

Fagan, G. Honor, 'Women, War and Peace: Engendering Conflict in Poststructuralist Perspective' in Munck and de Silva (Eds) *Postmodern Insurgency: Political Identity, Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, Macmillan Press, 1999

While this book seeks to examine political identity formation in conflict situations with a view to developing a poststructuralist perspective, I would argue that an analysis of the relationship between gender and war is essential to a poststructuralist perspective. Thus some chapters have referred, in brief, to women's involvement in political processes, but the intersection between gender and identity formation has not been explored in any depth. Ignoring the all-pervasive role of women in war, historically and in current practice, simply produces poor ill-informed analysis. This chapter thus seeks to highlight the importance of an engendered analysis of political processes and identity formation in the context of wars. I start with a broad overview of women's roles in war and possible changing trends pointing towards the growing importance of women's involvement in political processes. I then turn to the poststructuralist debate on gender and war in order to explore key issues that arise in analysing the intersections between the cultural formations of gender and war and their associated narratives. The negotiation of gender identities in a context of war leads us to some critical insights into the formation of political identities in contemporary war situations. What happens to the constructs of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in postmodern warfare, how are they manipulated?

I also introduce a specific site of political activity to portray the complexity and diversity of negotiations currently taking place when gender identity and the formation of political identities intersect. The activities of the Mothers of Plaza de

Mayo in Argentina are seen internationally to be of great significance in terms of providing a glimpse of the possibilities of women's resistance to state militarism and torture. It is useful to turn to this well investigated site since there is copious analysis of political agency and the gendering of political identities available. In contrast, the use of women in the United States army and their role in the war against Iraq also affords us an opportunity to unravel gendering and warring as cultural formations constructed in contexts of militarisation of women and has also attracted plenty of academic attention. Finally, though I use the tools of post-structuralism to investigate the gendering of political identity formation, I will conclude with a critical look at the transformative politics espoused by particular theorists embracing this framework.

### **Women and War.**

Steinheim in 1983 wrote an edited collection titled *Women and Men's War's*, a title which played on the common assumption that wars were men's business. Writing in 1996 Pettman easily dismisses the common assumption of women's exclusion from war showing that talking of war as if it is simply about men is a nonsense -

In World War 1, 80% of casualties were soldiers; in World War 2, only 50%. In the Vietnam War some 80 per cent of casualties were civilian, and in current conflicts the estimate is 90 per cent - mainly women and children. (1996: 96)

She further argues here that women have everything to do with war, that war would not be possible without women's co-operation at all practical levels. At the symbolic

level women force men to fight. At the level of citizenship women as taxpayers, voters and citizens are necessary for warring. At the practical level the number of women joining state militaries is on the increase. Pettman asks what effect this will have on both the military and the women themselves?

Georgina Waylen provides a useful summary of the role of women in revolutionary and liberation struggles, though she focuses on selected examples which exclude fundamentalist revolutions and only looks at socialist revolutions with a capital 'S' and a capital 'R'. She, too, points to the increase in women's participation in socialist revolutionary movements. She points to a change in the form women's participation has taken in the twentieth century-

with few women being organised or organising themselves in any sustained way in revolutionary movements in the first half of the century and culminates in much more active roles played by women in revolutionary movements of the seventies. (1996:72)

Alongside this practical increase of involvement the portrayal of women fighters at the symbolic level increased. The potential of apparently weak and powerless people (such as women) to fight back was of huge symbolic value to revolutionary socialist movements (Ibid.: 74).

The oppositional politics of the 60's was discursively dominated by the heroism of Che Guevara, the revolutionary who chooses violent confrontation with death, but later the movements generally changed towards urban revolution, and notions of a 'prolonged people's war' came into operation. In different national struggles this involved gaining the support of large numbers of women as activists, combatants and

supporters. Mass mobilisation and mass participation involved the inclusion of women and a revolutionary agenda for women's emancipation was put forward. Waylen points to a huge contrast in women's participation between the early 1960's and the late 1970's as the change in tactics took hold. She compares the Cuban revolution with the Nicaraguan revolution, in which the FSLN had a high female membership, women making up between 20-30 per cent of the fighting force, with some women as leading commanders. In the 1970's the Tupamaros in Uruguay had an estimated figure of around 28% females membership (Ibid.: 73).

Both Molyneux and Waylen describe this increased participation of women in political practices as positive advancement. At the symbolic level, in the first phase of revolutionary activity, women as victims were seen to be able to fight back. In the second phase women as revolutionaries were seen to be able to mobilise. These are seen as crucial developments, but from a feminist point of view these authors are disappointed with gains made by women through this involvement (Molyneux, 1981, Waylen, 1996: 89-90). Their evaluation of change in women's involvement in revolutionary activity rests at an evaluation of the success or failure of a feminist agenda at the level of social policy and conventional political representation. The involvement of women in socialist revolution is looked on as having given women material practice in political activity, a political empowerment, that they can build on to mobilise as women for improvements for women.

The effect of women's involvement in socialist revolutionary politics, including war, is analysed here for its effects on gender within a political rather than a cultural remit. It is perceived as emancipatory for the female gender because it achieved better living conditions for women in specific countries at specific times. While I share this political viewpoint, the question of what happens to the formation of gender

here remains somewhat unanswered. What happens as women formed their revolutionary political identity, how did that act on their identities as women? Was it simply positive, were they unambiguously emancipated or were further demands placed on their resources as women? On the other hand, did the construction of war change with women being actively included wholesale in warring processes? Did this new form of gendering - women's increased participation - limit or increase the power of the war machine? There is a tendency here to not only read the inclusion of women in war as simplistically positive, but also to under-investigate the interconnections between narratives of war and gender. The impact of women's increased involvement also impacts the narratives of warring and this inter-relationship is not fully investigated in this literature.

Irene Matthews analysing the war in Guatemala makes some interesting points in relation to changing processes of war and women's inclusion in war. She argues that in the first half of the 20th Century, civil war still involved codes of practice that distinguished between 'belligerents and the non-combatants', but in the second half, civil war took on a different perspective; 'no longer of "socially sanctioned" open conflict but of a diffuse and generalised violence pitting unequal forces against each other' (in Cooke and Woollacott, 1993:160). The classic structure of interstate war - where men are recruited to protect women and children who are left at home to weep - changed to the direct confrontation of the weak and the civilian against the strong and the militarised. In low intensity warfare "immune space is entirely eroded", including the space of the feminine and of the domestic. (Ibid.:160-162) Whether or not there ever was immune space for women in war is questionable - since I suspect the immune space was entirely in the hands of the more powerful and 'winning' contingent - but the fact is indisputable that war now includes women at every level.

Unlike Molyneux and Waylen, Matthews does not stress the emancipatory political potential of this involvement, rather the contrary. She reads this involvement of women in resistance/ revolutionary/defensive activity in Guatemala as having punishing effects on women, where women share the costs of repression with men, but as women. In this sense we see the cost of engendering conflict on women.

‘In a country where colonial identity is still self-perceived through sexual and ethnic superiority, women are now punished not (only) because of their chasteness, nor (only) to intimidate or humiliate their menfolk, but for the public nature of their own actions: for the assumption of a voice- unprecedented and unwelcome and insistent “noise” from a normally “discreet” source. The *mothers* body is punished for daring to stray away from her silent subaltern identity and her home’. (Ibid.: 162)

Women are increasingly going to war, and war is increasingly coming to women, so as Pettman points out, the choice to say no to war is simply unavailable in most situations (Pettman, 1996: 131). Women have been at war, are at war, in revolutionary and nationalist struggles (Jayawardena, 1986 ) and in state armies (Enloe, 1989), and they have been and are there as feminists too. In a war situation, where organisations have been explicitly set up to campaign on a feminist agenda, where violence rapidly increases against women in families, these organisations have repeatedly had to freeze their activities as the conflict and violence take over and the women cannot override the effects to the extent of even maintaining their group activities (Pettman, 1996:130).

Womens' experiences of war are so extensive and all embracing in the global context, that the two issues - women's rights and achieving an end to warring- are now being totally collapsed into each other. Jeanne Vickers discusses the main issues surrounding the question of women and war in a double context of armed conflict and structural violence. She suggests that -

'It is now generally accepted that ending discrimination against women and achieving a non-violent world are mutually interdependent, inseparable goals. It is also generally recognised that effective development and an end to structural violence require the full participation of women. The relationship between women's rights, social and economic justice, and non-violent conflict resolution has not only become clearer over the years, but it is now seen as of the greatest importance to all, not only to women.

(Vickers, 1993 :149 )

While this understanding is crucial to building a radically democratic political strategy toward justice and peace, collapsing the two together creates as many theoretical difficulties as it does closures on the debate. A political strategy might readily incorporate just, solemn and sanctimonious aspirations and objectives and address these to the global 'collective' of feminist women and achieve political advancement. However, the intellectual task of critically analysing the relationship of women to war cannot be furthered without an analysis of the social construction of gender and its relationship to political processes and the advent of war. This intellectual task demands a poststructuralist theoretical framework and its associated

tools of deconstruction. The poststructuralist turn allows us to look at narratives of war and their intersection with narratives of gender; narratives of masculinity, femininity, and heterosexuality as they are being produced, reproduced and constructed, not as fixed, immovable, indestructible and inevitable social facts. It is to this field of debate that I now turn.

### **Gendering and Political Identity Formation**

To point to the inclusion of women in war and in political processes and to explore the nature of their inclusion serves as a critique of accounts that ignore the gender dimension to political identity formation, but this is not enough. However, if we switch from the concept of women to the concept of gender- the social construction of sexual difference - we can tackle the analysis of women's relationship to warring processes in a non-essentialist way and this switch in focus also allows us to examine the impact of women's involvement on discourses of war and on warring processes. In other words we can analyse the intersections of narratives of war and narratives of gender. Furthermore, this switch from focusing on women to focusing on gender allows us to take a non-essentialist approach to identity formation, where identity is more unstable, always under construction and fragmented through multiple discourses. The nature of women's inclusion in warring is taken up from a deconstructionist perspective when we turn to the analysis of engendering political identity formation. It is within this field of debate that we can gain some insights into women's and men's political identity formation in contexts of warring, in particular in postmodern warfare, and the processes of gendering that occur in the formation of these political identities.



The poststructuralist approach rejects the unitary category of 'women' but, rather, argues that there are individuals who take up a variety of subject positions and that these subject positions are constituted through discursive practices within different discourses. Individuals are multiply constituted subjects, they can and do take up multiple subject positions which can be in conflict with each other. The internally differentiated subject constituted in and through discourse is the subject of post-structuralist theorising (Moore, 1994). Gender discourses position men and women in different ways and individuals constitute their self-representations as engendered subjects - i.e. through the selection of, or imposition of, different and hierarchically constituted subject positions on gender.

The poststructuralist perspective on the discursive construction of the subject allows us to view the everyday practices of gendering and warring, the formation of political identities, and the intersection of gender processes and war/insurgency/military processes as being culturally constituted. They are inherently contingent and thus open to transformation. The key insight resulting from this perspective is that, at the level of cultural and discursive construction, war is gendered and that gendering impacts warring (Cooke and Woollacott, 1993). While this insight can frustrate at the level of feminist political practice (since it fails to absolve the female sex from the responsibility of the brutality of war), it has implications for the analysis of the formation of political identities since it indicates that a gendered analysis is always necessary. It points to the fact that where narratives of gender and war intersect, increasingly complex negotiations take place in the formation of political identities. Constructs of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality are being negotiated and reformulated in contemporary warfare and political agency arises out of these

negotiations. Insurgents and military personnel form their political identities through gendered revolutionary and/or gendered military discourses, whatever side they fight on.

Following this theoretical trajectory I move to a particular site, a much discussed site of political identity formation in a warring context, to explicate how an engendered poststructuralist reading can be applied to the analysis of political agency. Moving from the theoretical to the concrete, specific and particular we look at the intersection of cultural formations of gender and war in the particular instance of Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires. If we turn to this site we can see an instance of the formation of political identities writ large in gendered identities and gendered political agency, but we can also see the complexity at play in the intersection between gendering and warring processes.

In 1976 Amnesty International found evidence of serious human rights violations such as illegal detention, execution, torture and disappearance. This came after nine months of what has been termed the 'dirty war', a war waged on the people by the military government. The dictatorship lasted until 1983 when it was brought down after the military's defeat in the Malvinas/Falklands war. In 1977, fourteen mothers began to walk around the square of Plaza de Mayo in the centre of Buenos Aires desperate to hear word of their children who had been 'disappeared' by the state. They walked in a circle, in silence, wearing white head scarves with the words '*Aparicion con vida*' (Return our Children Alive) or the names of their children embroidered on their scarves. In time they were joined by up to a thousand women. They became a social movement for human rights and democracy symbolically and practically. Their narrative strategy was so simple, straightforward and potent so that

it received international attention and it became incredibly vocal in its opposition to the dictatorship and its parallel violence.

How did this come about? Jo Fisher interviewed several of the women who initially participated in the 'protest' and who still protest every Thursday. Jo Fisher records the words of Maria Del Rosario whose son was kidnapped from her home in May 1976.

'It's very difficult to explain how you feel when they take a child from you and you don't know what's happened to that child. It's like a terrible emptiness, like something's been wrenched away from inside of you and there's nothing you can do about it. No one would help us. At the police stations and the barracks we stood in queues for hours and they turned us away, they played games with us, they laughed at us. They insulted us and called us the 'mothers of terrorists'. As we began to recognise in the faces of other women the same despair and desperation we felt, we began to realise that we weren't alone, that there were hundreds of mothers like us, searching for their children.

A few of us thought that if we all signed a letter together - which is how we started - we might make more progress. Then we found that if we all went to the courts they paid more attention to us. Then we all stood in lines outside the Ministry of Interior or an army barracks to drive the military mad. Working together was a very important step for us. At first we cried a lot, but together we began to find the strength to fight.  
(Fisher, 1993, p.105)

Another woman Hebe describes how the marching began :

When the police saw there were a lot of us in the square, sixty or seventy sitting on the benches, they said 'you can't sit here, there's a state of siege, this is a meeting; you'll have to move on' they began to hit us with their hands and with sticks. So we began walking. It was the police that forced us to march around the monument.  
(Ibid.: 107)

The mothers and grandmothers protest continues as 213 children are still unaccounted for despite a change in government. Maria Del Rosaria tells Fisher that,

'The square is our citadel. We'll only stop going to the square the day we're all dead, and not even then, because now Mothers are dying and they ask for their ashes to be scattered there.' (Ibid.: 137)

Hebe tells her how:

‘Our struggle is forever. In Argentina torturers and murderers walk the streets freely. I’ve met two of the torturers of my younger son, Raul. I know where they are. But they know we are fighting so that one day we’ll have a government that will condemn all those who have forced us to live through horror for all these years.’ (Ibid.: 137)

How has this particular incident, the case of the *Madres*, impacted the discourse of war? Definitely, we see a clear point of intersection between the two. The *Madres* use their gendered role of parents, i.e. motherhood as a symbolic form and as practical basis to contest the military oppression. Indeed, they designed their discourse to reflect their traditional domestic roles: theirs was a struggle on behalf of motherhood and in defence of children.

In human rights circles the mothers symbolise resistance to oppression, they are lauded for the innovative form their protest took, it was initially a silent one and only when they were asked later on in the campaign why they didn’t speak did they begin to shout for their children. From a gender perspective we can see that they used their female gender, in this case their role of mothers, as the pivotal point of their protest. This of course, fit in with, overlapped the military’s discourse on gender which indicated that the traditional role of motherhood should be lauded, and in a sense left this discourse of oppression ruptured momentarily by countering it with the discourse of motherhood (Hollander, 1997:140).

At the level of material practice these women used their gender to stand up publicly to the military. There was no show of military strength, in fact their weakness was their strength for how could a military maintain its masculinity by beating up grandmothers *in public*. We know they could use overt force in private, but to use it in public under

the camera of Amnesty International would have negatively impacted the pediment of masculinity on which their status as military personnel depended. These women, because of their public action, achieved the attention of the press and at the level of narrative strategy, their silence under international camera, was the strongest narrative strategy possible at that time. Here we see in this site the cultural formations of gender and war intersecting at the level of material practices, symbolic forms and narrative strategies. Was this gendered resistance - the protest was particular in its femininity, silent, caring, maternal and passive - to militarism successful?

There was a modicum of success at the material level, though this was not immediate. Information on bodies and on some kidnapped grandchildren was recovered, but the military's torture and murder of their children at some 340 torture camps was not blocked. At the symbolic level they were hugely successful in that once the military were removed from power, they symbolised what had been wrong with militarism in the constructive post-military polity. At the level of narrative strategy this discourse, established at the height of repression, had its impact later in the establishment, when the democratic political process came into play and held the leaders responsible for their action. For the first time in history of Latin America an own government made the military force accountable and jailed them.

Georgina Waylen draws our attention to the feminist debate on these activities (Waylen, 1996, 110). Are these activities regressive to a feminist cause because they involve women entering the public sphere on the basis of a traditional role or are they transformative in that they challenge the dominant discourses of motherhood as passive? Those who see this type of activity as transformative tend to argue that this gendering of political identities is a foundation for doing politics in a new way! The logic of this is mothers become revolutionary and motherhood is revolutionised. On

the other hand, what is worrying is that in a discourse where motherhood and sacrifice go hand in hand, the celebration of the actions of these women can be construed as the celebration of femininity under torture from 'assaultive masculinity', to borrow a phrase from Sara Ruddick (1993).

Let us place this site in its wider context where we see other patterns, other constructions and deconstructions of gender in place. We can see at the level of practicality that the appearance of the mothers in the streets was a result of a defensive reaction to military invasion of the home. At the discursive level we can see it as a result of the feminine being under attack in the first place. The home, the private, the civilian, the peaceful were in fact undergoing annihilation from their binary opposites; front, public, combatant and war, and the public centre became the only possibly safe place for the women. Here we have a situation where the grossness of war, the discourse of authoritarianism took control. Of the 30,000 (human rights figure estimate) disappeared, over 30% were women and an estimated 3% of these had been pregnant at the time of their 'disappearance' (Fisher, 1993: 105). In the camps these women were tortured, brutalised and murdered in the same way as the men were. There was also gender specific and sexualised torture. Bunster-Burotto (1985) describes family torture where women were raped in front of their children and vice versa, where sexual assault on women was enacted by a man, men or animals. Here women's babies were taken from them before they were murdered and the babies 'disappeared' into homes approved by the military. Many women were active participants in the resistance and at the practical level their involvement gave strength to the movement. However, it also afforded the military with the opportunity to go to new lengths of torture and oppression to annihilate so called 'safe spaces'.

Desperation, the mother of protest, brought the mothers themselves out in search of answers on the 30,000 '*desaparecidos*'. In the face of the dirtiest war where the governor of the province of Buenos Aires stated clearly that 'First we will kill all the subversives, then we'll kill their collaborators, then.. their sympathisers, then.... those who remained indifferent and, finally, we will kill the weak'(cited in J.Fisher, 1993: 104), these women felt compelled to make public protest. First the military called them mad, then they called them mothers of terrorists, then they moved on them, kidnapping and intimidating them. Meanwhile, newspapers and the international press has taken up the story and the protest was well established and the activities of Plaza de Mayo are well remembered at the symbolic level.

Whatever site we view, whether it is the almost passive resistance of the Plaza de Mayo or the militarisation of the revolutionary women we can go through this process of unravelling gendering and warring as cultural formations insofar as they are constructed in tandem. Leaving this site, we can turn to a contrasting site, one almost the opposite in its politics. The instance of women in the United States army and their role in the war against Iraq affords us an opportunity to examine a very different construction of gender and its intersection with war processes. While the Gulf War came to many women it is also correct to say that many women brought that war to them. Some 32,340 US service women were active combatants in the Gulf War (Pettman, 1996:148). For the first time media focused on service women and on service mothers: women were included in a new ways as fighters.

What happened to the narratives of gender here, are women empowered through playing an active military role? Was warring any less violent or any more peaceful as

a result of this inclusion of militarised women? Was the feminine eradicated, through the use of women soldiers, i.e. can women be as masculinised as men? Was there an unprecedented incorporation of the feminine into the representations of warfare? Were the resulting new representations of gender positioning the feminine in new positive ways - were female gender identity formulations strengthened? Was this empowering from a feminist political perspective? American women and Saudi Arabian women felt it was! Saudi Arabian women dismissed their chauffeurs and drove their own cars in a one-day demonstration during the Gulf War according to Jeanne Vickers (1993:63) in an effort to force reform of women's political representation having watched US women driving army jeeps and enjoying equal status with their male colleagues. The poststructuralist framework allows us to investigate gendered political identity formations in extensive detail. The descriptive detail emerging from this form of analysis of the intersection of gendering and warring is very useful at the analytical level, though less so at the level of transformative strategies.

### **Negotiation and/or Assimilation?**

Taking up the question of engendering political identity formation from a deconstructionist point of view has certain political drawbacks when it comes to developing transformative strategies as many feminists, particularly those writing on women and war, tend to want to do. Cooke and Woollacott, most recently and most coherently, have taken up the question of women and war from a deconstructionist perspective. They start from a position where they see war as central to gendering : 'after biological reproduction, war is perhaps the arena where division of labour along gender lines has been the most obvious, and thus where sexual difference has seemed



the most absolute and natural' (1993: ix). They move to a position where they argue that ' war is beginning to undo the binary structures that it originally put in place: peace and war; home (female space) and front (male space); combatant and civilian. Women as participants in wars of this century have blurred distinctions between gender roles in peace and in war. They argue that war has become a terrain in which gender is negotiated (Ibid.: xi).

Despite the lack of historical depth such an approach entails (the book is concerned with twentieth-century wars only) we can take their central point - that war is a terrain in which gender is negotiated and that cultural conceptions of gender reshape the experience and meaning of war. However, they move on to the other side of the corollary, that warfaring depends on gendering, to develop possibilities of transformation. Several authors writing within a poststructuralist perspective in their collection see this as the point where feminist politics can now make a difference (Cooke and Woollacott, 93). Enloe, writing on international relations in her book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, (1989) also sees the fact that international relations depends on gendering as the point where feminist politics can begin to make a difference. For her, focusing on women's involvement in international relationships will offer revelations from which 'may come fresh proposals for making countries less violent, more just and ultimately more rewarding for women as well as men' (1989: xii). In the 1980's the hope had been for women's values and maternal thinking to stem the construction of militarism and war (Elstain, 1983; Ruddick, 1983), now Cooke and Woollacott argue that the deconstruction of the war machine will in fact rely on deconstructing gendering.

“As we reinterpret and redefine gender roles and identities in war, it becomes clear that war has also become negotiable. The certainties constructed by binary thinking are revealed to be subject to question”.

(Cooke and Woollacott, 1993: xi)

Again an historical view of war would evaluate that war has always been optional or negotiable. We can also see that the discursive construction of war is not possible without gender relations in place and that the object of war, in the current hierarchical configuration of male as powerful and female as passive, is often at the discursive level about the elimination of the feminine. See for example, the discursive space allocated to the feminine in militarism as represented in the latest Hollywood text on militarism, *G.I. Jane*. However, Cooke and Woollacott, develop their transformative politics on the following basis :

“ But we believe that breaking the nexus (real or assumed) between military service and masculinity on the one hand and pacifism and femininity will weaken the social pediments on which militarism rests” (Cooke and Wollacott, 1993:321)

Unlike in Enloe’s work where she repeatedly refers to women’s collective action and women’s political networking as important to the development of feminised international relationships, Cooke and Woollacott focus on deconstructing gender. Therein they see our hope for the future! Deconstructing war will in fact rely on deconstructing gendering because the basis of war is the construction of the enemy as the binary opposite and that is why war talk as it is narrated is so gendered.

It is difficult to put faith in this politics. This poststructuralist approach to identity formation sets up the theoretical framework where we can explore how a negotiation of violence has been put in place, but I argue it is also possible that the deconstruction of gender can help hegemonize militarism. In fact, contrary to what Woollacott and Cooke argue, the spread of militarism could necessitate 'breaking the nexus between military service and masculinity' and 'pacifism and femininity' at the discursive level in order to further assimilate women into warring and femininity into discourses of warring. Women's increasing involvement in militarism is occurring within particularly powerful formations with the hegemonic masculinity associated with global capitalism (Connell, 1987) deconstructing the feminine side at a more rapid pace than the masculine side. It seems to me that symbolic representations of the passivity and femininity are on the decrease whereas symbolic representations of strength and femininity are on the increase ( e.g. Spice Girls, Xenon the Warrior Princess, GI Jane in the media world and representations of women as armed soldiers and armed revolutionaries in actual wars). Are not the construction of identities around strength and femininity as readily incorporated into warring discourses as those of passivity and femininity? Has the discourse of war dominated to such an extent that we are brought to the point where women's incorporation into warring processes has been about the assimilation of the feminine into the discourse of war? Woollacott and Cooke argue that 'war is a terrain in which gender is negotiated', but what form does this negotiation take? It is arguable that the only negotiation that takes place, looking (in the context of 20th century warring) at resistance of women to militarisation and processes of militarising women, is one of the foreclosure of the feminine. The inclusion of women in war, in the 'dirty war' of Argentina and those other 'dirty wars' which mark 20th century warring can be readily read as being about

the foreclosing of the feminine. In a postmodern global cultural context we can see changing signs and symbols of war, but is there room to read these positively?

If we look back to our example of the resistance of women in Argentina it is ironic that, at the material level, it was not the international public outcry in defence of these women and their children that brought down the military dictatorship. Rather, it was the militarisation of the UK, under Maggie Thatcher, that was the force which finally brought down the regime. Another irony in terms of gender politics is that the military regime was brought down by another military might led by a woman.

Can we read the site of the Plaza de Mayo as signifying the final breakdown of the private, the feminine, where the weakest resist by showing their vulnerability, not their strength. The last symbol of the feminine exposes itself to be finished off publicly and yet it cannot be done publicly. Is this not as close to total defeat of the feminine as you can get? Is it not central to the picture of the defeat of the feminine that the military power that defeats the regime that grinds its heels into the feminine is led by a woman who lays no claim to the feminine? On the other hand there is no such thing as total defeat, the subaltern feminine discourse of the grandmothers that was laughed at by the military regime could reassert itself in times of peace.

Therefore would engendering peace processes, rather than narratives of war, be a more likely source of political transformation and can you engender peace processes without engendering conflict? While in a context of warring gender is negotiated, but appropriation is another form of negotiation. Discourses of war can certainly accommodate the notion of femininity and strength without necessarily weakening the pediments on which war rests. I believe that discourses of war are increasingly hegemonic to the extent that they incorporate notions of strength and femininity

combined with notions of femininity and passivity in their narrative in 20th century postmodern warfare.

In conclusion, women are being included in more ways and in increasing numbers in wars and in peace processes. Whereas, up until now it has been argued that war was men's business, or women were not included in war 'as women', there are changes on this front too. Given the involvement of women in war, insurgency and peace processes it is easy to identify change, but far less easy to identify progressive change. Where women have been included and empowered through inclusion in both resistance to military regimes and in inclusion in militarisation, this can be read as extremely problematic if our vision of transformation includes notions of the world as a more peaceful place for all to live in. A turn towards a poststructuralist analysis allows us to understand better the intersections between gendering and warring, to perceive the pervasiveness of the interrelationships between the two, and to see the manipulation of concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in warring processes. However, at the level of political strategising it is also clear that poststructuralism as presented by Cooke and Woollacott promises us everything, but requires no engagement of the polity whatever.

New trends in war are likely to be as gendered as they always have been, although the form the gendering will take will be more inclusive of women and will incorporate particular notions of femininity and strength. Those who wish to contest this discourse must necessarily proceed from the basis of challenging this construction, a politics for which the dominant discourse of feminism seems singularly ill-prepared.

## **References**

- Cooke, M. & Woollacott, A. (Ed) (1993) Gendering War Talk. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Elshtain, J.B. (1983) 'On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness' in (ed) J. Steinhem, Women and Men's War's, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Elshtain, J.B. (1987) Women and War. New York: Basic Books.
- Enloe, C. 1989. Bananas, Beaches and Bases, USA: University of California Press.
- Hollander, N.C. 1997. Love in a Time of Hate, Liberation Psychology in Latin America, New Brunswick:Rutgers University.
- Isaksson, E. (1988) Women and the Military System. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Matthews, I. (1993) 'Daughtering in War: Two "Case Studies" from Mexico and Guatemala' in Cooke M. & A. Woollacott, Gendering War Talk. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Moore, H. (1994) 'The Problem of Explaining Violence in the Social Sciences' in Sex and Violence, Issues in Representation and Experience. London: Routledge.
- Pettman, J.J. 1996. Worlding Women, A Feminist International Politics. London: Routledge.
- Ruddick, S. (1983) 'Drafting Women in the Interests of Peace', Signs, Vol. 8, No.3.
- Ruddick, S. (1993). 'Notes Towards a Feminist Peace Politics' in Cooke M. &A. Woollacott, Gendering War Talk. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Vickers, J. 1993. Women and War, London: Zed Books.

