.³⁹ While broadly agreeing with Blum's argument, I feel that he does not explain in sufficient depth what is meant, for his purposes, by applying a principle to a situation, what kind of awareness of principles is implied and what kind of sensitivity to the situation is involved. These are key questions for relating different moral perspectives.

Rigterink insists that justice and care language cannot simply be added together. An ethic of care, for him, should eliminate the need for an ethic of justice.⁴⁰ Others have sought a framework in which both perspectives can carry significance. Some argue for the use of a concept of rights not as an ideal but as a moral minimum, with a regulatory function.⁴¹ Or this concept can be used perjoratively: "A rich sense of contextual detail awakens one to the limitations in moral thinking that arise from the minimalist moral

³⁸For various configurations of a split between public and private mirrored in the realm of ethics, see note 29, p.91 above, and also the discussion of Tronto's work arguing against such a split, below p.106.

³⁹These arguments are spelled out at greater length in L.A. Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

⁴⁰R. Rigterink, "Warning: The Surgeon Moralists Has Determined That Claims of Rights Can Be Detrimental to Everyone's Interests" in Cole and Coultrap-McQuin, eds.

⁴¹Cole and Coultrap-McQuin suggest this in their introduction to *Explorations in Feminist Ethics*.

principles with which we are familiar".⁴² Dillon expounds a new category of care-respect⁴³ which is a deliberate combination of key terms from both perspectives. 'Respect', as Dillon defines it is not the quasi-Kantian notion of non-interference with another, but is rather that in each person which demands responsive attention and action. This care-respect is due to each person not because of her/his rational capacity but because each is a concrete individual.

It may well be dangerous to women to oppose justice and care. "In repudiating universal principles of justice, feminists repudiate the political and social advantage those principles proclaim".⁴⁴ In cases of discrimination, women need, and readily use, the language of justice, equality and rights to demand changes to the oppressive situation. They should not feel criticised by feminists for using this language. It is possible to understand justice and care as indicative of different priorities rather than opposed understandings of human beings or moral reasoning, provided a too narrow understanding of the justice tradition is not adopted. The two perspectives are pushed further apart, however, the more they are reified in association with gendered behaviour, which is not an issue that many of the philosophers mentioned above have chosen to debate. If 'justice' and 'care' are seen as alternative, but not opposing, perspectives each can be allowed to regulate the other. Or, better still, the two perspectives may be modelled as a continuum - horizontal, not hierarchically vertical - so that the relationship between them is not static. To discard ideas associated with justice may come perilously close to denying women's rationality. Therefore, both perspectives together, even if not in equal measure in all situations, are a better reflection of moral reasoning based on a broader account of human nature.

FEMINIST ETHICS

In much of the work which goes under the title of feminist ethics, Gilligan's conclusions are a major presupposition: that there is such a thing as an ethic of care, which prioritises the maintenance of relationships, and that it is primarily associated with women. I suggest that these concepts are often used unexamined, without sufficient

⁴²M. Friedman, "Care and Context in Moral Reasoning" in Kittay and Meyers, eds., p.203.

⁴³R.S. Dillon, "Care and Respect", in Cole and Coultrap-McQuin, eds. This is very similar to Margaret Farley's argument in "A Feminist Version of Respect for Persons", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 9:1/2, 1993.

⁴⁴O. O'Neill, "Friends of Difference", a review article in *London Review of Books*, 14 Sept. 1989.

notice taken, for instance, of some of the methodological difficulties raised above. Usually the concept of care is understood in its more mature sense from Gilligan's work, with a balance to be maintained between care for others and care for self, though this is sometimes not made as explicit as it might be.

However, the acceptance of Gilligan's project is at least as important as the use of her conclusions in feminist ethics. By that I mean that feminist ethicists share with Gilligan the belief that women's concerns and experiences have been sidelined or not even seen in much of the work that has gone before. This is accepted as a valid reason for the search for a distinctive female ethic, though some theorists sound the warning note that the experiences of women socialised into a patriarchal society may not all be unequivocally useful in the development of a feminist ethic. This also lies behind Tong's distinction between feminine and feminist ethics, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Feminist ethics seeks to take women seriously as moral agents, and to examine moral issues that may have gone unexamined in the past because of their association with the 'private' realm of women. In broad terms then, feminist ethics works with a relational concept of human subjectivity; it is to do with re-valuing the personal and particular, so that notions of what is moral for the individual and for society might be re-written taking women fully into account.

In their introduction to *Ethics: A Feminist Reader*, Frazer, Hornsby and Lovibond delineate what feminism will bring to the subject of ethics. They identify the discovery that the dominant ethical theories do not work for all men, let alone all women; the fact that situatedness matters; and the ways in which biological function needs to be brought into ethics, with an understanding of how that function is both evaluated and socialised.⁴⁵ Holding on to the significance of the particular individual, the tasks of feminist ethics are to critique what has gone before, unmasking ideologies, and to envision in new ways, with the aim of transformation. Feminism is avowedly political so that feminist ethical theory must not be separated from transformative action.

Actual examples of feminist ethics can, of course, be as varied as any others in ethics and examples are found in collections such as Frazer *et al.*, and Cole and Coultrap-McQuin. The fact that collections of feminist ethics have recently been published itself shows how far the subject has developed. For some the focus is on particular issues: women and economics, the ethics of domesticity, control of the body, for instance. For

⁴⁵Frazer *et al.*, p.5-7. It is noticeable that the stress on embodiment is not so explicit a feature of Gilligan's work as it is of the feminist theory that has followed.

others concepts of moral agency are more important, or the moral qualities, or moral tasks which might afford a focus for women. Thus Adrienne Rich images truthfulness for women (in women-identified relationships); Jacqueline Rose questions notions of the self which demand coherence as a basis for ethics (both in Frazer *et al.*) and Cheshire Calhoun describes emotional work (in Cole and Coultrap-McQuin). Important in all of these discussions is the recognition of how much of morality has been imposed on women, and the attempt to envisage a morality which women may choose, which yet takes account of non-chosen relationships. "The difference between *recognising* not only moral choices but also *moral demands*, on the one hand, and having a *responsibility imposed* on one is a fine but crucial distinction for the autonomy of women as moral agents."⁴⁶ The balance must be kept between freedom and determinism, choice and demand - and also, therefore, between a justice perspective and an ethic of care.

As with other aspects of the feminist enterprise at present, the issue of differences among women must arise. This is clearly so in the context of Gilligan's work which may seem to validate strong gender differences, at the expense of recognising differences of race, class, or simply individual personality among women. Yet there is also potential within the care perspective to deal with differences in a more positive way than the justice tradition with its emphasis on 'common humanity' (modelled on elite men), has done. For the care perspective is characterised by its attention to individuals in their own terms and to the practices and reasoning of daily lives. People who think and act, and are developed morally, in accordance with the care perspective attend to individual others, seek to see other perspectives and do the work which will build up relationships.

Many issues in feminist ethics are focused, for instance, in the development of an ethic of care based on the model of mothering. Nel Noddings' book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* is one of the most specific and most controversial in this area and I see it as dependent on an extreme reading of Gilligan's work. Noddings develops an ethic of care explicitly in opposition to an ethic of justice or to any notion of rules: "I shall reject ethics of principle as ambiguous and unstable".⁴⁷ Caring is, for Noddings, the only foundation for ethical response, and the caring response is universal, though it can only be expressed in personal (i.e. individual)

⁴⁶P.W. Scaltsas, "Do Feminist Ethics Counter Feminist Aims?" in Cole and Coultrap-McQuin eds., p.23.

⁴⁷N. Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, University of California Press, 1984, p.5.

terms. Her picture of the caring relationship is modelled on close personal relationships, chiefly mother/child and teacher/student. The full caring relationship must be two-way, between the 'one-caring' (always referred to as 'she') and the 'cared-for' (always referred to as 'he'). Caring is a move away from the self, and the response of the 'cared-for' is an important part of the caring relationship. But the definition of care as a move away from the self makes it hard to take seriously Noddings' claim to be taking care for self into account as well. She also rejects any notion of care for all; obligations of care are prioritised by how close the relation is. "I am not obliged to care for starving children in Africa, because there is no way for this caring to be completed in the other unless I abandon the caring to which I am obligated."⁴⁸ 'Chains' of caring do enable people to care for those beyond their immediate personal circle of family and friends, but the 'chain' of caring to someone slightly more remote is still dependent on some form of attachment to one's closer obligations. Noddings is deeply suspicious of institutional caring - there is really no room in her model for shifting the notion of caring beyond the personal realm. Yet she is aware of the danger of this, and tries to draw back from the full implications of her own exposition. "Feeling, thinking, and behaving as one-caring mark ethical behaviour; but when caring must retreat to an inner circle, confine itself, and consciously excludes particular persons or groups, the ideal is diminished."⁴⁹ But anti-parochialism is not necessarily implied in her ethic.

In *Caring*, Noddings relies strongly on concepts of feminine and masculine, not apparently questioning their origins, or matching them up with the empirical reality of people's lives. This, paradoxically, makes it look as if she *does* match the concepts with actual women and actual men. Her gendered language reinforces this, outweighing the claim that the 'one-caring' and the 'cared-for' could be of either sex. Lesley Davies interprets Noddings as enthusiastic about the retention of gender differences, without any interest in where these gender differences arise, and how much they are evidence, or even cause, of women's oppression.⁵⁰ Noddings reads women's role and identity in a deterministic and conservative manner. On the one hand, "My contention, then, is that men need to learn how to care, and women must learn how to maintain themselves as ones-caring through a general strengthening of self-image"; on the other hand, women are probably 'better', ethically, than men, according to Noddings' scale of judgement,

⁴⁸Noddings, p.84.

⁴⁹*ibid.*, p.114.

⁵⁰L. Davies, "Caring: A Feminine Approach To Ethics", *Women's Studies Occasional Papers*, 18, University of Kent, 1990, p.9.

because their self-image is bound up with the 'one-caring' role in a way that men's is not: "might it be that being cared-for is central to the self-image of men?"⁵¹ Her strong advocacy of the ethic of caring tends to strengthen women's connection with it rather than men's. She is in danger of implying that women who do not instinctively care, in stereotyped forms, are pathological.⁵²

Concentrating on concepts, Noddings avoids giving action criteria for caring, since she locates caring in pre-act consciousness, in emotions, feelings and attitudes. She concentrates on the ideal in her conceptualising, and therefore her work seems located at a surprising distance from many women's lives. She also insists that caring is non-rational, and is suspicious of any expression of caring beyond the individual level because she thinks that it will descend into abstract problem-solving, which is the realm of the rational.⁵³ Confining women to the non-rational is, however, liable only to reinforce the image of women as irrational.

The models of relationship on which Noddings relies mean that her concept of caring not only does not go beyond the personal, it also does not go beyond hierarchical relationships. Yet she does not discuss power in relationships, or the fantasies, drives or desire for control which might make her ideal of 'caring' a more difficult concept. She also admits no difficulty in the 'one-caring' interpreting accurately the needs of the other or 'feeling with' the other. Any conflicts that come as a result of caring are to be lived with, not necessarily solved. This is again significant in Noddings' discussion of care for the self and the maintenance of relationships. The ethic of caring includes "a deep and steady caring for self", but solely instrumentally, so that one may continue to be 'one-caring'.⁵⁴ Her hostility to principles is taken to its extreme when she suggests that this has to mean staying in relationship with unjust persons rather than pursuing 'justice'. The maintenance of relationship is so important for her that any withdrawal from relationship is a failure. I disagree: women need an ethic which affirms that they can be right, not wrong, to withdraw from relationships which harm them.

⁵¹Noddings, *Caring*, p.128 and p.130.

⁵²Davies, p.10.

⁵³Noddings, *Caring*, p.25.

⁵⁴*ibid.*, p.99-100.

Virginia Held, in *Feminist Morality*,⁵⁵ also seeks to build a feminist ethic on the model of a particular caring relationship. She uses the mother/child relationship as her model in explicit contrast to the contractual buyer/seller model upon which, she claims, so much of traditional morality is built. She uses the mother/child model for its links with actual mothers and actual children, but also because it is a significant cultural image. She believes that the re-valuing of care through the centrality of this relationship, is the way to transform culture, and that kind of cultural and symbolic change will in its turn issue in the transformation of social and political life.

Unlike Noddings, Held does not see the model she propounds as the whole of feminist morality. "Some important moral issues seem beyond the reach of an ethic of caring, once caring leads us, perhaps through empathy, to be concerned with them."⁵⁶ She argues that feminists need to make room for justice as well, while not returning to a model in which all moral problems can be solved with reference to a few, simple principles. She favours a circular model of the process of moral reasoning in which theory can be adjusted in the light of moral experience.⁵⁷ As with Noddings, moral experience for Held includes feelings, impressions, attitudes, as well as actions, actual experiences and beliefs. Unlike Noddings, she understands what she describes, and the model she uses, as *rational*. Even though her use of the mother/child relationship gives centrality to 'birthing labour', she insists that the process of human reproduction should not be consigned to a realm of sub-rational, 'natural' or instinctual activity. Human birthing is a human, rational process, so her model of morality has space for rationality and choice, alongside and within non-chosen relations.

Held's work is, for me, a step on from Noddings. Her vision of feminist morality is far more complex than Nodding's feminine ethic of caring. The exclusive use of the mother/child paradigm is still problematic, however. In particular Held overemphasises the commonality of women as expressed in motherhood, not obviously making space for other differences. Despite Held's assumptions to the contrary, I am quite sure that I, as a childless woman, am in a significantly different relationship to motherhood from women who have given birth, or who are engaged in the practice of childrearing. It is

⁵⁵V. Held, *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society and Politics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, p.76.

⁵⁷I do not suggest that this model of circular reasoning is unique to Held. Jeffrey Stout, for instance, recommends such a model for moral reasoning in a non-foundational ethic. J. Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents*, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1988.

not enough to assume that a woman knows all about childbirth and childrearing because of menstruation or socialisation.

Sara Ruddick also focuses on mothering in the ethics she develops.⁵⁸ She claims that she makes the move from a 'womanly' perspective to a liberating feminist standpoint - the move from feminine to feminist ethics. Ruddick separates birthing labour from mothering, asserts that mothers as she uses the term can include men, and then seeks to describe the actual practices of mothering. In this way she hopes to avoid criticisms that she is exclusive, or ethnocentric, in her description of mothering, or that she romanticises mothers.⁵⁹ She describes maternal practice as having three goals: preservation, growth and social acceptability or training. Out of this maternal practice, in context and in attachment, maternal thinking develops. Like Held, Ruddick understands mothering as rational activity.

The great advantage of Ruddick's work, over Noddings', is a much finer sense of actual practices, and actual failures, in relation to the goals of mothering practice. Frequent failures are accepted in her model, yet, because they are labelled failure, they point to the ideal. She is also aware of the complexity of power relations in the mother/child relationship which she takes as her model and is able to examine the power and powerlessness of mothers. Ruddick tries to separate mothering practice from motherhood as a cultural conception, particularly by separating mothering from birthing. The stereotyping web of expectation about women as mothers she loads onto the notion of motherhood, not discussed in her book. But I am still left with questions about how crucial it is for Ruddick (or Noddings, or Held) that this particular activity is examined, out of all women's practices. Still this is only one model in a field where a multitude of models may be more helpful. Susan Mendus sums up the difficulties of using models based on any aspect of mothering:

"Proponents of the ethic of care tend to vacillate uneasily between the claim that women's biological nature as child bearers renders them especially sensitive to considerations of care and compassion, and the claim that women's status as child carers makes them more conscious of those considerations. But either way feminist politics is jeopardised, for the former account renders women prisoners of their own biology, and

⁵⁸Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*.

⁵⁹Tong notes that all these criticisms have been launched at Ruddick's work, despite her attempts to anticipate and answer them! Tong, p.149.



the latter advocates for all women a single, defining role which in fact only some women occupy."⁶⁰

Ruddick sticks to gendered language and this specific model, where she might have developed the idea of parenting or 'nurturing' for instance. She is much more affirming than Noddings of the idea that 'mothers' as she describes them could be men, but her illustrations push the balance firmly in women's direction, as does her negative conception of Fathers. (The capitalising denotes that their role is not complementary to that of mothers.) The business of Fathers is material support, defence, representing 'the world' to the family, and legal control. "The point about - or against - Fathers is that their authority is not earned by care and indeed undermines the maternal authority that is so earned."⁶¹ However, though Ruddick describes the difficulties of mothering practice, she does not invest much in changing the status quo where the conditions of mothering are concerned.

The particular interest for me in Ruddick's work is the development she wants to make from mothering practice in the familial sense to the concerns of the public world and political activity. Unfortunately she does little to justify this move. Or perhaps she sees no need to justify it, simply assuming that it is possible to move from actual maternal practices, and maternal thinking, to the application of that thinking beyond the sphere of individual relations. It is noticeable, though, that her vision of mothering goals being applied to political life is all about the politics of dissent and resistance. She does not, for instance, develop the goals of mothering as integral to the structures of public life, but as dissenting from them, standing aside from them, and then seeking to influence them from that 'outside' position. In that sense she has formed a temporary bridge between separate public and private worlds. Yet, because she constructs that bridge out of concrete actions, there is a great similarity between mothering practice and some forms of political practice. For instance, she gives examples of how the symbols of mothering can be used as political speech.⁶² She bridges the public/private divide also in her discussion of conflict resolution, taking examples from the domestic sphere to apply to international situations.

⁶⁰S. Mendus, "Different Voices, Still Lives: Problems in the Ethics of Care", *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 10:1, 1993, p.19.

⁶¹Ruddick, p.42. This concept is reminiscent of the Hegelian concept of the husband and father. Sally Scholz interprets Hegel as arguing that the female "is individual in the particularity of the family but not an individual in civil society. There the husband represents the family". S.J. Scholz, "Reproductive Labour: The Impact of the Patriarchal Society on Hegel's Phenomenology", *CLIO*, 22:4, 1993.

⁶²Ruddick, p.229.

But Ruddick is more interested in the particular issue of peace politics than in justifying her stance relative to political life as a whole. She states, "I believe that everyday maternal thinking contrasts as a whole with military thinking."⁶³ She does not claim that mothers *are* peaceful, or non-violent, or pacifist, and her analysis of the ways actual mothers can support militarism seems to be just right. Rather she constructs a peace politics for which maternal thinking can provide valuable resources. Further than that, she constructs a link between a women's politics of resistance, based on mothering images, and feminist politics, while recognising that feminists and mothers have not always been the most obvious allies. Strong links are developed which yet do not assimilate mothering and non-violent peace politics, and are (supposedly) not only to do with biology. Yet this is not construction totally from scratch: Ruddick works with perceived links between peace and mothering. "Peace, like mothering, is sentimentally honoured and often secretly despised...Just because mothering and peace have been so long and so sentimentally married, a critical understanding of mothering and maternal nonviolence will itself contribute to the reconception of 'peace'."⁶⁴

However, it is here, in the context of the discussion of peace politics, interestingly, that Ruddick retreats from her distinction between mothering and birthing labour with her "Histories of Human Flesh" (chapter 8 of *Maternal Thinking*). In this section of her work she examines attitudes to bodies which have privileged death over birth, marking the philosophical significance of life for instance from death rather than from birth. She wishes to see the priority given back to birthing labour, to support a caring attitude to bodies. She analyses the very different ways in which the body is crucial for war, where the body is deliberately exploited and the aim is to produce injury and pain. It is abundantly right that bodies should be a part of the discussion of war, yet this section of Ruddick's book sits oddly with the rest, as she admits. It is a chapter that seems to be a tangent, undermining much that was stated earlier establishing mothering practice as separate from birthing labour. The failure of connection in her work is difficult at this point. Even though she has defined the goals of maternal practice as non-violent, Ruddick also recognises that the practice of non-violence by mothers in the domestic sphere does not correlate with mothers believing in public non-violence. Ruddick's work in this area is interesting, but leaves many questions for others to discuss.

⁶³Ruddick, p.150. Gilligan also asserts that an ethic of care implies non-violence: *In a Different Voice*, p.40f. and chapter 6.

⁶⁴Ruddick, p.137.

FEMINIST ETHICS AND POLITICAL THEORY

Will the act of taking what women do *seriously*, publicly, be enough to change society? And is that what women, or feminists, or ethicists should be concerned with? It has been acknowledged that second-wave feminism's slogan 'the personal is political' needs nuancing, but the slogan is still indicative of the fact that many feminist theorists argue against, or simply ignore, any intractable divide between ethics and politics, and between private and public life. Leading towards a consideration of Jean Bethke Elshtain's work, I shall examine briefly some work on this issue. Susan Mendus argues that the problem with an ethic of care is precisely that care cannot be extended, psychologically or conceptually, beyond the intimacy of personal relationships or, possibly, small-scale communities. She claims "domestic virtues are deformed when they are translated to a public world",⁶⁵ because care cannot be legislated. Her example of why it doesn't work is taken from Victorian England: "The substitution of compassion for justice at the political level was, after all, responsible for some of the morally disreputable aspects of Victorian Poor Law".⁶⁶ However, Mendus' argument only holds strongly against those who want to substitute an ethic of care for everything else, in particular dismissing any notion of justice. Her argument also implies that she understands care more as attitude than action. Other theorists have suggested modified accounts of both justice and care which make the political impact of care more realistic.

In *Justice, Gender and the Family*,⁶⁷ Susan Moller Okin defends a fairly straightforward application of a Rawlsian theory of justice to the family. In formulating principles of justice, Rawls suggested that people must make decisions about social distribution as if they did not know the particularities of their own social position, as if drawing a 'veil of ignorance' down over such matters. "The veil of ignorance is such a demanding stipulation that it converts what would, without it, be self-interest into equal concern for others, including others who are very different from ourselves."⁶⁸ However, Okin also believes this notion needs to be refined so as to take the

⁶⁵Mendus, "Different Voices, Still Lives", p.26.

⁶⁶*ibid.*, p.22. Mendus does, however, wish to take some aspects of the ethic of care into her political theory, notably the rejection of liberalism's attention to activity and choice alone, as well as the nuance to communitarianism which argues, from women's perspectives, that social contexts and roles are diverse and conflicting.

⁶⁷S.M. Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, New York: Basic Books, 1989.

⁶⁸*ibid.*, p.100-101.

particularities of others into account in deciding what is just distribution: "It seems clear that, while Rawls does not do this, we must consistently take the relevant positions of both sexes into account in formulating and applying principles of justice".⁶⁹ Iris Young critiques Okin on the grounds that no one subject can take *everyone else's* particularities into account; that is simply to revive the fiction of a universal viewpoint. So the 'veil of ignorance', even re-interpreted, remains a fiction.⁷⁰ Benhabib, too, critiques Okin's position for remaining too close to the 'generalized other' instead of fully developing the possibilities of the 'concrete other'.⁷¹

This particular argument turns on how far we feel it possible to enter into the perspectives of others, and the means by which that process may happen. However, Young, for me, illustrates a more interesting way in which a different vision of justice can help us to realise again its value. Her vision of justice depends not on the concept of distribution, but on correcting the injustices of domination and oppression. Her chief concern is to combat a theory of justice which reduces political subjects' differences through the notion of impartiality. The definition of politics in Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference* is wide, following those who have criticised the depoliticization of large areas of human life. "Politics in this sense concerns all aspects of institutional organization, public action, social practices and habits, and cultural meanings insofar as they are potentially subject to collective evaluation and decision-making".⁷² But she still defines justice such that it allows for pluralistic conceptions of the good, and politics is not defined as the whole of life. The way she defines what is and is not 'politics' serves to reinforce separated public and private domains, even though the boundaries may have been changed. A couple of points will serve as illustrations to show the interest of Young's work for feminist ethicists. She is able, within her theory of justice, to insist that rights are to be defined as relationships, not possessions.⁷³ She also widens traditional definitions of justice and moral concern by adding unconscious injustices into the concept of justice and the sphere of moral judgement.⁷⁴

⁶⁹Okin, p.102.

⁷⁰I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990, p.105.

⁷¹See above, p.93, for a discussion of Benhabib, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other" in Frazer *et al.*

⁷²Young, p.9.

⁷³*ibid.*, p.25.

⁷⁴*ibid.*, p.152.

Joan Tronto describes the public/private divide and the traditional distinctions between ethics and politics as moral boundaries which need to be examined and re-drawn. She believes the vocabulary of care can be used to achieve this, not as essentially private, marginal language occasionally drafted in to challenge public decisions, but as the foundations of a political ethic. "[O]ur account of moral life should provide us with a way to respect and deal justly with others. In order to do so we must honor what most people spend their lives doing: caring for themselves, for others, and for the world."⁷⁵ In particular, she highlights what is insidious about the separation of moral theory and politics: "When the world is rigidly divided between the realms of power and of virtue [as in the liberal view of power as inherently corrupting], we lose sight of the facts that power requires a moral base, and more importantly for our present purpose, that virtue exerts a kind of power. Thus, the rigid boundary between politics and morality prevents us from seeing that moral theory conveys power and privilege".⁷⁶ Tronto develops an ethic of care while critiquing much of Gilligan's work. She specifically questions whether Gilligan's discovery was of a *gendered* voice: because Gilligan does not take difference seriously enough, and retains some of Kohlberg's elitism, she does not see that care is a concern relegated to the realm of those who are marginalised because of race and class as well as gender. Gilligan also colludes with the public/private divide by discussing care only in terms of personal relationships. From that realisation, Tronto recommends moving care from the margins to the centre, exposing the fact that care has been limited and contained because its implicit view of human nature as interdependent does not fit the popular 'self-made man' image.

Tronto expounds her understanding of care as practice and disposition, with four phases: caring about, taking care of, care-giving and care-receiving. Because these phases cover decision-making and delivery of care, they need to be held together. Tronto notes that so often the powerful in society are responsible for the first two, and the relatively powerless for the second two. A sign of privilege in morality and political life is to be able to distance oneself from care-giving, and disguise one's care-receiving. Rather, the four ethical elements she commends - attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness - correspond to all the four phases of care. This re-drawing of the phases of care is important and helpful, but it is equally important that Tronto refuses to use care alone. She will not allow it simply to replace all principles, or

⁷⁵Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, p.x.

⁷⁶*ibid.*, p.93.

the notion of justice. "Obviously a theory of justice is needed to discern among more and less urgent needs".⁷⁷ She demonstrates an appreciation of the complexities and conflicts inherent in the practice of care: "The problems of evaluating proper levels of care, of anger and gratitude, and of providing smothering care as opposed to care that leads to autonomy, is intrinsic to the nature of care".⁷⁸ Therefore, "[t]o address and to correct the problems with care that we have noted requires a concept of justice, a democratic and open opportunity for discussion, and more equal access to power."⁷⁹

Tronto's re-working of care and Young's re-working of justice will not necessarily mesh perfectly together, but both demonstrate the influence and scope of feminist ethical concerns, as well as future possibilities. Traditional boundaries and theories *can* be challenged where they are oppressive. Tronto in particular exposes the danger that feminist theorising could be relegated once again to the margins and restricted to 'women only'; both Tronto and Young work to show the range and importance of the concepts they use for all human beings.

THE WORK OF JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Jean Bethke Elshtain describes herself as a political theorist, with feminist commitment. Her feminist standpoint enables her to make the role of women an interpretative clue in unlocking political thought. Her breadth of concern makes her work relevant not only to political theory, but also to women's studies, to moral philosophy and to feminist theology. *Public Man, Private Woman*⁸⁰ appears to be the best known piece of work by Elshtain. In it she examines the work of key political theorists of the Western political tradition. "Readers will quickly discover that the way in which determinations about the public and the private and the role and worth of each is evaluated will gear a thinker's attitudes towards women".⁸¹ She demonstrates that the split in political

⁷⁷Tronto, p.138.

⁷⁸*ibid.*, p.141.

⁷⁹*ibid.*, p.155. I discuss theologically coherent notions of justice in chapter 4, and of power in chapter 5, below p.135-136 and p.168-169 respectively.

⁸⁰Cf. note 5, this chapter. Cf. also Elshtain, *Meditations on Modern Political Thought: Masculine/Feminine Themes from Luther to Arendt*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986.

⁸¹Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p.4.

thinking between the private and public spheres has contributed to the oppression of women in Western society.

In the work of all the political theorists Elshtain discusses, women are kept in the private realm, though that means that they are at varying distances from public power, depending on particular constructions of the relationship between the public and the private. Increasingly, she shows, particularly with the advent of liberalism, the accepted philosophy of a split between reason and passion required a clear split between public and private. This split links to male and female roles by way of an anthropology which continues to associate men more closely with rational capacity, and women with passion and nature - the realm of necessity as opposed to rational choice.

However, Elshtain's project is to build on her analysis to develop her own restructuring of the realms of public and private which could allow women and men a full role in both. She insists on distinction, but strong relationship between public and private. The interplay of these realms is rooted in the need of human beings to live in relations of concrete particularity, and in the creation of everyday meanings. "The exercise of the political imagination must take root in those moral concepts and categories in which people think".⁸² Her concern for the everyday leads her to stress the role of the private sphere. Distinguishing public and private she yet refuses conventional gender association - male with public, and female with private.

Elshtain's view of politics is that it needs to be defined in distinction from other things if there is to be space for political action. "Minimally, a *political* perspective requires that some activity called 'politics' be differentiated from other activities, relationships, and patterns of action".⁸³ Innovative thinkers see 'politics' where it wasn't before, but without politics as something distinct there is no route to political change. Feminist politics, Elshtain believes, needs to develop the notion of citizenship. She wants the voices of ordinary women to be heard in the public realm and encourages their active citizenship. Her image is of women and men organising as local groups of citizens for the achievement of common goals, the worth of which are fully and continually debated. Citizens are, thus, involved in moral reasoning in the public sphere. This is the

⁸²Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p.320.

⁸³*ibid.*, p.201. 'Space' is not, however, a metaphor Elshtain likes for the political realm, since it conjures up memories of the exclusive 'space' that Greek philosophers created for political discussion, which was firmly closed to women. She wants to speak not of public 'space' but of "public imperatives, competing public claims, public duties, responsibilities, goods", *ibid.*, p.347.

re-emergence of public morality, different from private moralisms being paraded in the public arena. But another important strand of Elshtain's reconstruction of the political world is her exposition of politics as limited. She uses Arendt's metaphor of natality to signify hope in political beginnings, but also to deflate fantasies of control, "because it conjures up the fragility, mortality, and necessary limitedness of all our political efforts".⁸⁴ Politics is to be defined as something other than the power of domination, and there must be space in it for dependence and vulnerability, and for the nurture of new ideas and actions.

Elshtain's view of politics is dependent on what she has to say about both the individual and the family. She argues strongly against liberal views of the self which result in some notion of a disembodied self: liberal solipsism is no basis for understanding or valuing social relations. She shares many critics' despair about predatory individualism. She describes individualism in fact as due to the collapse of the public sphere as a unifying force and moral paradigm.⁸⁵ Yet she will not accede to a Marxist total socialisation of the individual, for the individual is too complex, and she cannot see that common meanings will ever be fully enough shared to fulfil Marx's picture of the collective.

It is the family which, for Elshtain, provides the context for the development of such an individual who will be able to take up her or his role as an active citizen in the political sphere. She emphasises this because she feels feminist politics has not properly valued the private sphere. The private realm is important for its own sake, as a realm of privacy and value, where meaning and identity are created. In the family, where authority and obligation go together, the individual can come to know the boundaries and limitations which are the necessary precursors of adequate, complex moral reasoning. This is where training for democracy begins. "In our own time the nexus of social relationships that retain the possibility for affection, tenderness, responsibility, moral duty, obligation and caring are, for the most part, those we call or know as 'private'... The private sphere, then, can (there is no guarantee) serve as the template upon which powerful political sentiments are raised".⁸⁶ Elshtain insists on distance between family life and politics so that individuals do not identify only with the state, and so that a potential is kept alive for revolt and dissent. Her argument entails "a rejection of any ideal of political and

⁸⁴Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys: Essays in Feminism as Civic Discourse*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p.xvii. This use of a metaphor to deflate fantasies of control resonates with the work of Sharon Welch and her 'ethic of risk'. See below, p.138.

⁸⁵Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p.181.

⁸⁶Elshtain, "The Self: Reborn, Undone, Transformed", *Telos*, 44, 1980, p.111.

familial life that absorbs all social relations under a single authority principle."⁸⁷ But this measure of commitment to the family does not automatically imply a commitment to any particular form of the family, and certainly not to the gendered roles that have been traditionally associated with conservative views of the family.

Elshtain puts distance between the family and the state with her plea for the development of local communities, focus of active citizenship. Yet this layer of civil society is precisely what bridges the abyss between the public and private as well. "The task of the political imagination is possible only if civility is not destroyed, only if a private sphere which allows for playful experimentation from deep seriousness of purpose exists free from totalistic intrusion and control."⁸⁸ This explains her deep suspicion of state intervention in the affairs of the family. Her review and critique of Susan Schechter's work on the battered women's movement questions a naive trust in the state to solve problems, without sufficient questioning of who defines 'problems', or sufficient notice of the danger of imposing client status on victims of domestic violence. Yet, in the same article, she balances this with the recognition that an over-privatization of the family is problematic. The family is social and political, distinct yet inseparable from the political sphere, and it needs political support.⁸⁹

Elshtain's political analysis further identifies a tradition in political theory of armed civic virtue which she wishes to challenge. In *Women and War*⁹⁰, Elshtain demonstrates how war and politics have gone hand in hand, so that, in the Western world, dominant political and war discourses have constructed a notion of citizenship which includes military values. This tradition of 'armed civic virtue' gives women an important role in being mothers of citizens-to-be, but never makes women citizens in their own right, and never allows them a public voice. "The narrative of patriotic armed virtue...constructs the woman either as Machiavellian mirror to male war-making or as the exemplary and stalwart mother of Rousseau's Spartan ideal who loses five sons but gives thanks that

⁸⁷Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys*, p.56. This model of the relation between public and private is similar in some respects to Ruddick, to whose work Elshtain refers, but Elshtain's model envisages a greater, more structured participation of the private person as citizen in political discussions. See above, p.102, for discussion of Ruddick.

⁸⁸Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p.169.

⁸⁹Elshtain, "Politics and the Battered Woman: A Provocative Study of a Major Social Problem", *Dissent*, Winter 1985.

⁹⁰Elshtain, *Women and War*, part 1.

Sparta won the battle".⁹¹ Such a tradition depends on the maintenance of men's and women's distinct relationship to war.

Women and War examines the imagery that sustains gendered relationships to war and peace for the majority of people. Elshtain distinguishes between the male Just Warrior and the female Beautiful Soul - taking the latter term from Hegel. In war discourse, women are defined as men's pacific Other, those for whom war is fought, the sustainers of morale. Women are constructed as the necessary background for war, honouring the sacrifices of the Just Warrior. Women's and men's bodies are implicitly valued in different ways in war discourse: men's bodies are the raw material of war sacrifice, whereas women's bodies are to be protected from war because of their role in reproduction. Elshtain then shows how this imagery has functioned historically in the lives of men and women, and what does or does not serve to undermine the imagery. For relationships to war are more complex than the imagery suggests, as I showed in chapter 2.

But Elshtain's project is not simply historical. She is concerned to find ways of undermining the dominant imagery which connects civic and military values. She is searching for a *disarmed* civic virtue. To this end, she re-examines the just war tradition from a feminist point of view. She critiques the tradition because it has given rise to the gendered roles of Just Warrior and Beautiful Soul. But in her re-working of the just war tradition she finds a strong alternative to a 'realist' approach to war. Realism speaks the language of scientific certainty, positing sovereign states in a permanent state of potential conflict, with war as a natural human state and no moral public language available to articulate an imperative to avoid war. Elshtain's interpretation of just war thinking resists the assumption of absolute disorder, and the utopia of absolute order.

"For just war is...a tacit account of politics that aims to be nonutopian yet to place 'the political' within an ethically shaped framework...There is an emphasis on the dignity of the human person, an insistence on the primacy of dialogue as a means to change, a commitment to deconstructing a lust for power in order to create space for alternatives, and a stress on sin as a form of moral disorder and division".⁹²

Her argument is that just war thinking cannot be abstract (though it has in the past been too abstract), since abstract discourse oversimplifies and distorts. She attempts to

⁹¹Elshtain, *Women and War*, p.92-93.

⁹²Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys*, p.158-159.

engage in the specific just war thinking she recommends in an article reflecting on the Gulf War.⁹³ Just war thinking must be attentive to context, and cannot, as does realism, exclude women's voices and the sphere of everyday concerns. "What we bring to bear in terrible circumstances will be shaped by whether what is foremost in our minds at any given moment is the suffering of an individual child, say, or a threat to the autonomy of our state".⁹⁴ She sees 'what is foremost in our minds' as a genuine choice. Within this framework, her image of the citizen - male or female - is of the 'chastened patriot'. She draws a strong distinction between patriotism and nationalism: a chastened patriot learns the lessons of history, seeks to uphold the vision of public morality for her or his country, but criticises it when necessary. These conceptions of just war and a proper patriotism are the material for Elshtain's vision of a politics which fully includes women, and which "offers values for which one might die but not easy justifications for the need to kill".⁹⁵

It should be clear by now that Elshtain maintains a strong commitment to pluralism, with a suspicion of rigidly absolute positions, in her political theorising. A component in that commitment is her attention to language and her use of a variety of discourses. Language is an "essential feature which makes human relationship possible...It allows us to differentiate and to classify reality so that we can identify more or less constant subjects and objects of reference".⁹⁶ Relationship for Elshtain depends on differentiation. Her defence of a theory of human nature which locates people firmly in relationship is also, therefore, a defence of the importance of differentiation. She grounds differentiation in sexed identity, which means that she can take bodily differences into account. Her delight in language is a delight in multiplicity as she seeks to trace many different voices. Therefore narrative becomes an important form of discourse in her writing. The stories of people's lives can be examples, can be given the status of models, and can thus inform the creation of new images for new possibilities of action. But they also remain stories. Elshtain seeks stories, not to generalise and oversimplify, but to theorise with a close eye on the differences in related individual experiences.

⁹³Elshtain, "Just War as Politics: What the Gulf War Told Us About Contemporary American Life", in D.E. DeCosse, ed., *But Was It Just? Reflections on the Morality of the Persian Gulf War*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

⁹⁴Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys*, p.158.

⁹⁵*ibid.*, p.161. I take up Elshtain's ideas about just war theory again in chapter 5; see below, p.190f.

⁹⁶Elshtain, "Against Androgyny", *Telos*, 47, 1981, p.13.

To live in this way with people's stories, with the way they express their actual beliefs and actions, as the raw material of the political imagination is to live with differences of opinion, and thus with conflict. This Elshtain recognises and applauds since she sees it as necessary to democracy. Her critical distance from some forms of liberalism is clear: she endorses a strong notion of pluralism not on the grounds of a universalism which ignores or eliminates difference and particularity, but on the basis of a celebratory recognition of difference. Her political vision never seeks to gloss over ordinary people's voices, and therefore it deals in the conflicts and confusions of life, as material for debate and action. In this context, her recommendations for political discourse and practice seek no closure, but a continued openness, resisting only absolutism and finality.

Elshtain's work is not always popular in feminist circles because she is not averse to critiquing various forms of feminism. Radical feminism is taken to task for its flattening of all distinction between public and private. She is particularly antagonistic towards the radical feminist discourses which concentrate exclusively on women's powerlessness and victimisation. She is convinced that the overuse of images of women as powerless will reinforce women's perception of themselves as powerless, and this will in fact diminish their power. "[W]omen are and have been powerful; women are and have been powerless".⁹⁷ Discourse which focuses on women's powerlessness denies the complexity of women's history which includes stories of survival, of powerful individuals, of real achievement in a male-dominated world. Liberal feminism on the other hand is critiqued for devaluing the private sphere, and for the denial of bodily differences in the use of androgynous language which ultimately only describes a disembodied, non-social self.

Part of Elshtain's critique of feminist discourses is an insistence that feminists must be held accountable for their ethical assumptions, which she carefully exposes.⁹⁸ She questions radical feminists' demonisation of men, and their refusal to be ethically responsible for the means of bringing about change. She is critical of feminist rhetoric about 'sex war', pitting women against men, which does nothing to undermine war rhetoric. She questions liberal feminists over the language of rights, which has always involved the exclusion of some, and has honoured too much the quest for individual

⁹⁷Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys*, p.134.

⁹⁸The following arguments are expounded in Elshtain, "Ethics in the Women's Movement", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 515, 1991.

control. She is dissatisfied with feminists making 'choice' an absolute in ethical debates, particularly over reproductive technology. She is particularly ambivalent about the liberal feminist 'right to fight' argument, feeling that it upholds the link between citizenship and service in the military, and whatever upholds that link upholds the unequal relations between men and women of which it is the expression. Equally, she is suspicious of ethical positions based simplistically on an equation of women with nature, and with 'good', and of men with anti-nature and therefore with 'bad'. She in fact critiques any argument, by feminists or others, which makes ethical dilemmas appear simple of solution. She argues for ethics to include complexity and to recognise conflict.

Some of Elshtain's arguments are based on her understanding of Christianity, and she looks at Christianity more as a historian than a systematic theologian. From her reading of the New Testament she interprets Jesus as someone who would have appealed to women, because he heard their voices, and spoke so that they could hear his public speech. His parables were close to everyday life, and the terms he used, of "forgiveness, succor, devotion" were the terms of women's lives. Elshtain suggests that women must have heard Jesus with a sense of attraction and celebration.⁹⁹ In addition, she claims, "the New Testament Jesus deconstructs the powerful metaphor of the warrior central to Old Testament narrative...he devirilizes the image of manhood".¹⁰⁰ Her reading of history suggests that early Christianity was a major force in challenging power as domination and command. She picks out two strands of Christianity, seeing it as important that they went together: i) pacifism and ii) a new role for women, in which women, like men, could achieve the highest praise, in martyrdom for their faith. She argues that Christianity instituted a new image of the body so that it could no longer be conscripted for society's purposes, and also sanctified each life and everyday life. At the same time, Christianity limited the political sphere: "Christianity drained the empire of its claims to divinity and omnipotence",¹⁰¹ making possible a principled resistance to political demands. However, she subscribes to the view of a clear distinction between early Christianity and Christianity as later imperial religion. She argues that later Christianity helped solidify the roles of 'just warriors' and 'beautiful souls', as well as providing Church support for state wars. She also has a negative image of eschatology

⁹⁹Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p.68.

¹⁰⁰Elshtain, "Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age", *Political Theory*, 13:1, 1985, p.44.

¹⁰¹Elshtain, "Christianity and Patriarchy: The Odd Alliance", *Modern Theology*, 9:2, 1993, p.112.

in relation to Christian history, for she sees it fostering a vision of absolute, ontological peace which she wishes to question.

Elshtain's attempts to restructure the public/private divide recognise the dangers of feminist dependence on the 'good' state to intervene in the private sphere, and limit the concerns of politics in the interests of a strong notion of the family. However, there are problems here. She asks important questions, and seeks more justification than feminists have been wont to give, but she does not set out her own solutions as clearly as she expresses her anxieties. In fact 'public' and 'private' are shorthand in Elshtain's work, and at times the use of shorthand obscures the complexity at which she hints. 'Public' in Elshtain's terminology sometimes means 'limited politics' and sometimes means the sphere of active citizenship. Public and private interact in her model, and the sphere between them, of 'communities of conscience', of civil society, needs to be taken fully into account. But this interaction which she demonstrates sometimes seems to deny the demarcations she also wishes to uphold. She intends "to sketch a feminism that holds that power ought to be decentralized, that the good of society is best served not by concentration...but by a multiplicity of institutions - families, neighborhoods, unions, churches - in which the principle of brotherhood and sisterhood must come more generally to prevail."¹⁰² What is also needed in her model is some notion of what happens if the public morality of civil society fails to protect and uphold individuals and families - perhaps the fact that she largely ignores the criminal justice system is notable here. Similarly, there is little explicit discussion of where economics fits into her model of public and private, which might help to illuminate some of the difficulties.

Elshtain's work seems to me useful and important. Her insights into woman's place in political theory and history are helpful. Her model of dialogue among appreciated differences, as the best model of pluralism and of democracy, which is key to her concerns, can be taken into a model of feminist theological ethics. Despite a suspicion of absolute positions, she is not at all inclined towards relativism in ethics: she simply will not sacrifice dialogue, or conflict, or complexity. She puts a concept of human nature back into the equation in discussion of the political sphere, and this is useful for the theologian to build on. I appreciate her analysis of the way in which women's relationships to war, peace and violence illuminate much else about women's roles in society. The image of the 'chastened patriot', and her encouragement of women's citizenship is a helpful construction of a possible new relationship of women to violence, which allows for many women's different experiences.

¹⁰²Elshtain, "Christianity and Patriarchy", p.121.

CONCLUSION

Feminist ethics is distinguishable from many other forms of ethics. It is not, however, entirely unrelated to them, and some of the emphases of feminist ethics will be found in liberal, communitarian, or theological ethics. Nor is feminist ethics a single, easily identifiable body of scholarship, with all feminist ethicists' work tending towards the same conclusions, any more than 'masculine' ethics. In whatever way they are shaped, though, the following kinds of emphases will be seen in most feminist work in ethics. There is a primary concern with the context of moral values and moral decision-making, and with needs *located* in the situations in which they have arisen. Attention to particular persons, and attempts to feel and see with particular persons are important. Though most feminist ethicists would not wish to deny significance to abstract principles altogether, or to principles that are somehow brought to the particular situation, it is context that has attracted most attention. This arises from concepts of people in relationship, in social contexts, which yet stand alongside the possibility of critiquing those contexts where they are oppressive, especially to women. Feminist ethics' relationship to abstract principles is focused on difficulties with the concept of justice. It should, however, be possible to overcome this since many feminist ethicists do work with strong notions of what constitutes injustice, and feminists have brought concepts of oppression and victimisation into view not just as value-neutral terms of political analysis and description, but also implying ethical judgement at a social and individual level.

Feminist ethicists have paid renewed attention to aspects ruled out of other accounts of morality. In particular, feminist ethicists specifically ask questions about women's viewpoints and women's practices (though they also recognise increasingly where their attention has only focused on particular groups of women, and needs to be widened). There has also been greater focus on the non-rational, in contrast to Kantian ethics with its exclusion of all but a narrowly defined rationality. Included in feminist work on ethics are feelings, attitudes, impressions, and processes hitherto seen as 'natural' and therefore 'sub-human'. Included also is a whole range of situations left out of much traditional ethics, usually those deemed to be in the 'private' sphere. Brought into the frame of ethical study, therefore, are non-chosen relationships and obligations. Feminist ethics seeks to counter suspicion of close personal relationships, and gives value to aspects of human persons seen most clearly in the realm of the personal, such as dependency, fragility and embodiment. This activity of widening the range of subject

matter for ethical enquiry is important. As feminists have questioned why women's points of view and experiences have been sidelined, they have also questioned other ethical boundaries, particularly those which seek to separate ethics from political theory, and the public realm from the private. These boundaries have been critiqued by feminists because they have been revealed as discriminatory and exclusionary in origin, the products of certain social contexts, and certain anthropological models. The language of care, responsibility and relationships is an important discourse for challenging these boundaries and adding other dimensions to the study of ethics. But this discourse can be used without excluding other forms.

There are dangers also in feminist ethics. A concentration on particularity can become parochialism, and a refusal to look at a wider view than that of oneself or one's immediate personal circle. There are many serious questions to be asked in this area, about otherness and distance between persons, as well as about the range of ways we relate to other persons, and what the links and contrasts are between different kinds of relationship. These questions matter very much to the ethicist, including to the theological ethicist, who deals with ethical judgements about the ways in which people interact with one another. Variety, flexibility and questioning of traditional boundaries can be hallmarks of feminist ethics, but they are jeopardised where ethical models are limited, as they are in much of the work on caring. It has been crucial to take serious ethical account of the everyday activities of many women, and in particular to re-value mothering practice. Mothering practice is sometimes expounded in idealised ways, but it has the potential as a model to help with certain sorts of mutuality, of taking and giving, of loving and responding, as well as helping us recognise the contradictions and difficulties (and inevitability?) of unequal relationships. But it is time to supplement this model, to recognise the variety in women's lives, and develop models of caring and of justice-seeking which will further illuminate what does happen and could happen and ought to happen in women's lives.

There is a danger, too, in the use of increasingly familiar code words as a kind of shorthand. 'Relationship' or 'care' or 'connectedness' are examples. For these are not necessarily useful words for feminists in and of themselves. A woman has a relationship with the husband who batters her; a father has a relationship with the daughter he abuses; an employer has a relationship with exploited employees; a tyrant is connected with his downtrodden subjects. We do not need code words, but rather an explanation of the kinds of relationships that are life-giving. In "What is Feminist Ethics?", Eleanor Haney discusses friendship as a model of the right kind of relating, as "a rejection of most competitive patterns, adversarial patterns, exploitative patterns, authoritarian

patterns, and paternalistic patterns of relating". She further notes, "Dependency and relatedness also have qualities that are valuable and qualities that are destructive".¹⁰³ This seems to me a healthy awareness of the complexity of the terms used.

Feminist ethicists have begun to recognise just how complex notions of dependency, equality, power and control can be. Dependency is a fact of human life, which we appreciate better when we have looked in detail at women's lives. But in certain circumstances, dependency can be destructive. Joan Tronto recognises the balance needed when she states, "Only if caring takes place in the context of a democratic social order can human dependence be recognized as a necessity but also as a condition to be overcome".¹⁰⁴ However, even this statement might need revision if it implies that all forms of dependency are to be overcome, and strict reciprocity instituted, for instance as people age and need more care once again. Andolsen warns about this in her article on the care of the frail elderly.¹⁰⁵ Similarly issues of control need to be seen in their full complexity. Some feminist ethicists warn against an ethics which assumes that people have full, autonomous control over their lives, or seeks to ensure that they will in the future. Our efforts may not bring about the control we seek, and many feminists question whether ethics can only deal in those things we can control successfully. On the other hand, feminists are very sure that the subordination of women which has issued in some women's inability to have control over areas of their lives is to be resisted. It may be necessary to look towards a notion of control as a mean between the 'control freak' extreme and a complete lack of autonomy.

Feminist ethics is still in its infancy. This is shown most clearly by the cultural specificity of much of the work I have discussed. If feminist work is to be responsible to particular people in particular situations, with difference taken into account, it does need to be culturally specific. But this must be made explicit. Much of my discussion above has been of work relevant to North American culture. I have discussed it on the basis of the philosophical links which make up the common background of Western culture. But some specific ethical examples and discussion have the constitution and legal system of the United States alone as background. There is nothing wrong with this as a beginning, so long as we realise it is a beginning.

¹⁰³E. Haney, "What is Feminist Ethics? A Proposal for Continuing Discussion", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 8:1, 1980, p.118 and p.120. See below, p.153, for further mention of this article.

¹⁰⁴Tronto, p.163.

¹⁰⁵B.H. Andolsen, "Justice, Gender and the Frail Elderly: Re-examining the Ethic of Care", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 9:1/2, 1993.

I have stated that I see feminist ethics as an important tool in enabling me to make ethical evaluations of the kind of experiences I discussed in my previous chapter. I have chosen to use ethical theory which takes women's experiences and concerns seriously, and which attends to the complexities of those experiences, as a resource. It is ethical study which enables judgements to be made, guidance established and new possibilities to be envisaged. Feminist ethics enables me to ask what is of harm or help to women, to humanity, and to the earth. It must also be able to ask questions about the harm women do, by standards of care and justice. The refusal of feminist ethicists to separate their work from social and political change has led to attempts to think again about the separation between public and private realms. This enables me to look at the interrelations between a host of different experiences, without assuming I cannot discuss together war, and particular people's 'private' experiences in wartime, and face-to-face violent incidents in the domestic context. That does not mean that I think such things can be discussed as if there were no contrasts between them.

In the feminist ethics and politics I have discussed, there is a general assumption that harmful violence is wrong¹⁰⁶ and that non-violence is a good. Non-violence as a good is not, however, necessarily equated with pacifism as an unvarying policy. This is particularly true of Ruddick's and Elshtain's attempts to construct peace politics. Both *are* involved in construction, for neither assumes that women are more peaceful than men. Both construct ways for women to be concerned with and involved in conflict and conflict resolution. So a satisfactory way of discussing women and violence could use elements of Ruddick's mothering practice transformed into political speech, and of Tronto's political ethic of care, and of Elshtain's disarmed civic virtue. With these elements, women's everyday concerns are allowed to challenge political decision-making about war and preparations for war. Mendus' claim that 'domestic values' are 'deformed' when applied to politics needs to be tested, rather than blandly stated, in the context of women's active citizenship and ethical dialogue. With these tools, we can investigate how militarism affects daily life, and learn to resist it where necessary in the name of privacy and dissent, questioning the over-politicization of some areas of life. We can look at the ways in which violence arises in everyday situations, and how violent behaviour may be encouraged, while working also on conflict resolution among individuals and communities.

¹⁰⁶As Elshtain points out, this would not necessarily be true of all feminist writing, some of which barely disguises its acceptance of violence towards 'the enemy' men.

But all this is not yet enough for the feminist *theologian*. My next chapter, therefore, examines the ways in which feminist ethics has been worked on by theologians, and the project of building a distinctive feminist theological ethics.

CHAPTER 4 - TOWARDS FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

FEMINIST THEOLOGIANS AND ETHICAL CLAIMS

Feminist theologians have always made ethical claims. Feminist theology involves the evaluation of religious traditions, specifically on the grounds of what has been good or bad for women within those traditions. A feminist critique of Christianity involves critique of Christian history, doctrines and ethics. In her important article "The Human Situation: A Feminine View",¹ Valerie Saiving examined the concept of sin which had informed the traditional theological view of the human situation, with particular reference to the work of Anders Nygren and Reinhold Niebuhr. She claimed that their concept of sin did not have universal reference and was in fact a gendered concept, based only on male experience. She interpreted their view of sin as "the unjustified concern of the self for its own power and prestige";² sin was pride, or self-assertion, in complete contrast to Christian love which was utterly selfless. In her critique, Saiving suggested that women were usually tempted to a very different kind of sin:

"triviality, distractibility and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus; dependence on others for one's own self-definition; tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence; inability to restrict the boundaries of privacy; sentimentality, gossipy sociality, and mistrust of reason - in short, underdevelopment or negation of the self".³

The traditional theological view of sin was incomplete, and therefore wrong in both a factual and an evaluative sense. Saiving challenged the traditional accounts of concepts which are crucial for theological ethics in the Christian tradition. In questioning notions of sin, of temptation, and of love, she challenged theologians to rethink their accounts of what is deemed 'right' and 'wrong'. She implicitly argued that for Christian theology to ignore women's experiences was wrong, in both a descriptive and an ethical sense.

¹V. Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View" (first published, *Journal of Religion*, 1960) in C.P. Christ and J. Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979. For a critique of feminist theological conceptions of sin, in terms of whether they are explicitly theological enough, cf. A. McFadyen, "Sins of Praise: The Assault on God's Freedom" in C. Gunton, ed., *God and Freedom*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. For further reference to this essay, see below, p.167, note 13.

²Saiving, p.26.

³*ibid.*, p.37. It is interesting to note, in the light of some radical feminist writing which is highly suspicious of reason, that Saiving includes 'mistrust of reason' in her list of women's temptations.

The challenge issued by Saiving has been endorsed and developed by many other feminist theologians.

The claims and conclusions of feminist theologians have varied enormously. Mary Daly is perhaps most well-known for her radical feminist critique of Christian symbols, myths and history, on the grounds of the harm they have done to women. In far stronger terms than anything in Saiving's article, she charges the Christian tradition with direct and deliberate oppression of women. It might appear nonsensical to write of the Christian tradition as 'deliberate' about anything, but that is the kind of paradox in which Daly deals. In most of her work she feels no need to distinguish between the Christian tradition and patriarchal Western society. Her worldwide examples of the harm done to women suggest that harm is not restricted to the Christian tradition; that the blame is on patriarchy. But Daly so identifies Christianity and patriarchy that she is happy to use Christian terms even in her discussion of non-Christian phenomena. In *Gyn/Ecology*, subtitled *The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, she describes harm done to women in barbarous rituals: suttee, footbinding, genital mutilation, witchburnings and gynaecology. In some the Christian Church is directly implicated; but others are also explained in theological terms, as re-enactment of the murder of the goddess. In *Pure Lust*, Daly again tackles certain aspects of ethics, reconstructing the virtues she recommends for women - Nemesis, Courage and Distemper. Daly's project is to deconstruct religious traditions, and reconstruct something different, and better, for women.⁴ There is for her no possibility of positive association with religious traditions which have harmed women: they are immoral.

Daphne Hampson agrees with much of Daly's assessment of Christianity. In *Theology and Feminism* she contends that feminism has exposed Christianity as untrue and immoral. The Christian myth is itself sexist, therefore false, and should be dispensed with.⁵ The evaluative word 'should' in my summary of her work does no injury to her argument, for her evaluation is clear: Christianity, of all religions, cannot be abstracted from its history, and its history has been male-centred (including its historical

⁴M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology; Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*, London: The Women's Press, 1984. Judith Plaskow, reviewing *Gyn/Ecology*, suggests that Daly's critique, her deconstruction, may be more important than her so far unconvincing attempts at reconstruction, since these use such unfamiliar terms and concepts. Review in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 48:3, 1979. For the earlier stage of Daly's critique of Christianity, cf. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, London: The Women's Press, 1986.

⁵D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p.2-3 and p.44f. Hampson cites Gilligan's work as 'evidence' for a new view of women which 'proves' Christianity's anthropology irredeemably sexist.

revelation) and harmful to women. It is, then, at least partly for ethical reasons that Hampson abandons Christianity. Describing herself as post-Christian is a statement about ethical commitment. Both Daly and Hampson deny the compatibility of feminism and Christianity on moral grounds.

However, that has not been the assessment of all feminist theologians. Many have weighed the evil done to women in religious traditions against other factors which they consider good, and have come to the conclusion that women can stay within those traditions, facing a history of harm, yet with their moral integrity intact. But the obligation remains to critique traditions and histories for their effects on women's lives, and the tensions and anger raised by such critique can be difficult to handle. This is shown in *Texts of Terror*, for instance, where Phyllis Trible works consciously within a tradition which attributes authority to the Christian scriptures, yet finds in those scriptures stories of outrageous abuses of women, insufficiently condemned. Remaining in a tradition which in some sense honours these stories is not an easy option.

Denise Carmody describes the decision to stay in the Christian Church as based on a balancing act: feminists can stay in the Church if they think the good which God has done in Christ outweighs the evil done to women in Christian history.⁶ In her analysis of Christian ethics there is unequivocal condemnation of sexism as sin, alongside a clear assumption that the subjection of women as prescribed by the household codes in the New Testament is wrong. She is also prepared to make ethical judgements about Christian history. However, Carmody's argument would be problematic for many other feminist theologians, for she identifies Christian doctrine as wholly good while any harm done to women she ascribes to Church leaders who misunderstood Christian doctrine. This is a somewhat disingenuous dualism, which does not recognise the interplay of Christian doctrine and tradition. Alongside these examples there is an increasingly influential strand of feminist theology concerned with the ethical implications of Christian theology's impact on the planet. Mary Grey and Rosemary Radford Ruether are theologians at the forefront of explorations in Christian ecofeminism.⁷

Although I wish to see feminist theological ethics as a distinct discipline, these examples of feminist theologians making ethical claims are important, for they demonstrate the

⁶D.L. Carmody, *Virtuous Woman: Reflections on Christian Feminist Ethics*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, p. 118. See below for further discussion of Carmody's work, p. 127 and p. 153.

⁷Ethical implications for Christian doctrine are further explored in chapter 5, p. 163f.

interconnections of systematic theology and ethics. Feminist theological ethics grows out of feminist theology. It also finds its roots in non-theological feminist ethics, discussed in the last chapter. Interestingly, fewer exponents of feminist theological ethics see its roots in other forms of theological ethics. Since I proceed by exploring specific examples of work which might go under the title of feminist theological ethics, following the direction of those examples this chapter concentrates more closely on the links with feminist theology and non-theological feminist ethics than on connections to non-feminist theological ethics. The chapter continues with my initial attempt to explore the relationship between feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics. I then look at work that has been done on *agape*, as a particularly important theme in Christian ethics, from feminist viewpoints. Following this is the question of how both feminist theologians and feminist theological ethicists have handled the questions raised by postmodernism, so that it is possible to examine the responses of feminist theological ethicists to philosophical issues of norms, universalism and naturalism. I then use a brief exposition of Beverly Harrison's work on specific ethical issues to stand as a representative illustration of a body of work among feminist theological ethicists which is concerned with specific ethical issues. Finally I examine three further texts which I count as being on the boundaries of feminist theological ethics, before seeking to summarise the model of feminist theological ethics with which I wish to work. My specific examples are invariably Christian because that is the tradition in which I find myself and within which I need to work, but I hope that the methodology of examining feminist perspectives for the light they may shed on religious traditions is applicable more widely.

DISTINGUISHING FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

I argued in the last chapter that feminist ethics was distinguishable from non-feminist ethics, but not in the simplistic sense that feminist ethicists always tackled different subjects from their non-feminist colleagues, or always arrived at different conclusions. Rather, different emphases come into play, and different starting points, from non-feminist ethics. Feminist ethicists are often much more aware of starting from a place of injustice than are those ethicists whose theories seem to assume the possibility of 'starting from scratch'. Feminist ethicists presuppose women's oppression under a patriarchal system, though the precise analysis of that may vary enormously. They are anxious too that their theorising is responsive and responsible to women's lives. Feminist theological ethics is not distinguished from feminist ethics in any of the above instances. It is not distinguished by a certain narrow field of subjects tackled, though

subjects which have a particular relation to a defined theological tradition may be explored in addition, such as the discussion of *agape* outlined below. However, relation to a theological tradition will affect how a subject is tackled: with certain presuppositions for instance, or with a certain audience in mind. One collection of essays, and one single essay provide me with examples of the possibilities and problems in moving from feminist ethics to feminist theological ethics.

An essay by Grace Jantzen illustrates one theologian bringing the questions and models of feminist ethics into theological perspective. She argues that liberal anthropology, particularly as expressed by Rawls, "is based squarely on the assumption that people are in competition with one another for goods and resources",⁸ so that ethics is all about fair distribution. She then explicitly refers to Gilligan's work because it challenges the justice/rights model of personhood and ethics, and proposes instead a model based on connectedness and care. Following my critique of Gilligan in chapter 3, I note here that Jantzen's summary of Gilligan's work may be misleading simply as a summary, not asking enough critical questions, though Jantzen also has other resources to offer as well. She develops the model of connectedness as a suitable model for theological ethics, supporting moral action which must be directed to the building of solidarity and connection (which may not be the same as equal treatment). Ethics based on detachment she sees as a route only to moral blindness because detachment, or disinterestedness, is often interpreted to exclude feelings, and Jantzen follows other feminist ethicists in arguing instead that feelings are part of what must be taken into account in morality. Anything less is a species of moral blindness. "[T]he connectedness model would be more focussed on the building of moral character and moral social policy than on dealing with crises",⁹ and when faced with crises it would be less about adjudication between conflicting options and more about searching for third options which transcend the ones initially discerned. The important, and difficult, point for me about Jantzen's article is that she sees no difficulty in moving straight from feminist ethics into theological ethics. I suggest, rather that that move needs to be made more carefully, and more consciously.

⁸G. Jantzen, "Connection or Competition: Identity and Personhood in Feminist Ethics", *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 5:1, 1992, p.3.

⁹*ibid.*, p.10. Jantzen does not make explicit the contention that detachment and disinterestedness in ethics might lead to crises, but that may be underlying her argument. A model of ethics which concentrates on discrete events, and individual decision-making might precipitate conflict.

The complexity of relationship between feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics, and whether there is any necessity as well as any possibility of distinguishing them, is illustrated by Barbara H. Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf and Mary D. Pellauer, eds., *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience*.¹⁰ This is a relatively early, much referred to collection of essays. Its subtitle is *A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, which does not signal the theological content of some of the essays. ('Some', rather than all, is my assessment from criteria of explicit theological reference.) However, Sharon Farmer writes in the introduction, "Feminist spirituality, whether it is an extension of traditional western religions or a revival of Goddess religion, provides a 'ground' in which feminists can root their visions of justice for women and a source of energy to struggle for that future",¹¹ clearly giving the collection theological significance. *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience* appears in the bibliographies of theological and non-theological ethicists alike.

This collection seeks to broaden the field of ethics in which feminists work, and in which women's lives are taken seriously. The introduction notes that, in the past, when the subjects of women and morality (as defined by men) were brought together, the discussion often stayed at the level of sexual morality, rather than encompassing the whole range of human striving for justice, fulfilment and the good society. Therefore, the articles in Part I ("Exploring New Territory: Bringing Women's Experiences into Ethics"), raise issues from a range of women's experiences. These include household labour, women in the economic system, violence against women, as well as the experiences of particular groups of women - Hispanic American and Jewish - to illustrate the range of women's experiences which can be used as resources. None of these articles needs a label other than 'feminist ethics', with the possible exception of Rosemary Radford Ruether's "Feminism and Peace" which explores Christian history.

The essays in Part 2 ("Mapping Paths and Dreaming Dreams: Retrieving Norms From Experience") explore how a variety of experiences could provide a grounding for

¹⁰B.H. Andolsen, C.E. Gudorf, M.D. Pellauer, eds., *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.

¹¹*ibid.*, p.xxiii. Farmer's mentions 'feminist spirituality' in connection with this volume, without much explanation. Feminist notions of praxis suggest a search for spirituality, for liturgies and for pastoral practice as ways to appropriate the theological tradition. Women who have found a home in Christianity despite problems with a sexist tradition have found it often through their spirituality, and can use their religious experience to challenge damaging aspects of the tradition, as well as discovering that other aspects of Christian tradition provide resources to feed alternative spiritualities. My concern has been to explore systematics and ethics closely together, but spirituality and liturgy perhaps also need to be seen as material for ethical study and response.

feminist ethics, and here the theological resources are also reviewed. Beverly Harrison's essay "Our Right to Choose: The Morality of Procreative Choice" grounds its conclusions in revised liberalism, without her theological perspective coming to the fore. But other essays explore black spirituality, feminist reassessment of the ethics of early Christianity, and goddess religion. Alongside these are the now more familiar groundings for non-theological feminist ethics, of female friendship, and parenting. The former is discussed without explicit theological terminology, and the latter firmly in a Christian context.

Variety is clearly an editorial concern in *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience*. The collection emphasises the common ground between feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics, assuming easy connection, perhaps modelling the relationship such that feminist theological ethics is seen as a subset of feminist ethics. Any distinguishing of the two allows feminist ethics the superordinate position. I have deliberately concentrated on the structure and variety of the book, rather than looking in detail at particular contributions to it, because it serves as an illustration of one model of feminist theological ethics. It is not the only model, nor necessarily the best. But it may have the advantage of ensuring that theological perspectives are seen, not ignored, and the possibilities of spirituality for grounding ethics set out in a way which ensures a wide readership among feminists who are not theologians. This collection raises the question of whether theological language matters or not, within or alongside feminist ethics. I wish to argue that theological language matters because theological truth matters, and that, therefore, feminist theological ethics does need to be more carefully distinguished from feminist ethics than this collection allows. For my purposes feminist ethics is an important root, which needs to be taken far more seriously by theologians, but it is not the superordinate partner.

However, I do not wish to go to what I see as the other extreme either. Denise Carmody, in *Virtuous Woman*, develops a particular relationship between feminist ethics and the Christian tradition in order to define what she wishes to label appropriate 'Christian feminist ethics'. She works towards that definition from descriptions of the ethical task (to do with value theory - answering the question 'what kind of life shall I best lead?'), to feminist ethical concern with asking 'Is it good for women?' It becomes clear as she proceeds that her vision of the feminist theological ethical task is one which gives priority to a certain form of Christian theology, upholding a 'high' Christology, at the same time as she accepts many aspects of feminist critique. She analyses examples of feminist theological ethics and critiques them as insufficient if they are not rooted in a

particular notion of Christian orthodoxy.¹² She describes her work as Christian feminist ethics, with 'Christian' the most important word: ethical conclusions are firmly subordinated to theological presuppositions. Carmody seems to me to take too much for granted, allowing some questions about the Christian tradition, but none about theological issues, as if they were easily separated. For this reason, the boundaries she draws are too restricting, and her vision of feminist theological ethics too narrow.

REVISING AGAPE

Following Valerie Saiving's article, an area of feminist theological ethics which has stayed close to the Christian ethical tradition is that in which the notion of Christian love is discussed. There has been a strong tradition defining Christian ethics in terms of a particular interpretation of agapeic love. This has been the prime case for many feminists of where Christian terms need revision. Andolsen's article "Agape in Feminist Ethics"¹³ develops a clear critique of this Christian tradition, outlining the contributions of Anders Nygren, Reinhold Niebuhr and Gene Outka to the exposition of *agape* as wholly selfless, other-regarding love. In common with Saiving (though writing twenty years after her and noting reservations about Saiving's explanation of how female identity develops), Andolsen concludes that the traditional exposition of *agape* is inappropriate for women. Drawing on the work of various women, she seeks a revision of Christian love, with an emphasis on mutuality. She wishes to use friendship as her chief model of love,¹⁴ but sees the need to retain also the notion of sacrifice as suffering for the sake of the struggle for freedom.

Linda Woodhead develops a similar analysis of traditional notions of Christian love, in "Love and Justice",¹⁵ critiquing the idea that a disinterested 'regard' for all should be ranked higher than warm emotional attachment, deep concern, or the concept of 'attention' developed by Simone Weil, and taken up by Iris Murdoch and Helen

¹²See notes 32 and 67, this chapter, for examples of Carmody's critique.

¹³B.H. Andolsen, "Agape in Feminist Ethics", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 9:1, 1981.

¹⁴John Inge's *Friendship: Friendship and Love, Human and Divine* (MATR dissertation, University of Durham, 1994) is a study of the importance of friendship in classical and Christian traditions up to the late medieval period, and a strong argument for its revival as a model of the love between humans and God. The study is consciously written with masculine concerns in mind, but takes feminist work into account as well.

¹⁵L. Woodhead, "Love and Justice", *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 5:1, 1992.

Oppenheimer. "In effect what the feminist critique seems to do is to stand the traditional Christian hierarchy of loves on its head".¹⁶ Woodhead concentrates on love, despite the title of her essay, but refers briefly to justice at the end, which is a reasonable indication of the hierarchy of love and justice with which she is working. "It is love which is the fundamental motif of Christian ethics, not justice, and it is love which should govern our relations with one another".¹⁷ Justice, for Woodhead, is an interim, legislative measure, which does not come up to the standard of love.

In "Feminism and Christian Ethics",¹⁸ Woodhead argues that Christian ethics, rightly understood, is obviously compatible with the concerns of feminists, since personal relationships are at the centre of Christian morality, and relationships are a feminist concern. The command to love God and neighbour, Woodhead argues, ensures that Christian morality is a matter of personal relationships rather than competing claims over rights. This echoes much feminist ethics. As in "Love and Justice", she uses non-feminist work by women theologians to mirror feminist concerns, exploring the hostility in Weil to 'rights' language¹⁹ and in Oppenheimer to ideas of justice as fairness. Woodhead here creates a new tradition, implicitly rejecting the tradition of writing about agapeic love which has gone before. She also remains close to the biblical tradition in expounding her revised concept of Christian love, using Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan to argue that nearness and need create obligation, and that this is the appropriate language in which to discuss a Christian morality which is compatible with many feminist concerns. Again she is concerned to privilege the language of love over the language of justice.

¹⁶Woodhead, "Love and Justice", p.55. This emphasis on ranking a 'disinterested' love above a more partial love has its Kantian corollary in the philosophical tradition, though the language in which Almond describes this ought to be of note to the Christian discussion of love: "The idea that acts of love are inferior to principled acts is a deep-rooted philosophical tradition". B. Almond, "Women's Right: Reflections on Ethics and Gender" in Griffiths and Whitford, *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, p.47. But see also note 53, this chapter, for nuancing of the critique of Kant.

¹⁷*ibid.*, p.55.

¹⁸Woodhead, in T. Elwes, ed., *Women's Voices*.

¹⁹To refine Woodhead's interpretation, Weil is clearly hostile to language of rights, but not to notions of justice because justice for her is not limited to rights. In interpreting the story of Antigone, in particular Antigone's expression of love and duty for her brother, Weil argues, "It was justice, companion of the gods in the other world, who dictated this surfeit of love, and not any right at all. Rights have no direct connexion with love". Weil, "On Human Personality", printed as an appendix in McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist*, p.280.

Two further examples demonstrate how this discussion can develop, particularly in possible models of Christian love. Linell Cady concentrates on the relationality of love, critiquing descriptions of Christian love which have focused on the individual and implied that love is a one-way relationship. "Love is a mode of relation that seeks to establish bonds between the self and the other, creating a unity out of formerly detached individuals".²⁰ It is this kind of love which has frequently been modelled by feminist ethicists in terms of mothering (occasionally parenting) or friendship. Cady opts instead for a 'paradigm of the universal community', in order to keep an element of 'disinterestedness' in her model of Christian love, but also in order to move beyond marriage and friendship as the ultimate models of genuine love. However, if Cady's model of 'universal community' is to be at all helpful, it needs to be used in addition to other models, rather than as a replacement for them, since it is by itself somewhat abstract.

Sally Purvis argues differently, using her own experience to develop 'mother-love' as a model of *agape*. She deliberately defines 'mother-love' as a part of the experience of mothering, not a full description, distinguished from the 'mothering practice' described and evaluated by other feminist ethicists. This makes her essay a helpful theological advance on Ruddick's work.²¹ "It is not the experience of mothering *per se* that offers a model for *agape* but only the mother-love which in my case undergirds the practice and explodes with intensity and clarity only sporadically in the midst of so much else".²² This model she then links more explicitly to the Christian tradition, asking of it the questions which the Christian tradition has asked of other expositions of Christian love: who is the neighbour, and how is the neighbour to be loved? Purvis holds together knowledge of the command to love with experience of 'mother-love'. If the person to be loved were not the mother's own child, "the requirements of *agape* would tell her that she was obligated to respond, and her experiences of mother-love would provide the information she would need about what the response would entail."²³ 'Mother-love' and *agape* are thus set up to provide standards for each other. The fact that this move from

²⁰L.E. Cady, "Relational Love: A Feminist Christian Vision" in P.M. Coe, S.A. Farmer, M.E. Ross, eds., *Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, p.141.

²¹See above, p. 101-103, for discussion of Ruddick.

²²S.B. Purvis, "Mothers, Neighbors and Strangers: Another Look at *Agape*", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 7:1, 1991, p.25.

²³*ibid.*, p.32.

loving the child to loving the neighbour or stranger is not straightforward is, for Purvis, a strength of her model, mirroring the difficulties we actually experience as we seek to love in response to the Christian gospel. She does, however, point out what I see as a weakness of the model, that it may resonate only with those who have experienced what she describes as 'mother-love'.²⁴

Purvis' and Woodhead's articles are particularly clear examples of insights from feminism being brought to bear on the traditional questions of Christian ethics, and it is significant that both draw on the parable of the Good Samaritan to support their arguments. Thus, they both find resources within as well as outside the Christian tradition. From all these examples, the critique of the usual exposition of *agape* is clear. Where it might lead, what models might replace it, or revise it, is less clear. There is, however, a stronger concern than is found in the work of some secular feminist ethicists²⁵ to relate particularity and impartiality, putting together a model of love based on intimacy with love of those with whom we will never be intimate, but to whom we acknowledge an obligation: that love of neighbour central to Christian tradition.

These are some of the clearest examples of what constitutes feminist theological ethics at present, since all of them are explicitly in dialogue with a central ethical concept in a specified theological tradition, from a feminist point of view. With these feminist theological discussions now reasonably well advanced, it is instructive to see how the essays in one recent volume discussing *agapeic* love do or do not take account of feminist work.²⁶ An essay by Gene Outka takes up a large proportion of *The Love Commandments*. Outka acknowledges much non-feminist work critiquing a Kantian-inspired notion of *agape* such as he himself is seen to propound. He argues for the Christian formula 'universal love' as opposed to the Kantian 'impartiality'. He has obviously recognised the need for a proper account of self-love, and the desire of love for mutuality and response. Thus, he appears to have modified his position to some

²⁴"Does mother-love have heuristic value for those who have not been mothers? Probably not." Purvis, p.33. The implications of experiences of mothering young children for spirituality are interestingly discussed in Janet Martin Soskice, "Love and Attention" in M. McGhee, ed., *Philosophy, Religion and the Spiritual Life*, Royal Institute of Philosophy supplement: 32, 1992.

²⁵Hoagland's critique of Nel Noddings is instructive here. She criticises Noddings, despite Noddings' denial of the charge, for promoting an ethic of *agape*. Hoagland sees no difference between *agape* (other-directed caring) and exploitation. S.L. Hoagland, "Some Thoughts About 'Caring'" in Card, *Feminist Ethics*, p.253-255.

²⁶E.N. Santurri and W. Werpehowski, eds., *The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1992.

extent from that which Andolsen critiques. But to what extent has he noticed the critique? He refers to 'the feminist critique' specifically with regard to the interpretation of sin. But he denies its usefulness by allowing it only to confirm the tradition which, as he reads it, has always confirmed both pride and sloth as two equivalent kinds of faithlessness. As far as he is concerned, the feminist critique is only an illustration of sloth and, from Outka's response, one would think there was no gender reference in such feminist work.²⁷ Similarly, Werpehowski refers to Ruddick's work to illustrate the affirmation of difference instead of 'comforting commonalities', but his footnote at this point applauds her model of attentive love only if it is *not* seen as emerging solely from the care of children. While I would to some extent agree with this, it still seems that Werpehowski is avoiding Ruddick's feminist perspective. Jackson's article refers to Gilligan simply in order to illustrate the notion of the relational self. Only Reeder really works with feminist ethical insights in order to explicate one way in which, for him, love transcends justice.²⁸

Explorations of agapeic love often (at least) refer to the relationship or dichotomy between love and justice in the Christian tradition. Woodhead in particular puts herself explicitly on one side of this dichotomy, in favour of an ethic based on love ranked above justice. This relationship needs more sensitive handling than that, I feel. The debate over the place of justice in Christian ethics, in relation to love, is similar to the debate over justice and care in feminist ethics and feminist philosophy, but there are differences as well, for there are different connotations to the terms used in the Christian tradition, and often different evaluations of them. Love and justice have resonances from the work of Aquinas as each the 'kingpin' of the theological and cardinal virtues respectively.²⁹ The issue within the natural law tradition is about how to link the cardinal and theological virtues. Much of the subsequent modelling of love and justice in Christianity reflects conformity with or hostility to Aquinas' conception. Love is usually prioritised over justice, but the theological significance given to justice can differ widely. This is a huge area of discussion in Christian ethics, and I can only deal with it briefly, outlining a few positions. A Niebuhrian split between the public and private realms highlights a dualistic interpretation within an influential part of the

²⁷G. Outka, "Universal Love and Impartiality", in Santurri and Werpehowski, eds., p.53-54.

²⁸W. Werpehowski, "'Agape' and Special Relations", p.149 and p.155; T.P. Jackson, "Christian Love and Political Violence"; J.P. Reeder Jr., "Analogues to Justice", p.297-298. All in Santurri and Werpehowski, eds.

²⁹Cf. J. Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics*, London: SPCK, 1994.

Christian tradition of love *over against* justice. Thus, justice must operate in the public sphere where love cannot impinge, because of the "impossibility...of love in intergroup relationships"³⁰ at the same time as agapeic love is exalted as the only standard for Christian morality. The strict association of justice with the natural law and of *agape* with Christian grace and revelation by some ethicists is then interpreted hierarchically. Implicitly or explicitly in this kind of scheme, 'natural' loves or special relations are aligned with the natural law rather than with a truly Christian love which is disinterested and universal, and valued more highly than any love available by nature rather than by grace. This is clear in Paul Ramsey's work on Reinhold Niebuhr, particularly in the latter's suspicion of mutual love: "Niebuhr believes that the motive and direction of Christian love is essentially sacrificial, at its highest heedless of self and containing none of the self-referential motives which are co-present with other-regarding motives in mutual love. Surely this is the more correct reading of biblical and New Testament ethics".³¹ Others put *agape* at the centre in a different way, by seeing justice as a necessary expression of love, though often in certain contexts, usually the public sphere, among large numbers of people. (A recent Methodist Division of Social Responsibility leaflet refers to justice as the public face of love.) A close relationship between love and justice is evident in Martin Luther King's theology, according to Katie Cannon. She expounds his theology in these terms: "Christian love is always in search of vehicles that will convert love into actions of justice and morality".³²

An example of ethical work which may help in relating concepts of love and justice to issues in feminist ethics is Margaret Farley's *Personal Commitments*.³³ The essays of hers which I discuss below are more explicitly feminist than this work, but strands of feminist concern are still evident here. *Personal Commitments* is an exploration of personal relationships, with particular focus on how to sustain relationships and whether it is possible to leave them. There are various elements here which will be of interest to the feminist theological ethicist. Feminist ethics has concentrated on 'relationships' and 'relatedness' to the extent that they are in danger of becoming ill-

³⁰P. Ramsey, expounding Niebuhr, *Nine Modern Moralists*, repr., University Press of America, 1983 [1962], p.136.

³¹*ibid.*, p.133.

³²K.G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988, p.167. See note 19 above for the way in which Simone Weil holds love and justice together, despite her dislike of the language of rights.

³³M. Farley, *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. See below, p.140, for discussion of other essays by Farley.

explained shorthand. Closer analysis, such as Farley presents, is crucial. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that she explores only one group of relationships: the interpersonal commitments that an individual chooses. She argues that love and commitment, love and obligation go together, contrary to certain models of love in opposition to duty, obligation or law. In order to express this sense of love commitments producing obligation, she expounds a notion of 'just love' which acknowledges the claim of the other to respect as a concrete, particular person. "I use the term 'just' love because of its traditional reference to something being 'due'".³⁴ This notion keeps faith with our intuition that there are better and worse forms of love; love that is good and love that is bad. According to Farley's definition, just love "requires a right love of oneself as well as of others".³⁵ Her account evidences a need for self-sacrifice in relationships, but a suspicion of how that has been understood in the past: "When a disproportionate burden of sacrifice is laid on one person in a commitment-relationship, and when the person who bears it is the one with the least power, the duty of self-sacrifice is morally suspect".³⁶ Though this account is concerned primarily with individuals (even her account of commitment to a religious community is about the individual's choice of such a commitment), the vision of the individual that she works with is recognisable to feminist ethics - relational persons, embodied, with the capacity to think and feel, existing in the real world. Farley's analysis becomes explicitly theological when she discusses the image of covenant in the Hebrew Scriptures.³⁷ This she analyses with reference to her sections about beginning, continuing, and changing relationships.

One of my qualms about some feminist ethical work has been that the stress on relationships as important to women may all too easily be seen to imply that women must (for the sake of their moral integrity) maintain relationships at all costs. Farley's analysis, and her notion of 'just love', allow for leaving relationships. "I want neither to absolutize the obligation to keep our commitments nor to relativize it out of existence in favor of a general obligation to avoid harmful consequences or produce good

³⁴Farley, *Personal Commitments*, p.82.

³⁵*ibid.*, p.105.

³⁶*ibid.*, p.107.

³⁷In her discussion of *Personal Commitments*, Carmody appears to miss the theological discussion entirely, and critiques Farley for not using the Bible enough, though the additional point about lack of reference to Christ is fair. Carmody is also suspicious of theology which analyses from human commitment to God's commitment, rather than working more explicitly from revelation; *Virtuous Woman*, p.22f.

ones".³⁸ She proposes a distinction between the unconditional commitment to love, and the specific frameworks in which particular commitments are given and kept: the framework may be changed even though the obligation of care and respect remains. "Frameworks for commitment...ought to be subject to norms of justice. In most of the commitments we are exploring here, this means that the frameworks...need to accord with principles like respect for persons, like equality and mutuality and equitable sharing."³⁹

I am wary of theoretical accounts that establish over-strict boundaries offering certain types of love for certain types of situation, or putting love in an oppositional relationship to justice. The injection into the Christian debate of a notion of love which desires communion and mutuality has been a very important contribution of feminist theological ethicists (though that is not to say that this notion has not also been explored by non-feminists). But Farley's analysis gives reasons for needing a notion of justice even in those areas of personal relationship which it has been thought can exist on language of love alone. However, this depends on the notion of justice involved. On the one hand the notion of justice referring to the right to non-interference of the unrelated, autonomous individual, with a rigid divide between public and private realms implicit within it, has received much needed critique. On the other hand, a notion of justice which draws attention to situations in which women are exploited and oppressed, and demand redress, is very important to feminist theory. Developing the notion of justice as right relation has more positive possibilities than a notion of distribution or non-interference alone. Justice as right relation cannot be opposed to love, and develops both in the arenas of sociality and of intimate relationship. This notion of justice can include issues of distribution and due, but will not stop there, for it takes into account areas that are not subject to calculation. In this sense justice can be explicated as dynamic, not static, involving the correction of injustice and the establishing of right relation, thus starting with the real world, not an abstract ideal. Just love is not simply the decision to be distributively fair, as if we can start from scratch, but it includes the obligation to cry out against injustice with the intensity and partiality of love, going further than disinterested charity. This concept will allow protest at the harm caused by violence, and will also contribute to the building of relationships which are not broken by violence.

³⁸Farley, *Personal Commitments*, p.68-69.

³⁹*ibid.*, p.36.

Justice and love should not be separated, but the two concepts, even as explored here, have different elements. The particularity of justice is its element of 'due', and the language of demand which is rightly associated with it. The particularity of love is expressed in emphases on partiality, warmth, engagement and the search for mutual relationality. With these emphases, justice can be an expression of love. But love can also be an expression of justice, for love is about meeting and respecting the particularity and difference of another. The notion of claim and other-regard have been regarded as opposites, but love and justice expressed in community would mean that you were not left claiming your rights over against others, but found them being claimed for you by others who loved you.

THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE

Feminist ethicists and feminist theologians, no less than their colleagues in other disciplines, have had to deal with postmodern theorising which has problematised Enlightenment epistemology, questioning the possibility of a universal standpoint, universal norms, or moral agreement. It is necessary to examine briefly how some theorists have dealt with this challenge before focusing more specifically on the issues of moral philosophy as discussed by feminist theologians. Seyla Benhabib's non-theological attempt to develop an ethic which holds feminism together with a revision of Habermasian universalism is a response to postmodern doubt about what we can know.⁴⁰ In one chapter of *Situating The Self*, Benhabib discusses the relationship between feminism and postmodernism, outlining the difference between feminism's reaction to the breakdown of modernist epistemology (radical contextualising of the subject) and postmodernism's reaction (the death of the subject). She concludes that feminism can only work with a weak version of postmodernism: the 'death of the subject' is no good for people who are trying to become subjects and agents, instead of objects. The postmodern challenge is critical for feminism for, in its strongest form, it appears to disallow the kind of committed stance feminists have developed.

Sheila Greeve Davaney criticises Rosemary Radford Ruether and particularly Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza for accepting only a part of the postmodern critique of modern historical consciousness, and not taking it to its conclusion. They accept to an extent

⁴⁰Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, particularly chapter 7. See above, p.93 for previous discussion of Benhabib's work. A different way of tackling the challenge of postmodernism for ethics, though not from a feminist point of view, can be found in Edith Wyschogrod's *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, 1990.

the relative, perspectival character of knowledge, she argues, but still see some viewpoints as more valid than others. Davaney charges them with searching still for a perspective beyond ideology and illusion. In particular Ruether and Fiorenza, she asserts, present the feminist norm as having ontological grounding in divine reality. Davaney wants feminists to understand their visions "as thoroughly human constructions sharing the same ontological status as male perspectives", judged against other visions "upon the pragmatic grounds of what kind of existence these visions permitted or inhibited".⁴¹ However Davaney's radical relativism breaks down itself on this last proposition, if she feels that there are, after all, *some* grounds or reasons for judging any vision to be 'better' than another.

Carol Christ challenges Davaney specifically on whether it is necessary for feminism to accept postmodern conclusions in their entirety. She says of feminist theologians and theologians, "We are not nihilists, because we believe that feminism has the potential to better the world".⁴² Christ argues for the possibility of making truth claims, if at the same time we acknowledge our limited perspectives. In this way a stance of commitment is maintained, and it is possible for feminists to present their views "in the fullness of our embodied and perspectival commitment".⁴³

The debate between Davaney and Christ may not refer immediately to ethics, but it is relevant to ethical issues. This is underlined by the way Linda Hogan uses Davaney's ideas, specifically for ethics.⁴⁴ Hogan acknowledges Davaney's claim that we must recognise the contextuality of all knowledge, while claiming that Davaney has left space for limiting relativism by appealing to categories of experience and praxis, instead of to ontological claims. This is, I feel, a somewhat generous interpretation of Davaney, but Hogan has not really solved the problem even with this loophole. What does it mean to claim that, "Women's experience and praxis operate in feminist theology - including feminist ethics - as primary resources *and as norms of evaluation*" (my emphasis)?⁴⁵ If

⁴¹S.G. Davaney, "Problems With Feminist Theory: Historicity and the Search for Sure Foundations" in Cooley *et al.*, *Embodied Love*, p.93.

⁴²C.P. Christ, "Embodied Thinking: Reflections on Feminist Theological Method", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 5:1, 1989, p.14.

⁴³*ibid.*, p.15.

⁴⁴L. Hogan, "Resources for a Feminist Ethic: Women's Experience and Praxis", *Feminist Theology*, 3, 1993. It is important to note in interpreting this article, that Hogan uses the terms 'feminist ethics' and 'feminist theological ethics' interchangeably.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, p.82. As I argued in chapter 1, p.22 above, it seems to me possible also to interpret Katie Cannon's work as falling into the trap of defining what women do as right when she writes of the

that idea is not explained more carefully, it simply implies no more and no less than that whatever women choose to do is right. Hogan has at the same time demonstrated her need for norms of some kind. In common with other feminist theological ethicists, she has recognised the problem of finding some sort of balance between a complete relativism and an unsustainable Enlightenment universalism, but her choice of resources for dealing with that are not developed enough to be free of problems.

Sharon Welch⁴⁶ is another theologian who sees clearly the moral ambiguity of the Christian tradition. Her postmodern commitment leaves no space for reference to the historical Jesus as a source of moral imperative. Instead she attempts to find a balance between a postmodern nihilism and commitment to liberation. Her balance, however, is not a middle ground, but the tension and ambiguity of holding together both nihilism and belief in liberation. She develops this in *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation*. There she takes a liberation theology perspective, but wishes to understand the referent of 'liberating God' as 'liberation', not 'God'. As the subtitle suggests, this is feminist theology rather than ethics, but it provides the background, particularly in her reading of Foucault, for her subsequent book, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*. Even this latter book is not in any way a conventional ethical study, though it takes as its background the ethical issue of the threat of nuclear war. The word 'ethic' in the title might be replaced by 'praxis', except that Welch wants the overtone of 'ought', implied by the word 'ethic', to bolster her recommendations. *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* calls for the re-thinking of an ethic directed to the ends of action, for such an ethic makes success the criterion of ethical action, and ability to control the outcome its necessary condition. In place of this, she proposes an 'ethic of risk' which recognises the limits and yet the value of struggles for justice. This 'ethic' is her way of empowering those who have become apathetic, who have given up in despair because of their failures, to new moral action, in which they can risk responsibility without hope of success. This is Welch's attempt to envision renewed human agency, within a postmodern framework.

In postmodern perspective Welch is wary of universal claims, but there are hints of a need for universal discourse in her work. Drawing on Foucault particularly for his

'ethical implications of experience' providing norms, without adequately explaining what she means by that; *Black Womanist Ethics*, p.5.

⁴⁶S.D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985; *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.

analysis of the structure of resistance, she commits herself to the *ultimate* significance of resistance and liberation, though without explaining why. Hogan picks up, at the end of *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity*, Welch's notion of universal accountability: "The ambiguity intrinsic to a universal basis for resistance to injustice can be mitigated if the concern is expressed in terms of universal accountability rather than in terms of what is universally true about human being".⁴⁷ Some possibility of cross-cultural obligation or goal is Welch's version of postmodern shared discourse.

DEVELOPING FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL THEORY

The publication of the volume of essays *Prospects for a Common Morality*⁴⁸ shows a variety of ethicists trying to come to terms with the postmodern challenge and decide whether, in the light of such challenge, any common, universal vision is possible for human beings in ethics. The volume encompasses feminist and non-feminist, theological and non-theological contributions. The question engaging all of the authors is the possibility of any norms or beliefs which can offer a secure ground for moral values. Feminist ethicists no less than non-feminists need to address the question, in their own terms. Some do so without acknowledgement, notably those, like Nel Noddings, who take 'care' to be a universal, natural impulse among women. Margaret Farley recognises feminists' suspicions of common morality: "The suffering caused by what are now judged to be mistaken views of women's 'nature' and its laws has moved many feminists to a deep skepticism regarding moral norms in general".⁴⁹ But most feminist ethicists want some ground or justification for giving greater value to beliefs and actions that challenge patriarchy than to those which reinforce it; greater value not just for feminists, but for all people. Some process for devaluing an oppressive viewpoint is either argued or assumed in feminist ethics. Any evaluation needs some sort of framework, and if an evaluation is seen as valid beyond a particular community or tradition, then some universal framework is in view. Farley sees dangers of coercion in the false universalism which marginalises certain subject positions, but she also sees danger if we conclude that there are no shared grounds at all on which to make judgements: "The problem of representing particulars as universals is bound up with the problems of coercion and

⁴⁷Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity*, p.81.

⁴⁸G. Outka and J.P. Reeder Jr., eds., *Prospects for a Common Morality*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.

⁴⁹M.A. Farley, "Feminism and Universal Morality", in Outka and Reeder, eds., p.170.

violence. But the problem of recognizing no universals at all is also a problem of conflict and power, and it limits or eliminates the possibility of a common cry for justice."⁵⁰ These concerns are no less clear in feminist theological ethics than in any other form of ethics. This is perhaps the area of ethical theory where the dialogue between theological and non-theological ethics is most obvious, and the distinctions between the two most blurred. Theologians and non-theologians work with many of the same questions in ethical theory, though they may reach different answers because of different presuppositions. Theological presuppositions are likely to make theological ethicists concerned to defend some notion of universalism.

Susan Parsons is one example of a feminist theological ethicist developing an appropriate universalism, which does not rely solely on the narrowest liberal notion of justice as the one and only universal principle, but which can still bring justice to women. She acknowledges the postmodern feminist ambivalence over a universalism which emphasises identity or unity at the expense of difference, or which depends on a privileged standpoint to describe 'reality'. She argues that a form of universalism responsive to feminist concerns is possible. "It is in the context of a new affirmation of creaturely life that a feminist Christian ethics suggests a framework for an appropriate universalism, sustained by the compassionate presence of God, and continually offering opportunities for this love to be interwoven into relationships with our fellow human beings and the natural world."⁵¹ A 'new affirmation of creaturely life' broadens an unacceptably narrow version of universalism which focuses on as few characteristics of human beings as possible. Parsons' project is clearly theological with the compassionate God as the context for human action and being.

Farley's feminist version of universality in ethics is developed in both "Feminism and Universal Morality" and "A Feminist Version of Respect for Persons". In the latter article she criticises developments in the ethic of care which "leave largely unexplored the underlying issues of why care should be a moral requirement or a developmental ideal".⁵² Some account of the good is needed. Farley's universal discourse describes the 'obligating features' of persons. Autonomy and relationality are the features which she wishes to label obligating features - *held together*. Persons are to be understood as *both* self-possessing and self-transcending. She seeks to rescue autonomy from Kant's

⁵⁰Farley, "Feminism and Universal Morality", p.178.

⁵¹S.F. Parsons, "Feminist Ethics After Modernity", *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 8:1, 1995, p.92-93.

⁵²Farley, "A Feminist Version of Respect for Persons", p.185.

apparent devaluing of affectivity,⁵³ and relationality from communitarianism's social role conservatism. She takes from feminism in particular the idea of bodily integrity as a universal value, which issues in the claim of respect for autonomy. She hopes that feminism can recognise what is positive in the tradition of moral philosophy, while revising what is unacceptable. This is undoubtedly a suggestive example of a nuanced way to handle the traditional expositions of what is universal in ethics.

Both Parsons and Farley claim that feminism is all about arguing for what is good for women, and both suggest a more careful delineation is needed in theoretical terms of what that good might be. In "Feminism and Moral Reasoning",⁵⁴ Parsons reviews the notion of the naturalistic fallacy, and the 'new naturalism' which has responded to the positivist critique. Parsons is quite clear that moral thinking *does* involve some image of human nature and of what is good for human beings. She uses Mary Midgley's *Beast and Man* to illustrate a view of human nature which rejects the reason/feeling dichotomy, and which has a strong notion of biological inheritance, but not determinism. As a theologian, Parsons has various critiques of Midgley's work, but sees it as a useful basis for feminist moral philosophy, provided it is used with a critical openness: the new views of human nature which we develop may also turn out to be flawed. But Parsons' work here illustrates that there is a significant difference between arguments that previous appeals to human nature as the basis of morality worked with flawed versions of human nature and arguments that morality can never be based on a view of what human nature is.

Parsons is constructing feminist theological ethics, because she sees ethics as the obvious meeting ground for feminism and theology. In "The Intersection of Feminism and Theological Ethics: A Philosophical Approach", she analyses the liberal model of moral reasoning - governed by the notion of individual free choice as outlined by prescriptivist philosophers - and then suggests an alternative model. This alternative "suggests that moral reasoning takes place within contexts, the structures of which shape and are shaped by the reasoning which occurs within them". She continues, "The move towards this kind of realism in moral thinking is an attempt to demonstrate two

⁵³Mary Midgley, in "The Objection to Systematic Humbug", argues that devaluing of feeling and affections has been read into Kant's work to an unjustified degree. His suspicion of some aspects of 'feeling' is to be placed in the context of his arguments against German Romanticism's sentimentality. Midgley puts the blame for a neo-Kantian devaluing of feeling on British empiricists such as G.E. Moore. M. Midgley, *Heart and Mind*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981.

⁵⁴Parsons, "Feminism and Moral Reasoning", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, supplement to vol. 64, June 1986.

things: firstly, that there is a submissive element in morality, an objective reference to which moral judgements are trying to be true; and secondly that moral reasoning needs to take itself more seriously, since what it values defines the world".⁵⁵ She identifies this 'alternative' model to liberal moral reasoning as recognisable within the natural law tradition of Christian ethics. Then she identifies work to be done so that ethics based on this model can be fully relevant to women. This article seems to me to represent an important step in the search for a satisfactory feminist theological ethics, which seeks a universal reference, but remains critically open, remembering the mistakes of the past.

Finally, Parsons demonstrates the possibilities for a satisfactory relationship between theory and praxis in feminist theological ethics in "Feminist Reflections on Embodiment and Sexuality".⁵⁶ Similar in method to her other articles, she analyses liberal, radical and postmodern feminisms, specifically to explore their views of the body and sexuality. She finds problems with each - liberal feminism still devalues the gendered body, in the tradition of liberalism; radical feminism which could link with a positive Christian view of created embodiment, cannot get beyond heterosexual relations as the root of oppression; some postmodern feminism can stress the constructed nature of sexuality to the point of determinism - as if women have no choices. Yet she asserts that each strand of feminism has positive contributions to make to a feminist Christian sexual ethic: she explores themes of renunciation, power, and sexuality and spirituality. None of this is worked out at length, but it is suggestive of a method of working in feminist theological ethics, which is firmly attached to feminism, to the discipline of moral philosophy, and to a particular theological tradition.

Feminist theological ethicists are developing a dialogue with other questions in theological and non-theological ethics. Notions of moral agency and moral character are tackled by many non-feminist ethicists who have reasons for critiquing Kantian ethics. An example which may help to develop feminist theological ethics is provided by Ruth Smith. The central concern in Ruth Smith's work is moral agency and the moral subject.⁵⁷ Though her conclusions are not necessarily couched in explicitly theological

⁵⁵Parsons, "The Intersection of Feminism and Theological Ethics: A Philosophical Approach", *Modern Theology*, 4:3, 1988, p.258 and p.258-9.

⁵⁶Parsons, "Feminist Reflections on Embodiment and Sexuality", *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 4:2, 1991.

⁵⁷R.L. Smith, "Feminism and the Moral Subject" in Andolsen *et al.*; "Moral Transcendence and Moral Space in the Historical Experiences of Women", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 4:2, 1988; "Relationality and the Ordering of Differences in Feminist Ethics", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 9:1/2, 1993.

terms, she defines herself as a feminist working in religious studies, and she examines the Christian tradition in her critique of H. Richard Niebuhr and Reinhold Niebuhr. For her, feminist ethicists must look at ontology, individuality and autonomy, examining the beliefs about human nature with which they work. She takes up the feminist argument that the individual is to be understood as social and relational, but criticises those feminists who understand this relationality only in terms of the internal structure of the female self. She argues, in particular, that this is a fault in Carol Gilligan's work. If relatedness is the internal structure of the female personality, it is simply 'natural', and we are back to the position where women exercise no moral agency. For Smith, the social/relational self must be related first and foremost to socio-historical processes. "Relations of care are not natural; they are historical and political. Their depiction as natural is historical and political".⁵⁸ This stress on the historical allows Smith scope for acknowledging and valuing differences between women, though for me her fears about the 'natural' demonstrate too great a hostility towards notions of human nature. Despite her stress on historical context, Smith also wants to explore some notion of universalism. She does not set out in detail what form that would take, but she explains succinctly why it is needed: "If our ontology has no universal aspect then we have lost a fundamental source of moral appeal and we have ignored our nature as a human species and our global interdependence".⁵⁹ Her version of universalism would involve the interaction of historically particular agency with common goals, goals to which particular agents stand in differing relation.

Cannon, in *Black Womanist Ethics*, issues a timely reminder about a particular socio-historical context - what she describes as the 'moral situation' of Black women: "I discovered that the assumptions of the dominant ethical systems implied that the doing of Christian ethics in the Black community was either immoral or amoral. The cherished ethical ideas predicated upon the existence of freedom and a wide range of choices proved null and void in situations of oppression."⁶⁰ This echoes two strands I have already identified. One is the feminist concern, evident in feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics, for a careful attention to context. The other is Sharon Welch's concern to develop an ethic that does not depend for its definition on the possibility of success, with an assumption of complete control over events. Feminist theological ethics must recognise lack of choice, in situations of oppression, and not define ethics in

⁵⁸Smith, "Relationality and the Ordering of Differences", p.213.

⁵⁹Smith, "Feminism and the Moral Subject", p.249.

⁶⁰Cannon, p.2. See above, p.21-22, for discussion of a different aspect of *Black Womanist Ethics*.

such a way that oppressed people can only be described as 'immoral or amoral'. Or perhaps the need is for a construction of moral agency that allows that there may be a great variety of situations of choice and lack of choice at different levels of people's lives.

Some of the work being done by feminist theological ethicists is critique of theory that has gone before where it has demeaned or ignored women. Some is to do with locating various strands of feminism and analysing their compatibility with aspects of theological traditions. Much more is now construction, particularly with the aim of finding a form of universalism, for the sake of being able to articulate what is wrong with other points of view, which will be compatible with the increasing recognition of women's differences. While many ethicists are concerned with whether or not ethical traditions from a variety of cultures are incommensurable, Farley points out that dialogues about difference within feminism are not about each group occupying its own corner, separate from all others; they are rather about communicating differences, in order to build community which recognises and respects difference.⁶¹ An 'appropriate' universalism for feminist theological ethics is thus being built from various different starting points. Parsons, supported by Jean Porter's work on Aquinas,⁶² wishes to re-work the natural law tradition for a concept of human good which will give a better account than the Christian tradition has in the past of what is good for women. Farley re-works the Kantian tradition, concentrating on autonomy and relationality as (together) the 'obligating features' of persons. Obligation also appears in Welch's suggestion of 'universal accountability' as the only form of universalism she could accommodate with postmodern theorising. None of these theorists could take the route, for instance, which I understand Stanley Hauerwas⁶³ to take, of ignoring 'universalism' as an issue because of his focus on the forming of moral character within the Christian community alone, nourished by the narrative of the gospel. Assuming a simplistic appropriation of the narrative of the gospel is an evasion of the issue of how harmful the Christian tradition has been to many people, and will not therefore do for feminists. Feminist theologians also, I suspect, wish to strive harder for connection with their non-Christian sisters than Hauerwas' model of witnessing against the world allows.

⁶¹Farley, "Feminism and Universal Morality", p.179.

⁶²Porter J., *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics*, London: SPCK, 1994.

⁶³S. Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*, San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1975. See above, p.20-21.

MAKING CONNECTIONS - BEVERLY HARRISON

Beverly Wildung Harrison's influential work does not fit easily under the label 'feminist theological ethics', partly because much of it was written some years before that label became historically possible to describe a body of work. In her introduction to *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, Carol Robb, editing Harrison's essays, describes her as "one of the major feminist theorists in religious social ethics".⁶⁴ She has been influential partly because her arguments arose from a very different perspective to others in religious social ethics. She is also influential because of the range of her interests and the flexibility of her method. She furnishes me with an example of ethical writing which is clearly feminist, clearly theological, and concerned with a range of specific, practical issues. Her work is often highlighted for its consistent concern with oppression on the grounds of race and class, as well as gender. To that end, she is interested in social and historical particularity, including the particularity of the individual, focused on embodied reason, as well as having a concern for the individual in a network of relationships. Thus, themes recognisable from the work of other feminists are found here as well. However, she disagrees with theorists such as Gilligan who put too much weight for her liking on the biological differences between men and women. "Several of Harrison's essays contain an assertion that whatever the evidence as to biologically based gender differences, the ethical issue is the degree of moral relevance given to such evidence".⁶⁵

Harrison remains committed to the Christian tradition, though she is fully aware of other feminists' disillusionment with it. She works with scripture and tradition, relating to them through contemporary experience. Her philosophical framework is a mixture of revised liberalism, and liberation and Marxist elements. Robb argues that the norms invoked in Harrison's ethics are the same as those for religious social ethics generally, but with the different emphasis on the full personhood of women. Her central concern is for justice, understood from liberation and Marxist perspectives and she often demonstrates these perspectives by starting from the analysis of injustice. Robb describes Harrison's method of enquiry into particular issues as follows: "We are to ask what are the historical and social roots of the wrong social relationships or the failure of

⁶⁴B.W. Harrison, *Making The Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, C. Robb, ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1985, p.xi.

⁶⁵*ibid.*, p.xii.

justice. We are to investigate what interests keep these patterns of injustice in place. And we are to ask what patterns of institutional relations must be confronted and transformed before right relationship can be achieved".⁶⁶ The stress is clearly, as in socialism, on the social, rather than on such themes as individual agency, but that is because she focuses on institutional obstacles to the moral agency of people-in-social-relations, particularly of women.

Harrison is an ethicist who discusses a range of issues. In common with other feminists, she will not countenance dualistic structuring of public and private issues. This shows, for instance, in her deliberate choice to link the discussion of social ethics and sexuality. In "Sexuality and Social Policy" she argues that we need to re-think "our understanding of human sexuality to appropriate a sexual ethics deep enough to clarify the relation between our capacity for interpersonal love and our ability to struggle effectually for social justice in our common life".⁶⁷ Love and justice are held together because she does not want to see them treated as separable private and public moralities, though her stress is on one side (justice) rather than the other. Love is in fact subordinated to justice in her terms when she argues that what we know of love is to come out of the struggle for justice - that is part of her argument in the essay "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love".⁶⁸ The analysis of abortion for which she is often cited is fuelled by anger that this is an area in which women's moral agency is least trusted.⁶⁹

Harrison's essay in *Making The Connections*, "The Older Person's Worth in the Eyes of Society", is a plea for justice rather than charity in the treatment of older people. It is interesting that this is one of the areas built on by another essay - Andolsen's "Justice, Gender and the Frail Elderly: Reexamining the Ethic of Care" - in a volume of *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* specifically dedicated to Beverly Wildung Harrison, featuring essays that build on her work in some way. The volume indicates her importance to the work of other feminist theological ethicists. In her essay Andolsen also stresses the need for justice, a complement to her own earlier work on feminist interpretations of agape,⁷⁰ in specific dialogue with an 'ethic of care' discourse. Other

⁶⁶Harrison, *Making The Connections*, p.81.

⁶⁷*ibid.*, p.83.

⁶⁸*ibid.*, p.8.

⁶⁹See below, p.161-162, for further discussion of Harrison on this issue.

⁷⁰See above, p.128.

essays in the volume include Robb's on the links between sexuality and social policy, and work by various ethicists on interstructured oppressions.⁷¹ The volume witnesses to the range of Harrison's own work and to the extent of her influence. But in recognising her importance, I also question whether the starting points she chooses to use amount to a coherent enough framework. Her notion of justice still needs further explanation. Yet her commitment and her conclusions need to be taken into account in any developments in feminist theological ethics.

ON THE BOUNDARIES

In this section I shall examine briefly three other texts which might be regarded as outside the borders of feminist theological ethics, either because they are not explicitly feminist, or not explicitly theological. This may seem to be an approach which draws boundaries too sharply, but my attempt to define feminist theological ethics is in the interests of knowing what discipline it is that can then be used in dialogue with other disciplines. These texts help to draw boundaries, but also illustrate the variety of elements which can help to develop feminist theological ethics.

In *Justice in an Unjust World* Karen Lebacqz echoes some of Harrison's concerns with her focus on justice, but also with her critique of a separation between justice and love. She argues this from within the terms of the Christian tradition: "Justice is often understood as something available to all people through human reason, while love is given only to those who exist in 'grace'. I am proposing here that this separation of justice and peace, or of justice and love, is a false separation that must be rejected emphatically".⁷² Her work is important to a feminist theological ethic which challenges the traditional separation between love and justice. However, to expect the word 'justice' to do the work of previous understandings of justice *and* love may not be workable. Yet she has an important point to make in her preference for language of justice over a deformed language of love: "Christian 'charity' avoids issues of justice and

⁷¹*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 9:1/2, 1993 includes: C.S. Robb, "Principles for a Woman-Friendly Economy"; D.S. Williams, "Womanist/Feminist Dialogue: Problems and Possibilities"; P.K. Brubaker, "Sisterhood, Solidarity and Feminist Ethics"; E. Haney, "Towards a White Feminist Ecological Ethic". Also in this same issue of *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, articles by Farley and Smith discussed above, p.140 and p.142-143 respectively.

⁷²K. Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987, p.134.

preaches a gospel in which the poor and oppressed hold out their hands for alms."⁷³ Her approach to the study of justice is to work from situations recognised as unjust rather than working from an abstract definition.⁷⁴ She hopes this approach will avoid the problems of competing theories of justice, but she doesn't deal with *who* recognises certain situations as unjust, and how they do so. The strength of her starting point is that she refuses a 'neutral' description of justice which posits an ideal world. Her notion of justice is described in this-worldly terms, where 'this world' is fundamentally unjust, so that justice involves the correction of injustice, and restitution for injustice.

Lebacqz recognises that the Christian Church has been associated through history with many examples of injustice, but she still finds it possible to model the justice she wishes to develop through Biblical examples. Her reading of the Bible (a reading which unfortunately she does not analyse or justify) produces 'words for the oppressed' and 'words for the oppressor'. Voices from the Bible are combined with voices from oppressed peoples: she tries to present the viewpoint of the oppressed because she grants epistemological privilege to the oppressed.⁷⁵ Her terms - particularly her use of 'justice' - are suggestive of liberation theology. Like Woodhead, Lebacqz prefers language of duties to that of rights, but this is because she is suspicious that the language of rights enshrines the 'rights' of the oppressor before those of the oppressed. She defines rights in terms of others having responsibilities toward one and refuses any dichotomy between language of rights and responsibilities: "I would urge, against much contemporary discussion of justice, that justice does not *begin* in respect for rights. Justice begins in responsibility."⁷⁶ She recognises a great variety of possible oppressions, of which sexist oppression of women is but one. Her analysis is not therefore the one familiar from some radical feminists of 'patriarchy' as the explanation for all oppression, which creates the suspicion that feminism 'trumps' all other struggles. On the other hand, she too may have created problems in using too large an overarching category in 'oppression', and then not showing enough flexibility in her

⁷³Lebacqz, p.44.

⁷⁴In this her work is similar to Iris Marion Young's non-theological theory of justice. See above, p.105. See also my discussion of love and justice, above p.132f.

⁷⁵Lebacqz is criticised for this by Carmody who wishes to remind her that 'the oppressed' do not constitute a wholly innocent group. Carmody's critique also focuses on whether Lebacqz has recognised God's sovereignty over the times and ways of salvation. These points are valid within the terms of Carmody's aims, but focusing on those points alone is not a fair assessment of Lebacqz's book as a whole. Carmody, p.60f.

⁷⁶Lebacqz, p.106. She specifically refutes Gilligan's work where it appears to her that Gilligan too strongly opposes rights and responsibilities, p.181.

analysis to demonstrate differences between oppressions. Lebacqz is not writing feminist theory specifically, since she does not start from an explicitly feminist viewpoint, but her work is compatible with feminist concerns.

I have already referred to the way Linda Woodhead relies on Helen Oppenheimer's work in her model of 'feminism and Christian ethics'. Oppenheimer is aligned with the 'new naturalists' whom Parsons commends for refuting positivism. *The Hope of Happiness*⁷⁷ demonstrates Oppenheimer relying on the natural law tradition in the kind of way Parsons hopes for, though not with the feminist critique Parsons herself brings to the way in which the natural law tradition has been used in the past. Oppenheimer argues for a notion of human good in which happiness matters, in which goodness and well-being fit together, because it is grounded in the understanding that God wants human fulfilment. "It is not that feeling good makes us feel happy, but that being good somehow satisfies and enhances our natures".⁷⁸ This is entirely separate from utilitarianism which dissolves goodness into what makes us happy. But it is not, for instance, a version of natural law theory which supposes that it is simple to read off from nature what is good for us, and she makes room for choice. "Carefully explained, natural law gives no cut-and-dried regulations but a conviction of the normality of goodness, an assurance that there is some point in trying."⁷⁹

In common with many feminist theologians, she critiques Nygren's interpretation of *agape* and argues instead that *agape* and *eros* need to be put back together. This means that love needs an element of partiality, and that this is a full description of *Christian* love. This kind of Christian love attends to the positive individuality of another, who is not valued somehow apart from her/his personal qualities. The language she prefers for communicating the value of each and every particular, concrete person is not the language of equality, but the language of irreplaceability. She uses such language partly in order to be understood by non-believers, warning rightly that the Christian phrase 'God-given value', used to justify the value of each human being, needs explaining. There are many elements here familiar and helpful to feminist theological ethics, even if feminists would want to add some elements of critique. However, in the effort to move beyond critique alone, and be constructive, this is the kind of work that needs to be

⁷⁷H. Oppenheimer, *The Hope of Happiness: A Sketch for a Christian Humanism*, London: SCM Press, 1983. Cf. also Oppenheimer, *Finding and Following: Talking With Children About God*, London: SCM Press, 1994.

⁷⁸Oppenheimer, *The Hope of Happiness*, p.11.

⁷⁹*ibid.*, p.35.

taken into account, instead of imagining that nothing that is not explicitly feminist can be of assistance. The natural law tradition, understood in this kind of way, can help feminist theological ethicists to describe goodness for human beings, the conditions that help and do not harm them.

As a final example, in *Women and Evil*,⁸⁰ Nel Noddings explores a theological theme from a feminist ethical viewpoint. Her project pays attention to the kind of area that feminist theological ethicists should be concerned with and demonstrates in particular the need to break down barriers between ethics and systematic theology because she highlights the kind of effect that ethical reflection could have on the expression of doctrine. She admits that she is not a trained theologian, and it shows: she does not see all the complexities, or anxieties, within the theological tradition of theodicy, and there is some naivete in her image of God. However, she also demonstrates the value of an outsider's non-believing perspective in putting questions to the Christian theological tradition. For instance, her critique of certain emphases in moral theology is pertinent, if also too generalised: "Scholars have concentrated on the terror induced by disobeying a father, god, or authority and thereby incurring its wrath. They have paid relatively little attention to the desire for goodness that is aroused by loving relations with the mother."⁸¹

Noddings critiques a range of images in which women are associated with evil, and then with good, particularly a 'natural' (and, therefore, non-moral) association between women and good. She dismisses all attempts at theodicy, which she understands as justifying evil (rather than justifying God in the face of evil). As far as she is concerned, any religious tradition which justifies pain, by picturing God allowing or inflicting pain, blinds us ethically. She then proposes her own phenomenological analysis of evil from the standpoint of women: all that creates human misery is evil, and the alleviation of human misery is good. Moral theory must deal with what is evil because the test of a moral theory is "whether it finds ways of life that will give us some relief from that which harms or threatens to harm us - from evil."⁸² Noddings categorises evil as pain, helplessness and separation. The only 'god' that fits her scheme is one who struggles fallibly alongside human beings towards ethical vision. Noddings uses ethical values

⁸⁰N. Noddings, *Women and Evil*, Berkely: University of California Press, 1989.

⁸¹*ibid.*, p.9. A Christian resource for this notion of the desire for goodness aroused by relation with the mother is surely found in Mariology, provided it is not interpreted as impossible idealisation of motherhood.

⁸²*ibid.*, p.2.

familiar from her previous book, *Caring*.⁸³ Her standard of ethical good is the life-enhancing tasks for which women have been responsible in the domestic realm. One of the problems with this analysis, as in *Caring*, is her generalised description of women as caretakers. However, the later work shows much more awareness of the difficulties of valuing experiences which are the fruit of oppressive situations, while still affirming care. "Caring for the physical and emotional welfare of others has been basic to the feminine experience. It is important to affirm that this caring has not developed solely from a 'slave mentality'".⁸⁴ *Women and Evil* is not to be categorised as feminist theological ethics, but it is useful and interesting for highlighting a possible area of study. Noddings demonstrates that there is value in trying to define what harms people, as part of seeking their good.

CONCLUSION

Most of the authors I have read in order to describe feminist theological ethics for myself seem to see themselves as writing feminist ethics. (It is worth noting that I have deliberately sought a picture of feminist theological ethics through the work that ethicists are doing, though others may see it more as a matter of the self-identification of the ethicists themselves.) Though there may be theological emphases in their work, or though a theological tradition may have some place in their analysis, their main source is often in feminist ethics. I do not wish to imply there is any particular problem with this provided that it does not involve taking concepts over wholesale without sufficient theological examination. Therefore I have built on feminist ethics, taking into account the kind of critique I made in chapter 3, bringing theological perspectives and presuppositions to bear. My labelling of 'feminist theological ethics' is a deliberate attempt at construction, picking out examples of work, highlighting connections, and developing themes which coalesce into a model I can use. It is a model to do with question, guidelines, perspectives and concerns, rather than a subject standing alone.

Feminist theological ethics clearly stands with feminist ethics in its starting point of advocacy for women, even if, I would argue, it will not take the essentialist line which radical feminist ethicists advocate. Thus, women's stories, women's varying experiences, their roles, oppressions, struggles and resistances are all resources for feminist

⁸³See above, p.97-99.

⁸⁴Noddings, *Women and Evil*, p.42.

theological ethics. But they are not resources that are used uncritically, as if all that women think, say, or do is automatically to be labelled 'right' (though the critique of all of it having been labelled 'wrong' is high on the agenda!) Jean Bethke Elshtain's model for feminist research is useful here, as a method of dealing with these resources. She develops a model that starts with 'thick' description of women's experiences from their perspective, which allows the theorist who is on the side of the victims to interpret this experience, reflecting on it "with one eye on greater theoretical clarity and the second on emancipating human subjects from terms of fear, bondage, or silencing",⁸⁵ without crushing complexity. The resulting reflective theory must then be presented back to the theorist's subject, for dialogue (but not coerced agreement). In this way the whole theoretical enterprise becomes a politically responsive exercise. The starting point in what *women* do, or write, or say is also a resource to be expanded. Dealing with the perspective of women alone may be a starting point, but it is not where feminist theological ethicists should want to end up. Instead feminist theological ethicists should be concerned with taking up the perspective of those feminist ethicists who want to make their ethical models available and applicable more widely. A critique of gendered concepts should not take us to an ethic only for women, but one that is for women and men.

However, to assume that the relationship between feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics is obvious, and very close, is to leave out a whole area of investigation about the differences or links between theological and non-theological ethics - a much wider debate than one just among feminists. Some might see this as positive: if feminist theological ethics can be presented as just another variation of feminist ethics, it should be taken seriously by a wider range of feminist ethicists than would normally look in the direction of theology. The cost of this may be that the ethical work of feminist theologians is only taken seriously as long as its theological basis is not too obvious, or can be ignored. This is not a fair basis for dialogue, and serious dialogue is an important possibility when many feminist ethicists are searching for norms which will take their work beyond solely feminist attention. Allowing theological concerns to be downgraded is also an unhelpful strategy in presenting feminist theological ethics to non-feminist theologians in general. My chief concern has been to situate and develop feminist theological ethics in relation to feminist ethics, but the purpose of that is to enable dialogue between feminist and non-feminist work in theology.

⁸⁵Elshtain, "Toward a Reflective Feminist Theory", *Women and Politics*, 3, 1983, p.10.

Eleanor Haney's essay "What is Feminist Ethics?" was an early attempt at definition. The essay appeared in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, and it is that context that helps to situate it as related to theological ethics. She refers within the essay to Christian concepts, again revealing her theological context. But she is definitely writing about feminist ethics, situating feminist ethics as a critique of, and alternative to traditional Christian ethics. However, the relationship is not simple: "...dimensions of Jesus Christ's teaching and life are consistent with and enrich a feminist ethic".⁸⁶ The essay implies that there is no need to distinguish between feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics. I, on the other hand, do see a need for distinction. It must also be said that the amount that has been written since Haney's article, within feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics, has changed the possibilities of definition. A possible model of the relationship is to see feminist theological ethics as a subset of feminist ethics, not the same as, but subordinate to feminist ethics. But I am arguing that feminist theological ethics is a distinct perspective which should not be subsumed under feminist ethics, or seen simply as interchangeable with it. Therefore, I prefer a model of the relationship which places feminist theological ethics between feminist ethics and theological ethics, provided ethics is also situated in close relationship to other areas of theology. Certainly we must recognise that there are many different strands and starting points in both feminist ethics and theological ethics, and varying relations with these strands will produce different emphases in feminist theological ethics. I am not looking for a distinct discipline so defined that it is unmistakable, but for a distinct area of questioning and concern, with permeable boundaries, in relation to other disciplines.

Particularly important is the thinking, wrestling, critical, creative work which the feminist theological ethicist must undertake in relation to whichever specified theological tradition she chooses to work with. In illustration of this, compare the different approaches of Sharon Welch and Denise Carmody.⁸⁷ Both are clear about their relation to the Christian tradition, both in respect of what they reject and of that on which they build. Carmody subordinates ethical concerns to certain theological presuppositions; Welch acknowledges the tradition from which she comes, in which her training was grounded, and wrestles with it. Her attitude to the tradition is much more critical than Carmody would allow, but she chooses to count herself within it, though some might label her post-Christian. I find Welch's approach much richer than Carmody's. My comparison of Carmody and Welch is a methodological critique rather

⁸⁶E. Haney, "What is Feminist Ethics? A Proposal for Continuing Discussion", p.123.

⁸⁷Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity*; Carmody, *Virtuous Woman*.

than a critique of content, for I suspect that my own theological conclusions would be considerably closer to those of Carmody than Welch. But the strong element of critique as well as construction is crucial in defining the distinctness of feminist theological ethics. Carmody's work in relation to Welch's raises questions about what kind of theological reflection is appropriate for the feminist theological ethicist. Here questions of historical consciousness, or postmodern epistemology are relevant. The feminist theological ethicist needs to be clear about theological issues, such as how much reliance she will place on the historical Jesus, or whether a notion of Jesus-as-understood-through-text will do - what hermeneutical model she will work with in other words.

Relating ethical investigation and systematic theology, feminist theological ethics will critique the tradition but will also contribute creatively to revisions of traditional theological ethics and systematic theology. The theological presuppositions and effects need to be clear. Joanne Brown and Rebecca Parker make it clear in their essay "For God So Loved The World?"⁸⁸ that their conclusions about the abuse of women mean that they cannot subscribe to any theology of the atonement, because any chosen version ultimately affirms that suffering has some worth. Without agreeing with their particular conclusion, I accept that ethical study in theological context can have that kind of effect, and can work from those kinds of presuppositions. Thus ethicists will work with the theology of those who have expressed moral concern about the directions or effects of theological conclusions. This is not to suggest ethicists' only concern is in forming Christian doctrine: the work of the ethicist is primarily about empowering people to moral agency, or "the responsible direction of the social self."⁸⁹ Discussion of Susan Parsons' work in this chapter has been one example of how feminist theological reflection can be linked with ethical concern.⁹⁰ For instance, attention to the significance and quality of relationships is a strong element of feminist ethics and feminist theological ethics, and it has its corollary in the development of a feminist theology of redemption in Mary Grey's work.⁹¹ Grey affirms that redemption is about the restoration of broken relationship, and she thus reclaims the notion of redemption from the problematic overtones of concentrating wholly on discourse of

⁸⁸J. Brown and R. Parker, "For God So Loved the World?". See above, p.49-50, for a discussion of this article.

⁸⁹Robb's introduction to Harrison, *Making The Connections*, p.xvi.

⁹⁰See below, p.140f. and relevant footnotes.

⁹¹Mary Grey, *Redeeming The Dream*.

guilt, suffering and self-denial. Parsons develops this from an ethical point of view: we need to "affirm that the relationships which form the matrix of our lives, are not only natural given facts of existence, in which all things are bound together, but are purposive, in that we are meant for one another and for the earth"; "the end for which all things have been made is right relationship, in which integrity, wholeness and harmony may be realised."⁹² Parsons also argues that this theology is a way of reclaiming the transcendence of God, often a source of difficulty in feminist theology, in the notion of God resourcing relationships.

Within theological ethics, the feminist revision of *agape* has been influential and persuasive. But less work has been done on what justice might mean for feminist theological ethics, except where the concept has been taken straight over from liberation theology (in the work of Welch and Lebacqz), and even there the work on relating this to any concept of love is not far advanced. Some revisions, or critiques, of justice within the theological tradition have privileged duties, or the obligation imposed by need, rather than rights. But language of rights or duties unconnected with one another each imply the same individualist notion of ethics, and it may be better to look more closely at the relationship between them. Concentration on the language of duties or responsibility alone may after all be a route for taking us straight back to the exclusive focus on the needs of others, at the expense of self, which was criticised in the traditional exposition of *agape*. On the other hand language about responsibilities can include responsibility towards self. The 'code-words' used must be thoughtfully explored so that exploitation is effectively challenged. Margaret Farley's work illustrates how close the justice/care debate in feminist ethics can be to the language of justice and love in theology. She argues, "The problem for our moral lives and moral theories is how to evaluate our care, our love, our relationships: according to what norms is care helpful and not harmful? The problem, one might say, is whether and how caring may be just". Farley's exposition of just love may help us over the theological ethical impasse of too great a separation between love and justice. Non-theological ethicists have wanted to use the language of justice to refer to universalism. Theological ethicists have used the notion of *agape* for the same purpose. I want to keep the languages of love and justice together, though not identical, to express a modified universalism, warm, inclusive partiality and a cry against injustice and harm.

The problematic side of the justice/care debate in feminist ethics, or of the justice/love debate in feminist theological ethics, is the relationship to the public/private divide.

⁹²Parsons, *Feminism and Christian Ethics*, to be published.

Ruth Smith critiques Gilligan and others for conducting their analyses within the terms of the public/private divide, instead of challenging it. Her particular point is to challenge the notions of 'public' or 'private' space used in a non-historical way, but she adds: "The complexity of the relation between women and justice suggests that any reconciliation between them must be based not on an easy synthesis of justice and care, but a deconstruction of liberal thought and social arrangements in which these concepts are embedded".⁹³ As far as this is directly relevant to feminist theological ethics, it seems to me that as long as love and justice are seen in oppositional relationship, often reinforced by a reading of Carol Gilligan's work as wholly opposed to any notion of justice or rights, the split between public and private realms cannot be fully addressed. Unless the public/private divide is satisfactorily reworked - and not just assumed to be the same thing - women's relationship with morality will remain problematic. But neither can love and justice simply be treated as if they were the same.

I discussed in this chapter the work of ethicists who recognise the problem of agreement, or lack of it, in ethics and seek some common ground on which to work. Smith, Farley and Parsons situate themselves explicitly in this area. This search appears to be for some sort of certainty, and yet this is precisely the area where feminist theological ethicists need to use the critical, reflective capacity to admit new possibilities and the need for change. No moral judgement is necessary or relevant except as it refers to categories recognised beyond the individual - even such basic categories as 'right', 'wrong', 'better', 'worse'. That these terms have some meaning is a general assumption, even if we do not know how to define them explicitly. Beyond that, positions must be argued. It is useless for feminists to assume general agreement about what is good for women, rigid sex roles are some people's, including many women's, idea of what is best for women. Even assumptions that 'justice' or 'injustice' are immediately recognisable have to be questioned. However, taking the notion of harm or injustice into account does result in some gain. It may be that moral theorists have always assumed agreement about certain activities or actions being wrong, or harmful, and have simply concentrated on more problematic areas. But that concentration has led to assertions that there is no agreement in ethics, because there are differing opinions over the most problematic issues. Instead there *is* a measure of agreement in the human community about some basic harms - torture, rape, murder, child abuse, right through to reckless driving, for instance - even where there is disagreement over remedies for these harms. At the very least, feminist theological ethicists should be able to recognise and acknowledge the assumptions they are making, the 'leaps of faith' they

⁹³Smith, "Moral Transcendence and Moral Space", p.25.

inevitably take, and be ready to revise them. This is, after all, only an extension of a common feminist call for people to be more aware of the limited nature of their own perspectives.

A useful model here combines one of Carol Christ's emphases with the non-theological perspective of Seyla Benhabib. Christ argues that we should still make truth claims, even though we recognise their perspectival nature. These truth claims can then be regarded as the material for dialogue, in the process of communicative ethics which Benhabib develops.⁹⁴ There is still work to be done, however, on how the dialogue takes place (not just between experts, or just hypothetically), and how agreement might come about, or even what measure of agreement can be expected. It will be more helpful to think in terms of a 'working agreement', than of final closed agreement. In this search, some feminist theological ethicists want to refer in a revised way to ontological universality, perhaps via a version of 'new naturalism' which can be shown to be good, rather than restricting, for women. Others look for a form of common ground which doesn't refer to ontology: Hogan looks at the possibilities of women's praxis, though I have already noted my reservations about this. Common goals, obligation and accountability have also been discussed in this chapter. Re-worked, these possibilities may not look quite as mutually exclusive as they have in non-feminist theories. Indeed feminist theological ethics must be open to working with a variety of possibilities, of models, and examples.

We have to admit our ethical standpoint, analyse it, and compare it to that of others different from us. But in the end we do take a stand and are right to do so, provided we can develop a position knowing it may need to be changed. The critical faculty and flexibility are vitally important. In this sense I agree with Linda Hogan's conclusion that "we must do our ethics modestly, recognizing that the goal is not a well-articulated theory but a framework within which we can make moral decisions which will respect the integrity of each dilemma while avoiding the pitfalls of situation ethics."⁹⁵ But the search for 'well-articulated theory' must not be altogether abandoned. In the midst of feminists' suspicion of abstraction, and their adherence to the particular, feminist theory still takes place. This is the activity of theorising with a strong relationship to praxis, producing clearly revisable theory. It is the concern of the feminist theological ethicist to point towards the universal while acknowledging the provisionality and yet ultimate

⁹⁴Christ, "Embodied Thinking"; Benhabib, *Situating the Self*.

⁹⁵Hogan, "Resources for a Feminist Ethic", p.98.

value of particular perspectives. This ought to be a stance familiar to Christian theology, pointing towards the greatness and distinctiveness of God and acknowledging the worth of humanity. It demands a critical, reflective methodology, open to revision in the constant activity of ethical praxis. Engaged with praxis, language of moral agency, development and moral situation will be important to feminist theological ethics. Feminist ethical concern with the ethics of social policy will also be retained.

In some of the examples I have discussed above, the autonomy and value of the individual is taken very seriously, in others the theme of relationship is key, and in still others the search is for a discourse which will embrace all women, or all human beings. Many of the disagreements in any ethical discussion are to do with the right balance of attention between these. Feminist theological ethics, from its roots in feminist theology and non-theological feminist theory, has the difficult task of witnessing to the importance of all of these. Christian theological commitments demand proper attention to God-created humanity and the God-given value of the individual. Feminist theology has highlighted the ways in which women have been excluded from that. Feminist theory has further highlighted what some theological traditions have always emphasised more strongly than others, that the individual has place and identity in community and in relationship. Feminist theological ethicists must be concerned to take account of individuals, with all their peculiar particularities, in their concrete reality, understanding that individuals are formed in relationships and have roles as members of overlapping communities with varied commitments, and need, at times, to dissent from their communities. But we reach also for a humanly inclusive ethical discourse, which does not deny or suppress all that is most partial, most particular and most human about persons; a discourse which can value God-given creaturely fragility and dependence, bodies, feelings and rationality, expressed differently in each individual.

In this chapter I have sketched possibilities, many of which have remained very abstract. In my final chapter, I seek to explore some of these possibilities in connection with a particular subject and particular experiences. The test for this kind of theological theorising will be what it has to say about some of the most damaging, disruptive situations in human lives; whether it gives resources for facing various forms of violence. It needs to suggest possibilities and goals and ideals (and this is my area of concentration in the next chapter), but also to provide us with resources to cope with tragedy, with the evil and hurt in human lives that cannot be changed. This could and should be an important and fruitful area of development of feminist theological ethics. Jantzen comments "It is a shock to lose our moral callousness and really take notice of the violence and pain all around us" and to recognise our participation in the structures

of violence and injustice.⁹⁶ Thus, for her, ethics needs to be developed in directions of care and connectedness, with solidarity as moral motivation. The question for feminist theological ethicists is whether they are able to encourage the development of moral agents, women and men, who can face the reality of the world, and still live and work, hopefully and lovingly, against exploitation and injustice, and for peace.

⁹⁶Jantzen, p.13, referring to M. Pellauer, "Moral Callousness and Moral Sensitivity: Violence Against Women" in Andolsen *et al.*

CHAPTER 5 - A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL STUDY OF WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

GUIDELINES

I have discussed in previous chapters some of the ways in which women may experience violence, and also possible perspectives for evaluating those experiences. In this final chapter I bring those strands together to sketch some conclusions. At the beginning of this chapter, therefore, I need to summarise the perspectives which guide the conclusions I discuss. Initially feminism asks questions about whether a theory has adequately described the human situation by explicitly including women. Very often this means engaging in a process of uncovering what has been hidden - both uncovering the implicit gendering of concepts that were promoted as universal, and rediscovering women's experiences and perspectives where they have been ignored and deliberately excluded. Within the Christian ethical tradition, this involves an exploration of how a failure to discuss women's experiences has functioned to deny women's moral agency. The activity of highlighting women's experiences expands the picture of what needs to be taken into account in judicious ethical evaluation. This cannot be achieved by any simplistic 'blanket' approach to women - assuming that their experiences are somehow uniform in a way which men's are not. Women's differences and their historical situatedness must be acknowledged, and I have tried to do that through attention to a multiplicity of discourses, as a method of appreciating complexity.

A particularly important guideline for my work has been the discussion of ethical terminology. A feminist ethical perspective highlights the possibilities of an ethical language which privileges care and relationality and focuses on the self in relational networks. But I have shown that if we are to use this language we need to pay close attention not just to the *fact* of relationship as a defining factor in human identity, but also to an evaluation of the quality of relationships. The language of justice can fulfil that purpose if it is not just about abstract equality but about the desire to correct injustice and harm. Theological terminology is able to bring the language of love into focus, with its own discussion of the relative weight of love and justice, within varying interpretations of those terms. My understanding is that those two terms need to be brought closer together, and interpreted in terms of each other so that we can talk of just love and of justice intertwined with love and mercy. The latter is Dorothy L. Sayers' vision when she subjects human notions of justice to theological critique in the light of the Christian gospel. These ethical perspectives can express God's purposes for

women and for men, for fulfilled lives lived in empowering, whole relationships. In a modified universal language, feminist theological ethicists assert the irreplaceability of the individual, formed in relationship.

A corollary of the feminist ethical perspective is the challenge, which feminist theological ethicists take up also, to any rigid divide between ethics and politics and between public and private realms. Carter Heyward places some of her feminist theological colleagues in this debate:

"Challenging Reinhold Niebuhr's 'Christian realism', in which a personal ethic is held to bear no necessary relation to a social ethic, Sheila Collins and other North American feminist theologians, such as Beverly Wildung Harrison, Delores Williams, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Judith Plaskow, affirm that personal (private) and political (public) acts are bound up in a single ethic, and moreover that theological ethics are expressions of human actions which are at once of private and public value".¹

A strong distinction between ethical issues of apparently public or private significance (public significance being understood as of higher value) may lie behind an example of Christian ethical judgement questioned by Beverly Wildung Harrison.² She further attributes the distinctions in this example to Christian ethicists' willingness to recognise men's ethical dilemmas, but not women's. She believes that there is great empathy among ethicists for real-life choices and dilemmas in situations such as just war discussion, but she argues that such empathy is consistently lacking in situations where women face dilemmas: principally her concern is with the discussion of abortion.³ She argues that "ignoring the life circumstances out of which a woman confronts an abortion dilemma is inherently antifemale."⁴ There is a sense in which some ethical issues are seen as worthy of more discussion than others. However, some Christian ethicists may seem to reverse the priority of the particular issues of Harrison's example.

¹I.C. Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation*, University Press of America, 1982, p.133.

²See above, p.145f., for discussion of Harrison's work in more detail.

³It might be interesting in a discussion of abortion to decide whether the controversial nature of this issue is to do with women being thought of solely as reproductive beings - with a duty to produce children - or whether it is about refusing the association of women with killing. Abortion has not been a concern of mine in this thesis, but it might be possible to explore it as an example of violence. Similarly, abortion is an issue which has been very much privatised, and consequently there has been a lack of social support for women to make real choices.

⁴B.W. Harrison, "Our Right to Choose: The Morality of Procreative Choice" in Andolsen *et al.*, p.103.

Mary Segers⁵ argues that, despite public avowals of the immorality of nuclear weapons as well as of the immorality of abortion, the American Catholic bishops whose campaigning actions she has studied actually spend far more time and energy working against abortion than against war. This, for Segers, is an inconsistent pro-life ethic. However, though her analysis of this particular example may be different from Harrison's, her conclusion shows that they have both focused on the same problem. She concludes her study by arguing that the solution is both to re-think the public/private divide and to accept feminist views of women's moral agency. For, although the bishops' actions suggest they are more concerned with abortion than peace issues, *not* spending more attention on issues of war-making as Harrison might lead us to assume, the ultimate effect is the same. The bishops are campaigning for a law which will refuse women moral agency, and will represent a significant failure to recognise the difficulties of choice that women face.

In attempting to take women's moral agency, their choices and their contexts seriously, I have rejected the model of women as 'naturally' peaceful in a way that distinguishes them from men. I have rejected historical interpretation which asserts or implies that women have nothing to do with certain instances of violence. Finally I have rejected any implication that ethical discussion of violence really need only concern itself with decisions about war. My own commitment is to the goal of challenging violence and promoting peace. I believe that, before God, we have a duty to work out, recognise and acknowledge those things that are harmful and destructive to human beings, and to reject them. To that end we need to have a presumption against violence. However, because I do not take either 'peace' or 'order' to be ultimate goals in themselves, I suggest that it is possible for us to sanction and use coercive force, on a very few occasions, to halt injustice. The ultimacy of the word 'salvation' seems to be better expressed in the just love or merciful justice which builds relationships than in many of our impoverished images of peace as the cessation of war or violence. Yet some form of peace, as active harmony, co-operation and mutual upbuilding, is a part of salvation. Christian discipleship is an invitation to the promotion of that kind of peace.

Feminist theological ethics is beginning to aid reflection on what is good for women and men, what is good for our fulfilment. Language about God's purposes encourages us to label destruction as wrong, to proclaim women and men of such importance that they deserve protection from violence. It enables us to proclaim that broken relationships are

⁵M.C. Segers, "A Consistent Life Ethic: A Feminist Perspective on the Pro-Peace and Pro-Life Activities of the American Catholic Bishops" in Elshtain and Tobias, eds.

destructive, but also to work for the healing of relational people. The model I have taken from feminist theological ethics enables me to make suggestions about evaluating various kinds of violence women face. Language of care and relationship, as well as the insistence that love and justice are suitable terms for personal and political, private and public subjects, give me terminology to explore again the ways in which domestic violence can be analysed, condemned and resisted. It opens up positive possibilities for women in the military, and for valuing women's experiences of wartime struggles in the midst of collective violence. So also the 'better' and 'worse' of war can be examined in the light of women's perspectives and concerns. These issues can be explored in the framework of an ethical perspective which allows the possibility of cross-cultural agreements over 'right' and 'wrong' even as it seeks to build a fuller picture of particular contexts.

To employ the insights of feminist theological ethics on issues of peace, war and other forms of violence must enable discussion which takes account of a wide range of people, appreciating complexity in particular through detailed description of a variety of women's experiences. This attention must refuse a gender-associated split between the public and private, moving instead between different social contexts, and noting their interactions. The effects of violence on people's autonomy and relationality need to be explored further. Beyond the space available here, as part of a continuing discussion, there are issues to be addressed about women's power and powerlessness in various societies. In the sections of this final chapter below, I have not sought to answer all the questions I have raised, but I have instead concentrated on those aspects that seem to have received least attention in the feminist theological work I have researched. Having made explicit the theological images that have operated throughout this thesis, I discuss in more detail my conclusions about the interpretative value of using evaluative considerations which re-work the public/private divide. I then discuss the position of women in the military, and the elements that might begin to build a new discourse about war.

THEOLOGICAL IMAGES

I am not here beginning something new at this stage of my thesis: theological images have not been absent. However, in this section I am making explicit the theological images of which I have been particularly aware in creating this work, highlighting what is already present. These are both images that I have brought to the work, that have been refined by the themes I have pursued, and images that have arisen more directly

from the themes themselves. I also refer to some images briefly which are being, or need to be developed, arising from my chosen themes. I am using the term 'images' in a non-technical sense to refer to symbols, models, metaphors, concepts and doctrines, expressed in a variety of discourses.⁶ The theological images I discuss are not the only possible way of reading the Christian tradition. If they were, they would already hold undisputed sway. The history of Christian tradition is, however, a history of interpretations and re-interpretations, of new constructions with varying relationships to the theologies of the past. This means that the images I choose to focus on will not be unproblematic; they will not automatically satisfy those with a very different theological background from my own. I want to follow the methodology that Carter Heyward indicates in recognising that our theological images are choices that we make, out of human experience. "The theologian's ongoing constructive task is to discern common assumptions which are emerging in the praxis out of which and to which she speaks...I am attempting to respond to the human need for good - empowering, mutual - relation among ourselves."⁷ However, unlike Heyward, I acknowledge a religious sense that something/someone outside and beyond ourselves - God - encourages, informs and enables our choices. I wish in particular to affirm that our choices of theological imagery are moral choices, which have moral consequences.

In *Theology For A Nuclear Age* (clearly a title relevant to my own questions about wartime and peacetime), Gordon Kaufman argues that taking human responsibility seriously, particularly "the unprecedented new powers and responsibilities which have recently fallen to humans",⁸ demands a radical re-thinking of theological images with regard to their ethical content. For him this is most obviously true of the concept of God's sovereignty and control over the world, which he sees as contradicting the notion of human control and, therefore, human responsibility. Kaufman expounds the biblical

⁶I realise this non-technical use of the work 'images' is problematic, but I am concerned here with a broad range of discourses. For a careful discussion of the use of analogy, metaphor and other images in feminist theology, cf. F. Martin, *The Feminist Question: Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, particularly chapter 8 "Analogy, Images, Metaphors and Theology". Sallie McFague describes her work as metaphorical theology and she focuses on that particular set of images that can be described as metaphors. Heyward relies on the term 'image' as she seeks to 're-image' many of the central ideas about Jesus and his significance for us. Her 'images' are to some extent certain choices of interpretation. Kaufman relies on 'concepts', and that remains his preference as he explains in a review of McFague's book (in *Theology Today*, 45, 1988), even though he acknowledges that she has drawn more from the type of images she uses than he had thought possible. (See notes below for full references to these authors.)

⁷Heyward, p.12-13.

⁸G.D. Kaufman, *Theology For A Nuclear Age*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p.ix.

image of a dominating, king-like God, who commands human beings to subdue the earth, and to kill all their enemies. He argues that this image functions to legitimate human destruction of the earth and of other human beings. This is a morally unacceptable state of affairs. Only a different image of God will legitimate a better mode of behaviour among human beings as far as Kaufman is concerned. His answer to the problem he has identified is to promote an image of God which relativises human life in cosmic context, and which images God as creativity. This image is acceptable to Kaufman because it is not personal or intentional and cannot therefore legitimate intentional abuses of power or control among human beings.

A reviewer of Sallie McFague's *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* suggests that her aim, and her understanding of what has gone wrong in Christian theology, are similar to Kaufman's: "The thesis of this work...is that the models of God which have prevailed in the Christian tradition are inadequate for our day. Indeed they are not only inadequate, but they constitute a real danger for the survival of life on our planet because they foster a consciousness that is hierarchical, dualistic and dominative".⁹ Her strategy and solution are, however, different from Kaufman's. She relies on insights from process theology, rather than the liberal theology which Kaufman espouses. The primary insight which she thus appropriates is that God cannot be externally related to the world as the power that controls it. Her preferred metaphor for the relation of God and the world is the world as God's body, in explicit contrast to the world as God's kingdom. This is a relation which she understands communally, and it is important for her to point to that communal relation before referring to more individualistic images. From that basis then, she is prepared to explore personal metaphors of God as mother, lover and friend, in order to express intimacy, mutuality, relatedness, and immanence. It should be clear from my work in chapters 3 and 4 that these are experiences close to the heart of what feminist theological ethicists want to value, and McFague's images may therefore make sense and be helpful to feminist theological ethics.

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite's article "God and Her Survival in a Nuclear Age"¹⁰ identifies the same difficulty with theological imagery as do Kaufman and McFague. In particular, she denounces theologies of 'salvation by nuclear destruction'. She is quite

⁹N.C. Ring, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 57:3, 1989, p.656, reviewing S. McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, London: SCM Press, 1987.

¹⁰S.B. Thistlethwaite, "God and Her Survival in a Nuclear Age", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 4:1, 1988.

clear that destruction cannot be saving activity - and that is an assertion I find immensely important. She too wants to "find ways of talking about God that both affirm the goodness and value of the world and mandate justice in history".¹¹ But she critiques the liberal attempt to do this, represented by Kaufman's book. Thistlethwaite reads Kaufman as offering the kind of liberal vision which has denied the material base of life, propounding a problematic view of humanity. His vision of God is for her too rational in the narrow sense of 'rational' as excluding feeling and emotion: Kaufman's God is an abstract 'point of reference'. In particular this God cannot pronounce any judgement on human evil and injustice. Her own preferred direction is to search for insight among those human beings who know about the struggle for survival, and so she examines the work of black women writers. "It is closer to the major theme of these writers to say that God becomes the black woman protagonist in both suffering and healing".¹² In associating God with both suffering and healing, and with the condemnation of injustice, Thistlethwaite overcomes the imagery of a God who is associated with the power and control of possible nuclear destruction.

Kaufman, McFague and Thistlethwaite all register concern about the ethical consequences of certain images predominating in the Christian doctrine of God. The particular concern they point to relates to issues of conflict and violence, to war and peace in contemporary context. If God is seen almost exclusively in terms of sovereignty, control and power over people, then there is the danger of those attributes being valued too highly, being worshipped, when exercised by human beings. Also at issue here is the way in which an over-emphasis on God's transcendence is read as distance between God and human beings. Patriarchal political metaphors for God legitimate certain kinds of power for the few, and negate responsibility for the many. For me, Thistlethwaite's and McFague's solutions to this problem work better than Kaufman's, partly for the reasons Thistlethwaite suggests: both of them stay much closer to the lived experience of human beings in their interpretation of the Christian tradition. For they have made choices about which images to highlight from within the Christian tradition. Though Kaufman does examine the symbols of both 'God' and 'Christ' in the Christian tradition, his image of God becomes more and more detached from the human realm as he drops personal metaphors. His is an abstract 'God', uninvolved with the world. There are resources to be developed from within the Christian tradition which offer a different picture.

¹¹Thistlethwaite, "God and Her Survival", p.74.

¹²*ibid.*, p.86.

The Christian God is absolute and transcendent in comparison with the limitations of human beings, but the being of God is grounded in relationality and personality, and God's transcendence is expressed in immanence.¹³ A trinitarian view of God is a way of expressing the relationality and personality of God, in a fashion analogous to human understandings of those terms. But the Christian God cannot be imaged, even partially, without the central notion of Incarnation to interpret God's relationality, so that relationality is not simply internal relation, but is relationship that is established in self and reaches out beyond self. The Incarnation of God in Jesus is the pledge of God's relationship with the world, worked out in the ordinariness of human life. It is the evidence of God's choice of involvement and interdependence with the world. Incarnation should be for us an image on which we build the ultimate seriousness of concrete situations and daily lives, of our embodied - incarnate - material existence. For the Incarnation proclaims that it is in our material existence that we find God with us. It is in this context that feminist theologians need to work on a theology of grace.¹⁴ The model of God which we see in Christ is of one who criticises those who burden others, who stands with the victims, who is concerned for healing, wholeness and salvation. This kind of God must condemn the destruction of war and grieve over it.

To understand the Christian doctrine of God through the relational experience of Incarnation leads also to a re-thinking of the notion of transcendence in the light of the centrality of relationship. The notion of God's transcendence is our expression of the experience of God relating to all, both to our common humanity and to concrete individuals. We can use the notion of transcendence as the assertion that God can be passionately particular in his love for individuals without abusive exclusion. One of the reasons I have for discussing diverse experiences of violence together is the image of a God who cares about the violated individual, and who can comprehend what we cannot: the particularities of the destruction of vast numbers of people. It is in this context that I find Susan Parsons' notion of the transcendence of God as 'God resourcing relationships' useful. Carter Heyward images God as the power of relation, but without reference to any notion of transcendence.¹⁵ The advantage of Parsons'

¹³McFadyen rightly criticises feminist theologians for having a mistaken, dualistic, even spatial, notion of transcendence, which simplistically opposes it to immanence. "Sins of Praise", p.39-41.

¹⁴"The primary meaning of grace after all is God's dealings with human beings". H. Oppenheimer, *Finding and Following*, p.68.

¹⁵No more God and humanity defined by opposition: one up, the other down; one good, the other not-good; one with power, the other without; one giving, the other receiving; one in heaven, the other on earth, but rather a constellation of relation in which God is nothing other than the resource of

notion is that it pronounces judgement on our own experiences of particular loves which are exclusive in the name of a God whose relational resources empower us beyond what we thought possible, to take responsibility ourselves for making love and justice in the world. This allows us to talk not just in sentimental terms of our basic nature in relationship, but to question the quality of particular relationships. The sense of empowerment to take responsibility can be expressed in terms of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit who empowers the people of God not so that they become automatons but so they can make the choice to be involved with the work of salvation.

My theological exposition here can only be an outline, but these are hints of the necessary images which underpin the kind of ethical responses to violence, to war and peacemaking which I advocate. Even more briefly - because this is an area that is very much the subject of current work by theologians - theological reflections on power are a necessary part of any development of the work I have detailed in this thesis. McFague argues that God's power envisaged as domination leads directly to militarism, and God's power as providence leads to human escapism.¹⁶ The doctrine of God's sovereignty is often interpreted as the assertion that all power belongs to God, on a model of power that assumes that, therefore, no one else can hold power. Issues of power and powerlessness lie at the heart of how and why violence is used. But the word 'power' is an immensely broad one and various types of power need to be distinguished, especially where power has been thought of as wholly negative and synonymous with unjust coercion. Power can be used to inhibit, to dominate and to control. 'Power over' people is often retained in the hands of the few, to the benefit of the few. But a discussion of the sociology of power needs a full analysis of who has power to do what, and who needs power to do what, for the exercise of power does not just refer to the power to organise and rule a society. Power can describe people's capacity to do for themselves, not to be done to. Love, creativity and relationality can all be described in terms of power: they are experiences of the giving and receiving of power to love, to create and to be in relationship with others. Stephen Sykes argues that "the word 'power' is not irredeemably perjorative for Christians" since "[t]he Christian faith is a way of mobilizing resources, all of which are gifts of God, for getting things done".¹⁷ The issue

relational *dunamis*." Heyward, p.43. Heyward's liberal theological background means she is not content with any traditional account of incarnation, such as I rely on.

¹⁶McFague, p.17.

¹⁷S. Sykes, "Institutional Transformation: Power and Polity in the Churches", paper given at the Society for the Study of Theology Conference, 1995, p.18. Interestingly both Sykes and Carter Heyward, from very different theological backgrounds, find the positive uses of the word 'power' (*dunamis*) in the New Testament accounts of the life of Jesus important for the theology they develop.

is not about power itself, which may well be morally neutral, or at least morally ambiguous; the issue is in whose hands and for what purposes power is held and used. That is the matter for moral judgement. The image of a powerful God is not necessarily problematic; what is problematic is how that power is understood and experienced by humanity, and in that sense it is analogous to the exercise of human power. If Christians believe in a God who is powerful but not coercive, who uses power to empower and enhance the capabilities of others, then Christians must demonstrate the reality of that power as they live in its light. The image of a powerful God becomes problematic when Christians are seen to abuse power in the world. And that is directly relevant to Christian conduct and attitudes to incidents of personal and collective violence when judgements are required about the proper or abusive exercise of power.

Also relevant to issues of violence is the question of God's relationship to suffering and to victimisation. God in Christ encounters human violence and is made a victim of human violence in the crucifixion. The choice of involvement and interdependence involves vulnerability to evil and to abusive forms of violence, because the choice to develop right relationships brings the risk of involvement with those who choose to break relationship, or abuse relationship. But the suffering of Jesus has been interpreted for too long in the Christian tradition as passive masochism, providing us with an example to follow of capitulation to unjust violence which seems to glorify suffering and is in danger of collusion with injustice. It is attention to women's experiences, and to the kind of pastoral responses they have sometimes attracted from Christian leaders, that has made me suspicious of language which holds up the bearing of victimisation as an ideal. Rather, my choice of theological image suggests that the victimisation of Jesus, as of anyone, is a defeat; in Jesus we may see God suffering violence, but we do not see God thereby sanctifying violence or suffering. Part of an answer is to maintain a strong distinction between voluntary and involuntary suffering. Involuntary suffering must not be glorified under any circumstances. Yet there may be such a thing as voluntary suffering, provided we do not use the idea of 'choice' uncritically, and examine also the purpose and intention of the choice to suffer. The sight of Jesus on the cross enables us to take evil into account, and to face what needs to be resisted. It allows us to appropriate the anger and the pain and the judgement of God against evil, as well as the presence of God, and apply them to other instances of victimisation. These other instances include situations where women are made into victims by male physical, sexual and psychological violence, but also instances where women make others into the victims of their failures of relationship and their violence.

Similarly, I dispute the value of language about denying the self where that is interpreted in terms which allow injustice, towards the self or another, to continue unchecked. Feminist theologians have looked at the insistent Christian rhetoric of self-sacrifice, suggesting that the rhetoric is taught to, and heard by women differently from men. Self-giving (rather than self-denial) *is* an important part of Christian teaching, but it needs contextualising so that we can also talk about the needs of the self as well. Jesus' self-giving, which in death is an extension of his self-giving in life, arises out of a strong sense of self and self-worth before God: it is not self-denial. Teaching about self-giving needs balancing with another biblical image of discipleship: that of developing the gifts given by the Spirit. The language of Christian discipleship need not be expounded such as to induce an inability to resist abuse, but must allow protection and support in the face of victimisation and unjust coercion.

I take up Susan Thistlethwaite's assertion referred to above, that God's purposes are for our salvation and our healing, and that these are not achieved by our destruction. A feminist theological ethical account of the God-given good for human beings asserts that God's purposes are for our fulfilment and growth, for our God-given potential and capacities to be used for the happiness of others and ourselves. This vision will best be realised when people seek abundant life in non-abusive relationships with God and with one another. Thus we might envisage "a divine activity of righteous regard for the well-being of human creatures for their own sake".¹⁸ The real possibilities of healing are crucial, theologically, in considering the effects of violence in people's lives. Healing is not a process of making all as it was before; healing is the re-making of whatever wholeness is possible when the damage is fully recognised and dealt with. If we say that good can come out of evil, what I believe we actually mean is that good can follow on after evil, because it is possible for evil to be halted at least in some measure. That is why images of healing and wholeness, of salvation and resurrection mean something to us, because, collectively if not individually, we have seen that such things are possible in the human realm. They are possible - not inevitable. For the sake of the examples I have discussed of the ways in which women interact with violence, and out of an ethical model which values certain types of relationships, which impels us to discover and create love and justice, it is imperative that our theological images allow the

¹⁸The phrase is from William Werpehowski, in an essay on the work of Paul Ramsey. W. Werpehowski, "Christian Love and Covenant Faithfulness", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 19:2, 1991, p.106.

pronouncement of judgement against destruction, the facing of evil and tragedy, and the holding out of possibilities for healing and for change.

VIOLENCE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE.

In chapter 3 I discussed the necessity for feminist ethics and feminist political theory of re-working the public/private divide. The dichotomy between public and private is created in a variety of ways, its origins probably in certain sociological conclusions drawn from women's biological role - i.e. that since women bear children, they must be the ones to rear them, in particular preferred circumstances. Over the centuries philosophy and political theory have assumed and reinforced the division of public and private spheres. For feminists, the particular difficulty over this division is that it has *restricted* women to the private sphere, while men have roles in both the public and private spheres, including headship in the private household. The restriction arises out of associations between public affairs, rationality and men, and between the private realm, nature, irrational emotions, and women. However, as the work of Elshtain suggests, it is not enough simply to treat things that were previously rigidly divided into public and private as if they were exactly the same and could be treated in the same way. The feminist task has been to question and challenge and complicate assumptions based on the public/private divide. To that end, issues that were regarded as private, and not examined on the public stage because they were assumed to be areas of private, individual, free choice, have been publicised, particularly where they relate to the oppression or exploitation of women or of other marginalised groups. Publicising the private reveals what was hidden to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. The feminist slogan 'The personal is political' was an attempt to stop certain injustices and coercions and violence being excluded from public redress by being hidden from public view.

Matters of religion have, since the Enlightenment in particular, been relegated to the private sphere in Western philosophy and politics. That does not mean that theologians have necessarily agreed with the refusal of philosophers and political theorists to allow that theology is a necessary public language. Most theologians have continued to assume some form of universal reference and confessional truth content for their work, denying that religion is 'just' a matter of personal opinion. Most theological ethicists have continued to write about public matters in largely secular societies. However, theologians working in these fields have often accepted the great difference between the public and private realms imposed by the development of Western culture. Many

theologians have also accepted and do accept that social roles should be divided along gender lines, particularly that men are suited to the roles and demands of the public realm and women are not. This is an important area for some fundamentalist Christians who argue the validity of the language of male headship, and who wish to restrict women's role in paid employment on the grounds that, by God-given nature, women's primary role is that of childbearer and homemaker.¹⁹ Alternatively, many theologians work with the kind of model Niebuhr proposed between the private morality of individuals and intimate small groups, and the public morality (if the term morality could even be used here) of larger social groups, states and nations.²⁰ While I do not wish to deny entirely differences of responsibility, obligation and behaviour between the individual and the social group, or between the public and the private realm, these distinctions that have been so rigid and restricting need to be complicated, so that it is possible to see the kinds of interactions that go on in everyday life more clearly. It is of the utmost importance in particular that the public/private divide should no longer be associated with particular gender roles. In theology as well as in other disciplines, it may be best to think of some areas of life that are primarily private - and largely free of interference - and some that are primarily public - which deal with groups of people and structures for the way people live together in society. But we must also see the extent to which they intersect. People's private lives affect, inform, underpin and undermine their own public roles; private lives affect the decisions made by and about large numbers of people. The family, or individuals in their leisure time, are not sanctuaries from the public realm; rather they are shot through with influences, limitations, resources and possibilities that originate in the public sphere.

Susan Griffin's *A Chorus of Stones*²¹ provides me with an example of a study of violence which crosses public and private boundaries. From a non-theological and radical feminist viewpoint, she focuses on human and technological developments that led up to the bombing of civilians in this century, and the fears, threats and possibilities

¹⁹The same group of Christians might also be those who emphasise the personal relationship between the believer and God in such a way that they dispute any interpretation of the gospel which challenges the socio-political status quo.

²⁰R. Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932.

²¹S. Griffin, *A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War*, London: The Women's Press, 1994. Mary Daly also refuses to see any distinctions between different kinds of violence as she writes about the unholy trinity of rape/war/genocide in *Beyond God the Father*, p.114. Daly's polemical point in joining these three is to blame men for all of them equally, and to place women as the victims of war and genocide in the same way as they are the victims in rape. In fact she argues "violence against women is the source and paradigm of all other manifestations of violence", p.xv. This is too simplistic.

that have been its aftermath. *A Chorus of Stones* is not written in the style of academic discourse. It is partly autobiography, partly the narration of others' stories, partly public history, often told through imagined or actual stories of the individuals involved, and partly fragments (italicised) in the style of an encyclopaedia. Griffin's object is to create a different kind of history of war, in large part disposing of the public/private barrier usual in discourse about war as a public event. "We are not used to associating our private lives with public events. Yet the histories of families cannot be separated from the histories of nations."²² She does not simply see public and private as continuous; what she actually does is to prioritise the private and individual, and interpret public events in terms of the stories of individuals. This is for her a way of revealing what has been hidden about war, and in particular the extent of the harm it causes. Thus she tells the story of Leo, a Ukrainian fascinated by images of strength in violence, deported to a German labour camp as a child during the second world war, emigrating with his family to America, but failing to adapt to the 'normal' pattern of adolescence and young adulthood because of the things he had had to do in order to keep his family alive. Joining the American army for the Korean war, he was part of an intelligence unit where he tortured Russian prisoners. Finally he describes how, back in America after the war, he was an accomplice to a horrific murder.²³ It is clear that, for Griffin, all of this is, or should be, the public history of war. So too is the story of attempts to cover up the dangers of radiation, and the extent of preparations for nuclear war.

Griffin's method is unusual, and bears fruit in interesting analogies which link the experience of war with other kinds of violence. For instance, she juxtaposes the experience of one of the Marines ordered into trenches just three miles from the site of a nuclear test in 1957 and the experience of an abused woman: "His body shook uncontrollably but still he did not speak, and only feared, along with his body's terror, that this shaking might be seen by the men he was commanding...And I can imagine Nelle trembling too, after her father had forced himself upon her, trembling, and not knowing where to take this trembling."²⁴ Her comparison interprets the soldier as a victim, as much as the abused girl, and even her father also. The comparison also denies the accepted gap - of public significance - between the violence of militarism and the hidden, private violence of sexual abuse. That itself is interesting, but she achieves this insight at cost. In positing all of these people as victims, she refuses to analyse their

²²Griffin, p.11.

²³*ibid.*, p.168-177.

²⁴*ibid.*, p.36.

victimisation: of what or whom are they victims? Any decision-making, any command structure in the case of the soldier, is absent and it is as if the oppression is wholly impersonal. There is therefore no moral responsibility, and no route to change.

Unfortunately, despite the insights of her book with its unexpected method, Griffin is essentially conservative as to the realms of masculinity and femininity. In line with much radical feminist work, she re-values these realms, attaching positive value to the realm of the feminine and in particular devaluing masculine militarism for the harm it has caused. But essentially the spheres stay separate. Women are most frequently in the role of victims: men may be victims, but women even more so. Fighting is associated with men, and not women. This picture, as I have already shown, needs complicating. At one point she imaginatively describes a scene from the trenches in the first world war, focusing on the material reality of conditions in the trenches, and on the material reality of bodies torn apart. Yet *as a woman*, she is fundamentally disassociated from the scene of war:

"But now...I find myself knee deep, waist deep, in the mud of a trench. And what am I doing here? *Because after all I am a woman. I am not cast in a soldierly mold.* My childhood interest in uniforms and battles, being inappropriate, has waned. Yet even so, I must confess that there is something familiar here. Something I recognize. The feet for instance. Cold. Wet. What they feel like. I have some sense of this." (My italics).²⁵

Griffin's series of encyclopaedia-style fragments follow various themes in between paragraphs from other stories. One theme is that of the biological development of life on earth; a contrasting theme is the development of death-dealing weaponry. These themes are both developed in one chapter. In the following chapter the italicised fragments chart the effect of radiation on living organisms. The kind of contrast which Griffin creates between the complexities and beauties of life on earth and the kind of destructive power human beings have sought for so many centuries is deeply ironic, but little more than that; it is a picture of horror with no possibility of redemption. For the theologian there is another layer of both irony and horror if the use of the world's resources, and human ingenuity put to destructive purposes, are seen against the purposes of fulfilment which the Creator has for the creation. But the use of Christian imagery can also hold out possibilities of redemption, and resources for healing and change.

²⁵Griffin, p.233.

I discussed in chapter 2 a range of examples of the ways in which women encounter violence. These examples crossed the persistent barrier between public and private. I discussed them together because they were associated as ways in which *women* encounter, create or oppose violence (though this is not to say men may not encounter, create or oppose violence in similar ways). I believe there is interpretative advantage in looking at these different instances together for the light they shed on each other. Further examination shows also that public/private distinctions are not so clear-cut in these examples. Discussion of war, for instance, is a key area where the distinction between public and private has been used to insist that only a certain kind of discussion is allowable. Essentially this means that war is to be discussed in so-called rational terms, which exclude certain forms of discourse. This is because war is seen as exclusively a public affair, involving large numbers of people and subject to political decision-making. I shall discuss below in more detail the kind of discourse about war that is warranted by the kind of research I have done. Here it is enough to point out that Griffin's work illustrates one way in which it is insufficient to talk about war as if it were only a public phenomenon. The full story about war is not told without narration of its private effects. Furthermore, the public/private distinction is precisely not upheld in wartime, since the state is able to appropriate private goods and even the persons of at least a percentage of private individuals. In times of war, the public, in the form of the state, intervenes most decisively in the private sphere, refusing many of the customary distinctions between public and private. This included, of course, in Britain in the second world war, the registration and conscription of some women for war work, alongside the conscription of some men as soldiers. Thus many women, supposedly representative of the realm of home and family to be protected by soldiers at the front, were actually engaged in far more public roles, especially in the workplace, than ever before.

Some issues about the public/private divide and war are accentuated in the discussion of nuclear war. The bombing of civilians that has happened in this century has emphasised what has always been true of war - that it is not something played out only on the public stage, but affects people's private lives, their homes, their families, their choices. Bombs are no respecters of the public/private divide. In wartime also even the most private thoughts and feelings are targets for the manipulation represented by political propaganda. This sense of the private arena being made the subject of public, collective violence seems to be accentuated by the fear of nuclear war. There is no doubt about the vulnerability of the private sphere to war in an age of nuclear capacity. This was particularly explicit in the debates, at least in the West, about counter-force and counter-city targeting in the last decades of the Cold War. Arguments in favour of

counter-city targeting fully admitted the extent to which the private sphere is involved in the public war effort, suggesting either that military and civilian sites were not separable geographically, or that private citizens are fully involved in the war, and as such are themselves legitimate military targets.

Ironically, it is possible to argue that the development of democratic politics in some countries has led not to full participation but to alienation and a sense of powerlessness among many citizens. Political protest often works to gather people together in order to draw private convictions into the public sphere in such a way that they will be heard publicly. Meaning and identity built up around shared values in the small group context are relevant to the scrutinising of public decisions. This is the explanation for the language and concerns of motherhood being employed in peace protests. Political protest demonstrates the continuum between public and private. Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk argue that the Greenham Common peace camp provided space for people to take personal responsibility for doing something about the public issue of nuclear weapons.²⁶ In particular, in these protests many women demonstrated their agency and their moral choices in public. Cook and Kirk show that one persistent strategy in the women's protests was to make conversation with the individuals who opposed them as part of the attempt to stop people thinking of themselves as part of the mass, just doing their job. Instead the women were asking them to take individual responsibility for what might happen as a consequence of what they were doing, or intending to do, or might be ordered to do. For some it must have seemed an absurd ignoring of different public and private roles, but that was precisely the distinction these political protests were designed to deny. Greenham Common peace camp was the occasion for various conflicting attempts to define what is public and political and what is not. In particular Cook and Kirk illuminate the attempts made to define the peace protests there as non-political in order to deflect public attention from them. They accuse 'the authorities' (whom they define as government, media and the law) of attempting to define public, political protests as private by concentrating on bye-laws about land ownership - a private issue, though dealt with in the public courts - instead of prosecutions, for instance, under the obviously political Official Secrets Act. Similarly, the charges were to be dealt with by magistrates rather than by juries, to minimise publicity.

Advocates of non-violent action in other contexts than Greenham similarly dare to suggest more of a continuum than an abyss between personal relationships and larger

²⁶A. Cook and G. Kirk, *Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas and Actions From the Women's Peace Movement*, London: Pluto Press, 1983.

social groups and institutions. "Rejecting the modern individualizing process which produces atomization and new modes of alienation, feminists and advocates of nonviolence have spoken the necessity of associating individual integrity and liberty with first, I-Thou types of relationships and then with larger scale co-operative institutions."²⁷ A philosophy of non-violence specifically ignores the public/private divide (though the peace movement has not always avoided its restrictive gender implications). This is not sustainable if it insists that there are no differences at all between personal, small group relationships and larger scale institutions, but non-violent action can be a strategy for questioning assumptions about the divide between public and private affairs, without destroying their differences altogether. In British politics, the divide between public and private is breached by the channel provided when individual cases are taken up by MPs and brought to the attention of the relevant public authorities. With publicity given to the stories of individuals, the kind of political discourse which seeks only to recognise people in groups is undermined. One such instance is the number of MPs who have listened to and conveyed stories from Gulf War veterans about 'Gulf War Syndrome'. Increasingly it is clear that the story of the Gulf War has not been told until the stories of soldiers' sufferings after the war are taken into account.

As I have already illustrated in chapter 2, there has been in the past, and to some extent still is, considerable debate about the private or public nature of violence against women in intimate relationships. Many of the arguments that domestic violence should remain a matter for the civil courts reveal a conviction that it is essentially a private matter, to be resolved behind closed doors, and need not receive the public recognition of sanctions within the criminal justice system. More naively, some argue that this is not an important enough issue to need public attention in the form of legislation, revealing how hidden the realities of domestic violence still are while people can thus mistake the frequency and severity with which women are assaulted, as well as how widespread these assaults are among all social groupings. For this reason research, interpretation and conflicts over interpretation have been an important form of public attention. Domestic violence has now been recognised as a public issue, however, in those countries where it has been accepted as a matter for criminal prosecution; assaults in the domestic context then become subject to public investigation, public justice and public restitution.

²⁷P. Rayman, "Utopian Visions: Reflections On Feminist and Nonviolent Thought" in P. McAllister, ed., p.260.

The language of 'just love' may be particularly appropriate in this context. In reference to personal relationships, a just love demands a certain quality of relationship, so that the relationship is for the benefit of all partners to it. A just love further demands continual effort to improve relationships, for just love is itself an activity seeking to establish right relations. Just love is a tough love that actively combats victimisation, recognising that it is not loving to allow someone to continue to harm others without restraint. Restraining harm is the loving thing to do. The terminology of 'just love' may appear to fit easily into the realm of personal relationships, but not any others. However, I have shown that the personal relationships here discussed, broken by domestic violence, have their public aspect in being subject to public sanctions. This suggests that terms applicable to so-called private situations may have resonance in public affairs also. 'Just love' may not be the language appropriate for inter-group or international relations, but the emphasis on working at right relations, understanding that co-operation is something to be built, are possibilities that cross the public/private divide. So too is the sense that relationships should be reviewed so that there is constant opportunity for injustices to be corrected, that God's purposes for our abundant life might be fulfilled.

However, violent assaults in the domestic context must not be subsumed wholly into the public realm either, for considerations of recovery and treatment demand attention to the individual in a way which cannot be generalised. The theologian in particular should recognise that, though public justice must be demanded, matters cannot be left there. Such assaults are a matter for public restitution on the part of the offender, and for personal repentance, confession and forgiveness. Forgiveness in particular is a difficult matter. There may be forms of forgiveness that an offender can receive other than from his or her victim, such as the forgiveness of God. But that should not be detached theologically from the offender's acknowledgement of the offence and desire for forgiveness from the victim/survivor. There is then a separate question as to what part forgiving the offender - in other words, letting go of the power of the offence over one's life - might play in the recovery process of the one offended against. It is surely likely that this kind of forgiveness may occur at the end of a long process of recovery, and in addition to public restitution; but it is still part of the healing process, and it is the job of theologians considering this situation to recognise the public and private nature of domestic violence when dealing with the process of recovery. The situation of women who have been victimised by violent partners, their needs for justice and their need to let go of the past, can help theologians to reflect on the process of forgiveness in Christian tradition, and in particular on whether there is a public side of penance that

needs to be emphasised again, or whether in cases such as these recognition by the public criminal justice system suffices.

Feminist interpretations of domestic violence have rightly resisted any analysis which reduces such assaults to the level of a quarrel between individuals. They have drawn attention to the more public picture of a pattern of violence in which it is usually, though not invariably, men who assault female domestic partners. Feminist interpretations highlight the patriarchal attitudes about a man's right to control 'his' woman which underlie domestic violence. Such attitudes are public creations, shared in the public realm. They are attitudes that public bodies, including the Church, need to take responsibility for - both for having created in the past and for disputing now. The pastoral care exercised within the church is usually seen in terms of dealings with individuals. But the church's pastoral care of people who have been assaulted in their most intimate relationships also demands a public theology which states a public disavowal of such behaviour, refusing any pretence that it doesn't really happen. God's purposes for human fulfilment are denied if women are restricted to a sphere where the harm done to them can be ignored. It is up to the Christian church to denounce the harm that is done to women in private.

Feminist interpretations of domestic violence, and the challenging of any public/private divide that they represent, are also useful in the interpretation of rape in war. Christian moral theology has little to say about rape. Used occasionally as an illustration, it is assumed simply to be a coercive interaction between individuals, and wrong.²⁸ Though this is of course true, I believe more analysis is needed. Beyond the realm of individual responsibility, though without denying that, the social patterns of behaviour and attitudes to women that underlie domestic violence have their similarities with those that underlie rape. Discussions of rape in Christian ethics need to take the social, public perspective seriously, for that is the only way of pinpointing the sorts of changes that are necessary not simply to condemn rape but to make its occurrence less likely, and to enable women better to protect and be responsible for themselves. The connection between personal behaviour and social pattern in instances of rape is clearest in the case of rape in war. I do not wish to deny (as I think Brownmiller effectively does in her book²⁹) the explicit condemnations of rape by soldiers in international law and

²⁸Paul Ramsey, for instance, uses rape as an example of something that is always wrong, in the context of countering John Robinson's version of situation ethics. Ramsey, *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965, p.28-29.

²⁹S. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*.

convention. But alongside that, there is also a form of social legitimation of the violence of men against 'enemy' women, some sort of excusing of the 'high spirits' of soldiers, and a feeling that they 'must' take their aggression out on somebody in situations where their adrenalin has been so raised by the fighting they have done or been made ready for. I believe the reason that rape in war has been relatively unpublicised is that it was known always to happen; it was expected. Now the public outcry at such news may indicate a change. Yet the media influence which often creates that outcry is an ambiguous ally for women, for, as my illustration in chapter 2 showed, such publicity may once again disempower women.³⁰ Public discussion has its positive side, yet here is a case where women must have the power to choose how they want their privacy respected. Public accountability and interpretation matter once again as a way of insisting that rape is an unacceptable method of waging war. Feminists have insisted that rape should be defined as violence before it is defined as a function of sexuality. It is the expression of desire for power over another. Rape in war highlights that, but at the same time it may show up how male sexuality is implicated in militarism, as expressed by the language of conquest used for both victory in war and for rape.

Paying attention to women's experiences highlights the difficulties for philosophical, political, or theological systems of assuming a rigid division between public and private roles, or discourses. As the structures and interactions of public and private are better understood - and here they have only been examined in relation to specific instances of violence - we have the material to make more sense of issues about blame and responsibility, about restitution, forgiveness and the establishing of justice with mercy. In theological ethical language, there ought to be a balance between public and private restitution, between the process of forgiveness that can be offered between individuals, and the re-establishment of right relations that must also take place on the public stage in cases of violence. It is a matter of public significance, for any community needs to pay attention to the violence which is destructive of relationship and of community. The Christian community must have a stake in this.

³⁰See above, p.66. Publicity appears to be endemic also for women who murder. Their crimes become matter for public outrage, propaganda and stereotype. The power of people to choose to tell their stories is something very different from media sensationalism and voyeurism, yet the two often become closely entwined.

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

In this discussion of how the work I have done bears upon the experience of women in the military, I start from the situation of the modern world in which there is assumed to be a need for standing armies and I do not argue that assumption. I also accept here, and justify in the section "A New Discourse About War", the legitimacy of military force in certain circumstances. Therefore I am choosing to comment on a narrow strand of this subject. Much of the detailed comment in this section was suggested by a conversation with an ex-army officer, Susan Wing, who became a Christian during her army career and herself had to think through issues about the legitimacy of military force, and, in later years, whether she was prepared to kill.³¹ Interacting with her point of view, I have waived any more explicit theological arguments over these starting points.

As my research progressed and contrary to my own expectations, I became more convinced of the necessity and the unrealised potential of women's presence in military services, once the need for military services is presumed. The chief arguments against such a position are 1) that women are not capable of doing what is required by any member of the armed forces and 2) that women's presence simply shores up military institutions which are the supreme example of patriarchal values. Arguments about women's competence and capability in the military can be looked at from two angles. One suggests that this is another emergence of the myth of women's peacefulness, which claims women are peaceful, nurturing and incapable of aggression, let alone killing. I have already demonstrated my grounds for rejecting this myth and arguments based on it. The other angle of approach for arguing that women are not capable of being soldiers³² mirrors arguments of years gone by that women were incapable of being clerical workers, or doctors, or managers in business, or participants in any occupation which had until then been seen as a male preserve. The only answer to either of these arguments is to provide the evidence of what women actually do and what they achieve. Thus the presence of women in the military services of many nations, though proportionately small in most, is key for challenging the myth of women's peacefulness, and for revealing the breadth of women's experiences, so that ethical discussion may be based much more securely in the circumstances of women's lives.

³¹Information and opinion from S. Wing, conversation 28/11/94.

³²I am using the word 'soldier' as shorthand to refer to men and women employed in any branch of the armed forces, not just those in the army.

The other argument against women in the military - that their presence shores up patriarchal institutions - deserves more attention. In the U.S. in particular, the issue of women in the military has been a source of conflict among feminists. Liberal feminists argued for women to be registered for the draft on the grounds of equal rights, while other feminists saw such a move as a capitulation to a patriarchal militaristic ideology with which military service is wholly identified, so that military service is seen as irredeemably patriarchal. This must remain in some ways a peculiarly American argument because of the way in which the duty and the right to bear arms is written into the American constitution and treated as a specific measure of citizenship. Questioning the National Organization for Women's challenge to all-male military registration, Elshtain comments (quoting Cynthia Enloe), "NOW's brand of equal opportunity or integrationist feminism here loses a critical edge, functioning instead to reinforce 'the military as an institution and militarism as an ideology' by perpetuating 'the notion that the military is so central to the entire social order that it is only when women gain access to its core that they can hope to fulfill their hopes and aspirations'."³³ It is easier in the British situation to assert that a career in the military is not a measure of citizenship because there is no British equivalent to registration for the draft, conscription was last in force 50 years ago, and even National Service ended 35 years ago. Even in a time of war, whether men alone or women and men become liable to conscription to fight in the future, still the only conscription we can envisage applies only to a proportion of citizens, of certain ages, not engaged in certain reserved occupations. The citizen is marked by being part of a community, or a variety of communities, involved in dialogue and decision-making, and in the work of caring and providing, not by the requirement to fight. Therefore it is much easier for us to appreciate that some such notion as Elshtain's 'disarmed civic virtue' can stand alongside the notion of the military as a career choice open to women and men, and also alongside my vision (below) of war as occasional tragic necessity.

Arguments about the significance of military service can be the beginning of the process which questions military ideology and the spread of militarism. By 'militarism' I refer to the propaganda values attached to more than military activity, to the belief that a society's interests are to be defined in close conjunction with its military activities. According to such an ideology, the activity of the military is supreme even in peacetime, and important enough to have its own rules of security, beyond public scrutiny and accountability. Militarism has economic and political facets, for those who need war in

³³Elshtain, "Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age", p.43, quoting Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*

order to make profit, and for those who seek to simplify the picture of war for the purposes of political propaganda. Putting an inappropriately high value on military activity - i.e. creating militaristic ideology - is part of the background to the glorification of a certain type of macho masculinity, so that the soldier becomes an important male cultural icon. Contrary to that kind of ideology, I suggest that, particularly in peacetime, the military is to be regarded simply as an occupation, to be judged in many ways on the same criteria as other occupations.

The presence of women in the military must be a presence on equal terms if there is to be any chance of challenging false militaristic values, which give the military too high a value within society. This includes the opening of full combat duties to women, a move which most nations' armies have not yet taken. In the British military, women were unarmed until the early 1980s, taught only how to disarm weapons, and from then were given weapons training for the purposes of self-defence. Where women have shown themselves capable in other areas in the military, still they have been belittled by allusion to their non-combat status. It is an issue of equal opportunity that women, accepted into the military, should be accepted in the fullest sense, at the same time as it is recognised that because of the large ratio of support duties to combat duties, and the fact that soldiering is largely a peacetime occupation, most career soldiers never go into combat. This helps to keep the issue in proportion.

Fears about women in combat are expressed in their most direct form by questions about whether women are capable of killing, as I have already discussed. But also I suspect such fears are evidence of some feeling that killing is *unsuitable* for women, even if they prove capable of it. To the extent that this is an expression of the myth of women's peacefulness, I would challenge such a feeling. This kind of fear might, however, provide a renewed opening for the questioning of the seriousness of killing for men as well as for women. That is where the presence of women in the military begins to be a challenge. In this sense women can help to illuminate what military activity is really about: both its peacetime role and the seriousness of its war zone occupation. Susan Wing claims from her experience that though soldiers are undoubtedly disciplined and trained to kill, no good soldier glorifies or likes killing. Alongside aggressive tendencies, which may well be in part a creation (being 'psyched up' for combat), many soldiers can be immensely compassionate. Many British soldiers returned from the Gulf War with predominant emotions of sadness and sympathy for the 'pathetic' Iraqi soldiers. If this is a better, balanced picture of the military, it does not match militaristic myths. The fact that there is room for questions about the significance of killing other human beings, which arise out of the experience of soldiers of both sexes who do not

glorify killing, should alert us to the fact that the brash macho militarism which is so often presented to the public in our society is ironically not necessarily located in the military, or certainly not in the military alone. I suggest that the presence of women in the military increasingly makes this balanced picture more possible to imagine and easier to articulate, and this is in itself a challenge to militaristic myth. It also provides space for theologians to continue to place killing in war in Christian perspective, always to be avoided if possible, so that the taking of human life is still surrounded with many prohibitions and the value of human life is upheld.

The popular media highlighted one particularly controversial aspect of the issue of women going into combat, especially immediately before the Gulf War. They sensationalised the likelihood of women soldiers being killed because they reflected a popular impression that their deaths were seen as more shocking than those of their male counterparts. Is that part of the myth of women's peacefulness - a pretence that in some circumstances women's lives are more precious than men's, or that somehow it is incongruous for women to die in that particular situation, however little furore women's deaths may cause in many any other situations? The use of soldiers as 'cannon fodder' seems less acceptable when the soldiers are women as well as men. But these underlying tensions (and I am simply trying to suggest possible underlying reasons for the display of such squeamishness) should allow questions to be asked about the deaths of male soldiers as well. It is unacceptable to treat any soldiers as 'cannon fodder', giving their lives and deaths little dignity. If the presence of women in the military demands such questions, then it has achieved much. Of course, such questions are not inevitable. The presence of women in the military on equal terms with men, to the appropriate levels of individual women's and men's physical capabilities, might simply ensure that the deaths of women become as unimportant as the deaths of men in battle. The situation of women soldiers can only give rise to questions which will enhance the value of human life if there are people prepared to examine their situation, and not either ignore them, or treat them as second-class men.

Many of the issues raised over women in the military are similar to those raised in other areas of employment, where women have taken a fuller role in paid work outside the home. The theme of women presenting a threat to men through taking up jobs which men see as their right (both in the sense of specific occupations, and in the more general sense of paid employment being men's prerogative) has shown up obliquely in many parts of this research. It was part of the difficulty for women war workers who lost their jobs as soon as men returned from the war, and who were the subject of trade union fear and displeasure while they were working because of the possibility of

employers continuing to employ women after the war as cheap labour. Susan Wing noted that women appeared not to be a threat early in her career in the British army (in the 1960s) when there were relatively few of them, plenty of jobs, and women were separated from men in their own organisation. The problems began when the army began to attract a better quality of female candidates, better in many cases than some of their male colleagues. Similarly, though women's work in the army would be appreciated, there was always pressure to do better than men in order to get recognition. Women became more unpopular as jobs became scarcer and army personnel were beginning to be made redundant. In these ways the story of women in the armed forces in Britain is similar to that of workers in other fields. Reflected here are issues about who has the 'right' to paid work, and who 'needs' employment, which highlight the still startling different expectations attached to gender roles. But these issues in the military should be treated as employment issues, without anyone pretending they are the unique preserve of women in that particular occupation.

One of the most emotive issues that women in the military have had to face, certainly through media interpretation, is the situation of women who are both soldiers and mothers. Again, I would argue that this is primarily an issue about women's employment in general. The employment of women in the military is different in some respects - chiefly in the risks of deployment in war situations - but the childcare issues raised in this particular occupation will not be solved in isolation from other forms of employment. Clearly there must be particular difficulties attached to a family situation where both parents are serving soldiers and liable (as is the case with the British army) to be posted away from home at short notice. But I would argue that issues of childcare seem so difficult in the military situation precisely because there has not been enough effort put into working out practical, safe, stimulating childcare possibilities in other realms of employment either, for women and for men. Furthermore, raising childcare, and in particular the duties of mothers towards their children, as a particular issue in the military is a sign that the military has not taken the duties of fathers towards their children seriously enough in the past. I do not pretend that this is a simple issue to resolve, for instance with the immediate provision of crèche facilities in abundance. That will not necessarily be the right kind of care for all families. What is needed is more space for families to make choices, which means more recognition from military structures of the needs of their employees as relating human persons. The kind of dialogue necessary in this instance should allow a better working out of the values and responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood.

There are all too many dangers that possibilities for change will be negated if women continue to be treated as second-class males in a male institution, continually failing to live up to male standards. That danger could be stronger now that the women's branches of the British forces have been disbanded, even though there were severe problems with women being separated from men in a supposedly parallel organisation. The opinion was discussed with me that the Women's Royal Army Corps had at least provided female role models, and the danger of women being pushed to be better than men in situations where they are always outnumbered by men is that women will increasingly follow macho male role models, instead of being familiar with alternative possibilities. A parallel danger, again a more general employment issue, is that one of the symptoms of men feeling threatened by women is an upsurge in numbers of cases of sexual harassment, because such harassment is used to undermine women. This is another example of an instance where the underlying interpretative issues as to why men assault women need to be examined. With one of my particular stated concerns being to do with rape in war, the question can be raised - though it is probably unanswerable at this stage - as to whether mixed units in times of war would make sexual assault against enemy women less likely. That possibility would be strengthened by better understanding and publicity as to the fact that such assaults happen and why they happen.

At the same time there should be space, which the military might not yet be best equipped to provide, to explore whether a variety of training and working practices are possible to which women and men, or various individuals might react better than to those currently in use. One observation that needs testing and examining is that women work better in teams. It should be obvious that some people will respond to particular methods of encouragement or exhortation better than others. Military institutions concerned to get the best out of their candidates for their purposes need not use one set of techniques alone in training, implicitly failing all who do not respond to it. The presence of women in the military is in this instance again an opportunity. I have stressed the hopeful possibilities, though they may seem slight and fragile, which the presence of women in the military might provide for changing the ethos of what we believe the military to be and challenging the distorted ideology of militarism for which the armed forces provide an excuse. None of the hopeful possibilities, of course, is inevitable. But they would be strengthened if women in the military were allowed to be soldiers as women, able to give the best of their abilities to their job, instead of being set up to imitate men. These suggestions are in line with Christian language about people being given opportunities to fulfil their God-given capabilities in a context which respects and protects human lives.

A NEW DISCOURSE ABOUT WAR

I emphasise first that this is not a comprehensive discussion about all aspects of war. I do not propose to solve the problems of war in a few pages! My most important point, however, is that it is certainly not sufficient to discuss war as if it can be defined only in terms of decision-making and fighting, which are basically the matters dealt with by the just war tradition. That tradition is an important strand in most Christian discussions of war, even if its relationship to the Christian tradition is ambiguous in modern times because it has been adopted and developed in non-Christian discourse. Even discussions of war from a pacifist perspective can fall into the trap of imagining that war is just a matter of the giving and carrying out of orders to kill, so that many aspects of war are left unexamined. This is despite the fact that pacifism is usually focused on the much wider effects of violence, rather than on decisions about whether to kill or not. The implication of much of the work I have been doing is that changes need to be made to the way war is discussed.

I have deliberately developed the links between different sorts of violence and, therefore, appropriately, it is insights from other types of violence in women's lives that inform some of my conclusions about a new discussion of war. In examining violence against women in intimate relationships, it seems to me that a right feminist and theological conclusion is that such violence needs to be resisted. Much Christian theology has not helped women to resist, but feminist insights have helped feminist theologians to articulate their outrage at such violence, the necessity for examining why it happens, and ways to stop it. Analogous with that, instances of violent coercion and injustice between nations also need to be halted - they are not to be regarded as the life-blood of international relations, but as destructive poison. Attempts to stop flagrant injustices will almost certainly need to be coercive. Forms of Christian theology from Augustine on have allowed coercion for the protection of those threatened by injustice as an expression of love for the neighbour. I am forced to the conclusion that war is evil, but that it may at times be necessary. It may not, however, be labelled necessary nearly as quickly as it has been so often on the international scene if the kinds of considerations I discuss below are taken into account. The way in which the analogy breaks down is that, in the case of domestic violence, there is enough of a consensus against this particular form of violence to ensure a police power over the offender to which the victim may appeal. In the case of community or international disputes the lack of consensus about issues of injustice, and the lack of an overall police power are

the chief difficulties. But the analogy does give a frame for viewing some situations of injustice and coercion between groups of people, and in fact suggests an imperative to watch for patterns of coercion and incidents of injustice.

A further reason why I am not prepared to take up a pacifist position is again founded upon judgements about how women encounter violence. I believe in the possibility of self-defence, based particularly in the right and duty of women to defend themselves against assault. This is an assertion that women must be empowered to take responsibility for their own lives and safety. Language used about women has not always allowed women to think of themselves as capable of self-defence or as of enough worth to be defended. Christian language which enforces the notion of self-sacrifice before it speaks of the worth of the self is partly to blame here. But this example, too, is only an analogy when transferred to the situation between groups of people or nations. Some people, faced with violence, argue that the witness of pacifism, the suffering of violence, is powerful enough. However, that must always be a choice, not imposed, for no one has the right to tell somebody else to 'simply take it'.

Sara Ruddick proclaimed that maternal thinking was the enemy of military aims. So should not a concern with feminist ethics, and a concern for the perspectives of those who mother result in pacifism? It is noticeable that Ruddick does not make that second claim. She, and Elshtain, and Nel Noddings all use some of the insights of mothering practice in reference to war. Noddings is unsure whether Christianity's combination of a tough stance towards evil and a 'feminine' turning of the other cheek works. She tentatively suggests that one who was 'truly feminine' "would seek to prevent a second blow without striking back in violence".³⁴ She does not, however, develop that idea any further, or suggest alternative strategy if that didn't work. Elshtain, too, points out the ways in which mothering practice is a severe challenge to states making war.

"The perspective which flows from mothering practices, as these revolve around *preservation* and *growth*, asserts the primacy of keeping over acquiring, conserving the fragile over conquering, holding on to and protecting the vulnerable over controlling and coercing. Within this frame, what counts as failure is the death, injury or damage of a child through carelessness or neglect or the shunting and shaming of a child through over-control and domination...What counts as a failure within

³⁴Noddings, *Women and Evil*, p.50-51.

the maternal perspective - overcontrol and death - is located in the heart of the war-making powers of the modern state."³⁵

Yet none of these writers finally declares herself pacifist. They are all concerned to pose strict questions about war, stricter even than the just war tradition provides, based on broader perspectives about who we are as human beings, and about the material realities and particularities of war. War for them can only be tragic, last resort defence, part of the effort to enable a child to survive. This may well make non-violence a first presumption. Yet there is a danger in non-violence of a failure to check violence which ends up effectively as collusion with violence. Non-violent activists do of course deal in coercion and need to keep a continuous watch on how their methods of coercion touch the strongest and the weakest in a society. In this respect they are similar to those who are prepared to sanction violence as coercion at some point. What is also required in both cases is careful attention to the conflicts in a situation which may be defined as 'peaceful' because there is no physical violence involved. Violence and non-violence certainly cannot be equated respectively with coercion and non-coercion.

There are few feminist discussions that I have seen of the just war tradition. Perhaps Sara Ruddick's argument would seem adequate to many when she asserts the uselessness of the just war theory for feminists who are concerned about people in context, about women and men in their relationships and the circumstances of everyday life: "Just-war theories control our perceptions of war, turning our attention from bodies and their fate to abstract causes and rules for achieving them...The analytic fictions of just-war theory require a closure of moral issues final enough to justify killing and 'enemies' abstract enough to be killable."³⁶ Ruddick sees the just war tradition's set of questions for justifying the decision to go to war (*jus ad bellum*), and for regulating the conduct of war (*jus in bello*), merely as abstractions. For her they are questions that can be asked and answered at a distance from people. Many discussions and uses of the just war tradition might well prove her correct.³⁷ The charge of

³⁵Elshtain, "On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness", in J.H. Stiehm, ed., p.346.

³⁶Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, p.150.

³⁷For discussions of the just war tradition, cf. D. DeCosse, ed., *But Was It Just?*; J.B. Elshtain, "Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age"; Elshtain ed., *Just War Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992; P. Ramsey, *War and the Christian Conscience: How Shall Modern War Be Conducted Justly?*, Duke University Press, 1961; J.T. Johnson, "Just War Thinking in the Thought of Paul Ramsey", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 19:2, 1991; R.B. Miller, ed., *War in the Twentieth Century: Sources in Theological Ethics*, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

abstraction is a serious one: abstraction is that inattention to humanity which is one factor making war possible. However, Jean Bethke Elshtain's work on the just war tradition suggests that it holds other possibilities.³⁸

Elshtain interprets the just war tradition from her political theorist's perspective as an alternative to, in fact in opposition to, Hobbesian realist language. This may sound ironic, because it seems to me that in recent years, as just war terminology has achieved a revival in modern political discourse, it has been appropriated as part of a certain kind of realist language. The type of realist language Elshtain examines is that which sees no limits to war, and can conceive of no place for any moral terminology in discussions of war. However, there is also a type of realist political language which searches for moral justification. Into this language the just war tradition has been appropriated until it has come to be seen as language to justify anything, used by those who seek justification of the course on which they have already decided. Elshtain puts this in American perspective, but we need to ask whether her comment is also true of other countries: "The just war posture too easily falls into a rationalization: any war America fights, by definition, must be just because we are a country that believes it must justify itself".³⁹ However, she also notes, "just war thinking has, from time to time, offered a critical discursive edge."⁴⁰ It is this critical stance that can provide a proper starting place for the discussion of war. This is the way in which I appropriate the just war tradition: as a critical platform and beginning, rather than as a tool of justification. Any version of the just war theory assumes the possibility of judging between better or worse wars. The just war tradition as a whole assumes that moral discussion has some place in the political decision-making aspect of war.

A justified war is not the same as a just war, even though the latter term has been used to stand for the former in current English language usage. Somehow we need to discuss whether particular wars are more or less justified, not whether simplistically they are just or not. The idea of war being 'more' or 'less' justified is difficult because 'more' and 'less' are comparatives and as any particular war is examined it becomes harder to compare it to any other, and more dubious to compare it to a set of standards that are somehow abstracted from the particulars of any actual situation of conflict. But we need some sort of terminology (for which I have provisionally used 'more or less

³⁸Also see above, p.111-112, for discussion of Elshtain's work on the just war.

³⁹Elshtain, "On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness", p.343.

⁴⁰Elshtain, "Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age", p.45.

justified') that reminds us that the just war tradition will not give simple answers - 'just' or 'not just'. The just war tradition holds a strange position *between* the absolute and the relative in ethical discussion. Often propounded as if it consisted of a set of absolute principles, just war theory is actually a set of questions for deciding whether the absolute 'Do not kill' may be relativised. The linguistic relationship between 'just', 'justified' and 'justice' is also difficult in the context of discussion about war. If a war is to be more justified than not, within my scheme it must be a calculated attempt to establish right relationships in the face of injustice, whilst it is recognised that war will do harm to relationships as well. This is its tragedy, to be fully felt, not pushed aside.

The purpose of the just war tradition is rigorously to question and critique war; just war theory witnesses to a primary presumption against violence; it considers situations of relative harm, recognising that to engage in war has harmful effects, but that to choose not to wage war may not mean that an acceptable peace exists and may also have harmful consequences. Being able to answer the sort of questions posed by the just war tradition in certain ways will not make a war good; it might suggest that it is the lesser evil. Using the just war tradition as a starting point for the discussion of war must allow us to recognise war as tragic last resort. It must not however allow us to think that by declaring a war justified (provisionally) it all becomes 'good'. Sin, harm and evil are still a part of the activity of war; killing is no less an act of destruction because we have decided that in this case it is a necessary or lesser evil. The just war tradition can be reworked as a route for making real choices, between something other than an absolute good and an absolute evil, an absolute right and an absolute wrong. Allowing ourselves to do evil is dangerous, but war may still not be the greatest evil.

Elshtain notes that a particular problem with the just war tradition is the way it has been associated with the creation of gender roles, so that men are projected as Just Warriors and women as detached Beautiful Souls. Such gender association does not do justice to the actualities of war. It hides the ways in which Just Warriors depend on the service of women, as well as hiding the more direct ways in which women engage in war. Any continuing use of the just war tradition - its stance of questioning as much as the specific questions asked - must be disassociated from these gender restrictions and from the public/private divide which they mirror. War is not just a matter for male warriors and decision-makers, not is it only a matter of public policy. Elshtain is concerned to point out also that notions of the just war do demand just warriors: "A just war requires agents to carry out its purposes. But if the warrior no longer serves as an avatar of

justice, how is war itself to claim this imprimatur?"⁴¹ She questions the notion of the warrior serving as an 'avatar of justice' in modern times because of the mass slaughter that war has come to represent, and the use of the soldier as cannon fodder in a way that leaves no space for the soldier's moral decision-making. As I suggested in the last section, if there is to be a change here, the possibility ought to be opened by the presence of women in the military, but a discourse of war that focuses on some role for the soldier in the bringing about of justice, provided it is not gendered, would also aid such re-thinking. However, the re-thinking is not just the province of military commanders or even soldiers. Elshtain views the just war tradition through the frame of citizenship, arguing that it is the job of all citizens to engage in debate and dialogue over such issues. This vision would involve much education and training in citizenship, greater access to information, to produce a citizenry capable in large measure of such debate. But that is essential for the vision of conflict, and broadened perspective on what war is and how it should be discussed, that I suggest here. The supporting condition for such debate is a presumption against violence in all areas of life.⁴²

A new discourse about war will take women's opinions and the range of women's choices seriously, as Sybil Oldfield does, for instance, in *Women Against The Iron Fist*, where she discusses the anti-militarism of a number of women from the first world war, through to campaigners against nuclear weapons of the 1980s. Similarly I discussed at some length in chapter 2 the arguments of Vera Brittain, Virginia Woolf, Simone Weil and Dorothy Sayers about war. To take women's arguments about war seriously is to treat them as full citizens, as political and moral agents in their own right. The result of serious attention will not be the discovery of one view alone, but perhaps of a variety corresponding to the variety of opinions among men. Perhaps there will be new perspectives as well. The result may not make answering questions about war any easier, but it will make the process more truthful. Women's pacifism has been regarded as less important than men's, because women have not been liable to the same kind of conscription as that to which a minority of men have been subject in many countries. Yet, early in this century, American officials and eventually the American courts took Rosika Schwimmer's declared pacifism seriously enough to deny her citizenship, though it was acknowledged she would not be called on to fight in the event of war.⁴³ A new

⁴¹Elshtain, "Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age", p.46.

⁴²The difficulty with this notion of debate, which I have not pursued here, is who makes the final decision, and when. Also, does the debate take place only during war, or only outside wartime?

⁴³R. Flowers discusses the refusal of Marie Averil Bland's application for American citizenship on similar grounds, but he refers to Schwimmer's case also. Marie Bland filed for citizenship on 21 May

discourse about war values women's points of view because it recognises the many ways in which women are involved in war and affected by war.

The recent concern over whether there is any modern relevance in just war theory has focused on how just war theory copes with the possibility of nuclear war. Personally, I think it does have relevance, even if to deny validity to almost any form of warfare which uses nuclear weapons as necessarily disproportionate. But because the shape of world politics has changed dramatically in the last five years, war cannot now be discussed as if the only war that could occur in the world is a nuclear war, even if a 'limited' one (although the possibility of that has only ever been hypothetical). Commentators should perhaps never have been persuaded to talk of war as if there had been peace in the world since the ending of the second world war, and as if any breaking of that peace would mean limited or all-out nuclear war between the superpowers. It was never a true assessment of the international situation, for history since 1945 has seen a succession of wars in all parts of the world, resulting in the killing of millions. Now we are having to attend to conflicts in many African countries, to war in Europe, to the end of Cold War certainties, as well as to the possibilities of nuclear proliferation. And so new discussions of war are necessary. The U.S. Catholic Bishops recognised this in the differences between their 1983 publication *The Challenge of Peace* and the review of it published in 1994.⁴⁴ In the former, the attention is focused narrowly on the possession and use of nuclear weapons; the latter document shows a much wider appreciation of issues of justice, and 'small-scale' wars which are nevertheless devastating to many countries and many communities. They conclude, "In these anniversary reflections we have focused less on particular weapons and wars and more on a broader context of violence which still pervades our communities, our country and our world."⁴⁵ A new discourse of war may start with the critical questioning stance of the just war tradition, but it must recognise that the word 'justice' has a wider meaning in reference to relations between communities and nations than simply whether to resort to war and whether to use certain weapons or not. Decisions

1929, six days before the decision on Schwimmer's case was handed down. In Bland's case the problem came when she was due to take the oath of allegiance in 1930: "By this time she had become aware of the court's ruling in *Schwimmer* that the only way to defend the Constitution was by military service." R.B. Flowers, "In Praise of Conscience: Marie Averil Bland", *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 62:1, 1993.

⁴⁴United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*; "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace: A Reflection of the National Conference of Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of *The Challenge of Peace*", 1994.

⁴⁵"The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace", p.20.

made in response to the just war theory's questions must fit in with wider notions of justice, disciplined and interpreted by the kind of considerations I have discussed in previous chapters, so that we are not left simply with a picture of competing rights to be adjudicated.

A broadened vision of what war entails is the essence of the new kind of discourse I wish to see ethicists using about war. The ethics of war must be discussed such as to recognise the complexities that make up a war situation. Victory or defeat in military terms, or numbers killed are not the only factors of any importance. If modern warfare involves whole societies - albeit with different people in different relationships to fighting - then whole societies must be the focus of discussion. Numbers who have died in war are the most obvious public effect of war, and the most easily quoted, but a different kind of war discourse must go beyond the abstraction of numbers to recognise other effects, such as injuries and bereavements, which have to be dealt with personally and publicly. War has economic and environmental effects, and if these are not discussed then the full story of war has not been told, and war cannot be evaluated even to the extent of which we are capable. We do not have a God's-eye view, even if we choose to believe in a God who can compass what it means for vast numbers to be killed. If God does that, it is done in the same way as our smaller-scale attention, knowing all the particularities of each, so attention must be similar on the human scale, focusing as best we can on the complexities of real circumstances. These are the material realities of war, as is the attention to bodies on which Susan Griffin insists in passages of *A Chorus of Stones*: "A friend dies. Standing perhaps just in front of you. Or behind you. The wound gaping and spurting blood. The body suddenly not the one you knew, the life drained out, hardening quickly".⁴⁶ The destruction of war must be fully expressed in all these ways. We must also not destroy complexity with the use of a simplistic aggressor/victim dualism, designed to channel the kind of moral absolutism which I have already argued has no place in our discourse about war. There may be wrongs on both sides of a conflict. Nor can we refer only to the abstracted 'enemy' to be defeated, its status as a singular noun denying the humanity and plurality of opponents.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Griffin, p.245.

⁴⁷Elshtain refers to 'the enemy' as a 'pseudo-concrete universal', the abstraction of which allows the users of such language to distance themselves from people. She notes also, however, that we may give ourselves as many problems if we try to use similar 'pseudo-concrete universals' in more positive motivational senses - words such as 'the human race'. Abstraction, she insists, will not help. "Realism, Just War and Feminism", p.50.

For the history of war discourse is the story of certain subjects excluded on the grounds that it is necessary to discuss war in a 'rational' manner. Thus the work and the people responsible for supplies to fighting troops; what emotions surround war; what psychological traumas soldiers experience; what the effects of bereavement might be; the reality of what is inside the body bags returned from the war zone may all be subject to exclusion in some people's choice of language about war. In some instances it seems as if nothing personal, nothing to do with the emotions is involved. Political propaganda assures us that the discussion of anything personal or emotional will deflect from the stern realities of military purpose, and the absolute necessity of victory at all costs. In attempts to exclude certain subjects or certain perspectives, we recognise the same kind of dualism which sets up men's and women's roles in society, the dualism which ordains separate spheres for the rational and the emotional, for public and private realms, for men and women. Within that scheme war is on the side of public, rational affairs, in which men are involved. The ethical discussion of war I want to encourage, which I believe would be more responsive to women's lives as well as to the reality of many men's experiences, disputes these boundaries, recognising the irrational aspects of war, the material particularities, the sentiments of horror and tragedy, and the cruelty with which people can destroy one another. Ruddick writes, .."it is essential for developing a peace politics to keep one's eye on suffering".⁴⁸ The same focus is essential for discussion of the ethics of war. I give just one example of this. A person who talks about children in relation to war is liable to be accused of sentimentality, since children are not really involved in war. Proper attention to women's lives and perspectives refuses to exclude children, or future generations, from discussion. War has its effects on them, and must be judged for those effects.

Where we are prepared to see the material realities of war, there we find the complexities and ambiguities of particular wars. We are used to judging and classifying particular wars as 'right' or 'wrong' such that conflicts are separated off from each other. Thus I would argue, from a British perspective, we think of the second world war and of the Gulf War as tragic necessities in a completely different class from the current conflicts in Bosnia and in Rwanda. What we demonstrate thereby is the extent to which we have labelled conflicts simplistically, particularly on the grounds of a 'just cause' for going to war, without giving attention to the brutality and far-reaching consequences of all of them. Many people see abundant justification for the second world war in attempts to halt Nazism's conquest of other countries, and the activities and ideology of the death camps. But the story of the second world war includes inhumanity on both

⁴⁸Ruddick, p.157.

sides, including the bombing of Dresden and Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Allies.⁴⁹ The 'clinical' high-technology bombing of military targets was commended by many during the Gulf War, but that stands alongside the bombing of an air raid shelter, the destruction of the infrastructure necessary to Iraqi civilian life, and the slaughter on the Basra road. We are used to recounting with outrage the episodes of 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia, but are unsure how to respond to the wish of many ethnic groups for self-determination and identity based on nationhood, or to the implications for the role of the United Nations of that particular conflict. And while we condemn the butchery of Rwanda, we may not be so quick to face the fear and hatred that brought it about, and the ways they are mirrored in other societies, as well as difficult questions about the relative responsibility of leaders and individuals for such horror. I suggest that in talking about these conflicts in such contrasting moral terms, we may be attempting to deny the cruelty in what we think is justified. It is in the full horror of recognising the effects of war that we have to make moral choices about whether to go to war and about how to conduct war. It is in this way that we face the complexities and differences between people, rather than pretending we can deal with moral judgements about war by dealing with statistics and statements of intent. This is proper attention to context, in honour of a God who lived in the context of real human life.

The discourse I propose looks for alternative perspectives which are faithful to the material realities of complex lives. An object can be viewed from many angles, and a different choice of focus may reveal different insights for interpretation and evaluation. A city may be a spot on a military strategist's map, targeted for conquest or destruction because it is strategically significant. Or it may be understood as a lived in space, representative of many people and the details of their daily lives. The difference of perception will inform a much more difficult decision, in the latter case, to rain down bombs on that city. Carol Cohn's article "'Clean Bombs' and Clean Language" is a fascinating insight into the different perceptions engendered by different ways of talking about war and the technology of war. She describes being part of discussions about nuclear war conducted "without any sense of horror, urgency, or moral outrage...[T]he elaborate use of abstraction and euphemism...[never touched] the realities of nuclear holocaust."⁵⁰ In many cases everyday language and particularly domestic imagery were used to describe weapons and strategy. "The imagery that domesticates, that humanizes insentient weapons, also serves, paradoxically, to make it all right to ignore sentient

⁴⁹Incidents of inhumanity in wartime are labelled 'war crimes' - but perhaps not universally. At the end of the second world war the label 'war crimes' applied to the losers, not to the victors.

⁵⁰C. Cohn, "'Clean Bombs' and Clean Language", in Elshtain and Tobias, eds., p.33-34.

human bodies, human lives."⁵¹ The language we use in discussing war and its effects must be continually examined because it cannot be separated from the insights about people that it engenders.

Feminist ethicists have pointed out the great difference it makes to perceive people as basically autonomous individuals whose rights and interests will inevitably bring them into competition and conflict, and to perceive them as interdependent and relational, as social selves embedded in networks of relationships, the quality of which need to be continually worked on. Similarly, for the purposes of discourse about war, the human world may be viewed as a permanent play of power relations between nations which compete with one another and can never avoid conflict over the national interests they are obligated to pursue. Stephen Sykes, analysing sociological views of power, notes:

"it is an observable feature of the tradition stemming from Hobbes, and including Marx and Weber, that it is assumed that the interests of individuals conflict, and that more power for one agent or group will inevitably mean less for another...This 'realism' about power has not gone unchallenged, especially by those who hold that social order is constituted by shared belief, and that this shared belief identifies who has the right to exercise power in the last resort."⁵²

Another view of the world, therefore, may emphasise the interdependence of all nations, the ways in which decisions in one nation affect many others, and the consequent responsibilities of nations towards each other. This is particularly obvious with the growth of global economic interdependence. The model of the interdependence of co-operative nations, constantly to be worked out and re-worked in diplomatic contacts and numerous treaties, and the competitive, conflict model are not simply alternative views; they have alternative motivational force. Nations and communities are *both* interdependent and competitive, but they can also be made more interdependent or more competitive. If we choose to regard nations as interdependent we will work for the goal of co-operation. The working out of peace between individuals, communities and nations requires attention to the quality of relationships. The practices of mothering

⁵¹*ibid.*, p.40.

⁵²S. Sykes, "Institutional Transformation: Power and Polity in the Churches", paper given at the Society for the Study of Theology Conference, 1995, p.11. In his analysis, he notes Nietzsche's influence in particular: "Through Nietzsche's influence there is a marked tendency to sharpen, even to exaggerate, the degree to which social life must be regarded as the area of unrelenting and irresolvable power struggle, and to privilege a pessimistic denial of the possibility of a co-operative use of power in the realizing of genuine communal harmony", p.8. This pessimistic perspective is one which Reinhold Niebuhr propounds on nation states in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, particularly chapter 4.

and caring roles may then provide a model for possible relationships within and between groups of people. For instance: relative strength and weakness can be grounds for assault, but do not have to be. Security can be found in needing others: dependency does not equate with insecurity (though it does not *equate* with security either). No person and no nation can stand alone. I do not intend here to ignore entirely the different modes of behaviour between individuals, small intimate groups of people and larger institutions and societies, but some analogies are possible. These suggestions are underpinned by theological understandings I discussed above,⁵³ where God is understood to have chosen interdependence with the creation. The Christian model of God demonstrates that comparative strength and weakness (as between the infinite possibilities of God and the limitations of human beings) do not stop God depending on us by choosing to work salvation at least in part through us. Without denying the possible positive energy of competition, or the sinfulness of human beings, yet it is right for us to assert also that people are capable of co-operation in their interdependence. This assertion demands new visions of political possibilities, far more work on conflict resolution, on the making of peace and the political mobilisation of an active citizenship. Elshtain emphasises Arendt's assertion that forgiveness can and should have its place in political relations. And still there is need for a living Christian witness to the possibilities of change, of repentance, and of healing. This is the activity of peacemaking, essential to the discussion about if and when violent coercion becomes necessary, and therefore essential to a new discourse about war.

The recognition that women are not naturally peaceful, and can be violent and murderously cruel is also important as a balance to too optimistic a view of human relations. Things can go wrong. Situations of cruelty can breed cruelty. There are female terrorists; the Suzanne Capper murder may well have been orchestrated as much by the hatred of a woman as by the drug-crazed behaviour of herself and her accomplices; the Rwandan genocide was a case in many villages of neighbour turning on neighbour, encouraged by the propaganda of tribal leaders. These situations are part of us as a human race, as is the inordinate ambition of the few who provoke the many to fight on their behalf. Feminism has provided some insights into structural evil; Christian doctrine recognises the reality of human evil, individual and structural. That all of these situations provoke outrage, at least in some quarters, is a sign that there is more to our humanness than the expression of cruelty towards other humans, but it also suggests that there will always be need of restraint. Yet that is not wholly a negative

⁵³See above, p. 164f.

conclusion: human beings can live abundantly with some restraints, for that is what it is to live in networks of relationships. Relationships between individuals are not exempt from the worst of human cruelty, as idealised views of the private realm imply. But nor is the public realm exempt from good relations: international relations do not need to be the arena where selfishness and cruelty run riot. War is not our natural state, and war can be employed as a means of restraint, though very often it is not. "Might never makes right, argues the just war thinker, but might may sometimes, on balance, serve right."⁵⁴ With a wider range of perspectives taken into account, this could be true.

A new discourse about war demands attention to humanity and in particular to the human and environmental consequences of war. This is a possible international language. It is a language that has recognisable reference to personal relationships, and a language in which participatory citizenship may be based. I have suggested that all citizens could and should be concerned with questions of war and other forms of violence and this goes hand in hand with language which values people's lives and responsibilities as citizens. At present the language of human rights is used for that purpose, a non-religious language which many are trying to develop as universal. A new discourse about war demands broadened perspectives and a commitment to co-operation with people and nations not immediately attached to us. Concern for the protection of the vulnerable, the concerns of the mother for her child, of the friend for the one she loves and for whom she would give herself, are all valid perspectives from which to assume non-violence, and to question the justification of particular acts of coercive violence.

CONCLUSION

An understanding of violence can contribute to work for peace. An understanding of how women experience violence contributes to the construction of space for women to work for peace without having to rely on a false myth of women's peacefulness. I suggest that, at their best, human beings do not believe in destruction as a positive value, and a Christian view of humanity demands that we attend to and value particular human lives. For these reasons we seek to make peace rather than war, recognising the destructive harm that war causes to particular lives. But the vision of peace with which I work does not equate peace entirely with the absence of conflict, or even the absence of violence. Any attempt to exclude conflict, or demonise conflict, is actually an attempt

⁵⁴Elshtain, "Just War as Politics", in DeCosse ed., p.44.

to deny real humanity. The kind of peace we are to seek is not a state but a process: the process of establishing right, loving relationships. This vision of peace is not defined in total opposition to conflict, and therefore may be able to incorporate the use of coercive force on rare occasions. Part of the work of building relationships is the acceptance of conflict as a normal part of life, the ability to recognise it and the will to resolve specific conflicts, while not imagining that the resolution of one particular conflictual situation will mark a final closure of all conflict. Our presumption must be that conflicts can and should be resolved without violence. The *choice* to be non-violent is one of the characteristics of our humanness which distinguishes us from some of the species to which ethnologists often compare us. Nel Noddings argues, "We will not build violence into our conceptual models simply because it occurs naturally, but rather demand that it be justified whenever it is chosen."⁵⁵

This vision of peace still provides space for many different methods, and many different commitments. Even if it is possible to point to a basic set of values, to do with the value of life, the irreplaceability of the individual and the hopeful establishing of relationships, there may still not emerge *the* one and only right course of action. Nor should we be seeking that, even if we find agreement on what we seek to combat. Space for a variety of responses, space for moral choice and space for dissent are the conditions for empowering people to responsible moral agency.

In this final chapter I have characterised some ethically driven responses to situations of violence which are faithful and honouring to women's varied experiences. Feminist theological ethicists think and act towards the resisting of domestic violence, in a way which does not demonise the perpetrators of violence. They assert the right to question militaristic structures and presuppositions, and to contextualise questions about war at very different levels from government decision-making. Thus, the critical stance of the just war tradition is incorporated with strong ideas of participatory citizenship, in order to empower ordinary citizens' moral agency by valuing their moral responsibility to participate in dialogue and decisions about war. The encouragement of participation and the construction of space for moral choice allow women to decide whether to join their countries' military services, without thereby supporting the worst excesses of militaristic ideology. Feminist theological ethics supports a re-worked model of public and private which does not set one realm over against another, but which appreciates the interpenetration of different social contexts. Not all incidents of violence can be evaluated in exactly the same way: there are differences of cause and effect, differences

⁵⁵Noddings, *Women and Evil*, p.124.

in the extent to which the apparatus of the state is, or needs to be, involved. But they may be better interpreted when links are appreciated than when they are assigned separate meanings because they are thought to occur in wholly separate spheres. An abstract, determinist position which asserts that women are by nature peaceful leaves no work to be done, no space for moral agency, and has manifestly failed as a resource for peacemaking.

I have sought here to picture a Christian just love with regard to the violence which women face and in which they participate. It is rooted in the image of God who joins universal and particular, transcendent and immanent, and who wills our growth in responsibility, autonomy and relationality. A just love holds together reason and emotion, intuitions and justifications. It incorporates not only love, longing and desire for the good, but also pain, outrage and horror at evil. The feminist theological ethicist will support responses which protect the victims of violence, which recognise the painful aftermath of violence, and which promote conflict resolution, reconciliation and healing. In particular, violence against women will be taken seriously and not trivialised, and the violence perpetrated by women will be acknowledged and not ignored. The watchful prevention of violence, which is about recognising and resolving conflict, not seeking to bury it, must be promoted. Now, therefore, women can be encouraged to work for peace, alongside men, by working to build loving right relationships throughout the variety of social contexts in which they live, using a range of resources, a variety of models, images and stories.

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