

Engendering War in Hanan Al Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra*

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1. Introduction

The urgency to retrieve memory in many Arab women's writings becomes the impetus to retell the stories of women silenced, marginalized, and excluded by their own communities. There is no doubt that with the retrieval of memory comes the resituating of the body from its condition as an object of male desire, and "its transformation into a desiring force that rejects its subjugation to a narrative of erasure" (Fayad 148).¹ Hanan Al Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra*² is divided into two books. The first book is entitled "The Scars of Peace". In it we find the central female character, Zahra, is silently victimized by the patriarchal structure through its variously ugly manifestations. The second book is subtitled "The Torrents of War". Here we find a completely different character, one who is ready to do anything to stop the war, even if it takes a relationship with a sniper – a symbol of patriarchal war – which ends in her tragic death.

2. Engendering War in Hanan Al Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra*

My argument is that women are victimized by both patriarchy and war, and the futility of deconstructing the concept of war from within the isolation of patriarchy. For example, Zahra's father is portrayed as a patriarchal tyrant to his wife, Fatme and daughter Zahra, who is ever fearful of him: "(a)ll I knew was that I was afraid of my father, as afraid of the blows he dealt her as I was of those he dealt me; while she continued to tremble and wail in his grip"(15). The attention lavished on Zahra's brother Ahmad as a child reflects the masculine ideals of the patriarchy and the strength of its grip on society. Zahra remembers the behavior of her mother towards her brother.

Everyday, as we sat in the kitchen to eat, her love would be declared: having filled my plate with soup she serves my brother Ahmad, taking all her time, searching carefully for the best pieces of meat. She dips the ladle into the pot and salvages meat fragments. There they go into Ahmad's dish. (11)

Such a masculine mentality continues to manifest itself later in the book, in Ahmad's addiction to hashish, masturbation, and goods stripped from the bodies of the dead.

Zahra recounts how her own face and her inner psyche become scarred as a result of her society's descent into the abyss of war. In Zahra's early years, we also observe that her brutal father rejected her because she had acne, a symbol of her inner scars. Within this context, Ann Adams elaborates further how the conflicts in Zahra's home truly register on her body: "Zahra's abject and acne-filled face not only makes visible the emotional scars this upbringing has had on the sensitive young girl, but also literalizes the ever increasing gender conflict carried on in society – the 'battle' between men and women for the control and regulation of female bodies" (201). It is a problem that Zahra's father thinks might make of her a spinster with no marriage prospects. This drives him to beat and abuse her mercilessly every time he sees her fingering her pimples.

He would scold me severely whenever he caught me playing with my pimples....My father would go raving mad every time he noticed my face and its problems .He would nag my mother sarcastically : " That will be the day when Zahra married. What a day of joy for her and her pock-marked face! (24-5)

Zahra's father's cruel behavior succeeds only in intensifying Zahra's sense of isolation in a patriarchal society in which she feels discriminated against, unwanted and unloved by the people closest to her. It also reinforces to some degree the patriarchally constructed notions of beauty and idealised femininity.³ Resisting these patriarchal notions of beauty, Zahra starts a process of self-mutilation, a symbol of her rejection of her society and its conventions. With her nails, Zahra intentionally disfigures her face until the blood starts to ooze from her pimples to such extent that it has become her only reason for waking up early each morning: "(m)y pimples were my only reason for waking each morning. I would hurry to the mirror to inspect in the calm light of day the ravages of the latest onslaught" (24). Within this context, John Knowles comments that Zahra's face is no longer part of her but is metonymic of society, "In aggressing her skin, she is, in effect, indirectly repudiating all the unrealistic and procrustean molds in which commodified women are forced to fit."(15). In other words, through her silent resistance, Zahra rejects

the criteria by means of which women's value is measured and assessed as only sexual objects.

Al Shaykh portrays how Zahra continues resisting the oppressive patriarchal system through sheltering in silence, as seen in the first part of the novel. The bathroom becomes her only safe haven from the suffocating society she lives in. For example, Zahra locks herself in bathrooms either in Beirut or Africa whenever she encounters the psychological and mental pressures imposed on her by her tyrannical father, her uncle, and her husband. Concerning her uncle who lives in exile in Africa, his idealistic notion of his homeland, Lebanon, has come to him in the form of Zahra.⁴ We find that Zahra's arrival in the country of her uncle's exile represents "a direct contact with that which he misses the most, and from the outset he clings to it with all his being." (Allen 245). This is seen in the way he gives Zahra his bed while sleeping on the couch, and how he comes every morning to awaken her. He is desperate for her attention and often hugs her in a way that makes Zahra feel very uncomfortable, bringing back all the painful memories of her past. Zahra wishes she could break her own silence and tell him how she truly feels.

Uncle , please tell me why you have stretched out by my side . ‘Oh, how I wish could have said those words! ‘Uncle, if you could hear the beat of my heart, if you could only see the disgust and fury gathered in my soul. If only you know what my true feelings were. I am at my wits’ end, and am annoyed with myself and hate myself because I stay silent. When will my soul cry out like a woman surrendering to a redeeming love? (34)

These words reveal Zahra's inner self and her desperate search for her own identity. But instead of voicing her anger against her uncle, Zahra retreats silently to the bathroom. "I went into the bathroom and heard myself thinking 'There is no parting from you, bathroom. You are the only thing I have loved in Africa. You, and the electrical appliances stacked on the shelves'" (27).

While locking herself in the bathroom, Zahra remembers her first, ungratifying sexual experience with Malek, a married colleague in the government tobacco factory. Haunted by her painful past from which, she thought, that Africa could be her haven, Zahra

narrates: "(n)ow I am in Africa because I want to be far from Beirut" (29). But unfortunately, she encounters the harsh reality again when faced with Majed's marriage proposal, which leads her to another psychological break down, and an inability to face her husband-to-be as a non-virgin. "What was I to do with my life after Africa? Where would I go? The day must come when I marry and my husband discovers that I am no longer a virgin, that I have undergone two abortions" (29).⁵

Zahra's husband turns out to be a crude man who marries Zahra in order to be "the owner of a woman's body that I could make love to whenever I wished ... I have married Hashem's niece and so fulfilled the dream I've had ever since being in the South ... of marrying the daughter of an illustrious family" (83). He is completely oblivious to the fact that Zahra craves to assert her own identity and freedom: "I wanted to live for myself. I wanted my body to be mine alone. I wanted the place on which I stood and the air surrounding me to be mine alone and no one else's" (93). When her husband finds out that Zahra is no longer a virgin, he goes into a fit, feeling his honor and pride deeply wounded: "I thanked God that my mother was far away, far from this mess, and couldn't ask to see these stained sheets so that she might display them to Zahra's mother, to the neighbors and relatives. I thanked God for my mother's absence, and with it her stinging tongue" (86). It is apparent that he sees Zahra merely as a sexual commodity of which he is the sole proprietor. He does not even care about creating a true exchange of love and true, genuine feelings that could have saved her from breaking down again (Accad :1990). Furthermore, Africa may be a political haven for Hashem and other dissidents who live in exile, and may represent economic opportunities for youths like Majed,⁶ but there is no refuge for women who try to escape their oppressive, patriarchal families and their painful pasts. For Zahra, Africa becomes Lebanon since the patriarchal values that are meant to oppress women have been transported there intact. Both her uncle and husband "fail to acknowledge Zahra as an individual with her own personal needs"(Adams 201).

Once Zahra is back to Beirut – in the second part of the novel, “The Torrents of War” – she falls into a severe depression manifested in her withdrawal symptoms and over-eating, which develops into a form of complete despair and sickness:

My deep sleeping was sickness, my increasing weight, my wearing only my housecoat for two months on end were sickness. The scabs on my face that spread to my neck, to my shoulders, and my not caring about them were a sickness. My silence was a sickness. My mother would launch into a tirade whenever she saw me in my housecoat during those two months, but I stayed completely silent. (126)

But with the advent of the war, her attitude changes drastically as she begins to follow the news of the war.

Reading nervously but eagerly between the lines in the newspapers, searching for the truth. Then I would overflow with despair and disbelief. All those figures which listed the numbers killed, could they be possible? Were there truly these kidnappings? Did they actually check your identity card and then, on the basis of your religion, either kill you or set you free? Were the young people who fought in the war receiving orders from their leaders, and were they wearing combat clothes? Was it true that the Rivoli Cinema had been burnt down? Was it true about the fire in the Souk Sursok?. And the one in Souk Al-Tawile? Had George, the hairdresser, our neighbor, turned against me? Had I turned against him? (129)

Al Shaykh tries to subvert the patriarchal idea of war by throwing light on women’s participation in putting an end to it.⁷ For example, we see that Zahra is no longer confined to the safety of the bathroom but instead “finds that she can inhabit other spaces and move beyond the narrow life-style of her mother. While others cower in fear, Zahra rushes into the midst of the turmoil.”(Adams 201). War jolts her back to life and forces her to act; she volunteers for a short time at a casualty ward, which gives her a deeper insight into the gruesome realities of war.

I wondered whether the leaders of the factions ever visited hospitals, and if they did, even for an hour, how they could live an ordinary day again? Could they stop themselves thinking of an amputated leg? Or of an eye that had turned to liquid? Or of a severed hand lying there in resignation and helplessness? Why did none of those leaders, as they stood listening to the groans, pledge to put a stop to the war and cry out, “ This war shall end! I shall finish it! No cause can be won until the

war is stopped .No cause comes before the cause of humanity and safety. The war ends here and now! (135)

Zahra tries to understand the real reasons behind the cruel war and its validity, and the urgent necessity of acting to stop the complete madness. Undoubtedly, her reflections on the cruelty of war pose serious questions about the role of women in stopping war and what strategies should be adopted in this regard.⁸ In her continuous attempts to stop the war, Zahra tries to prevent the shooting of prisoners taken from the Christian side by asking the militiaman she knows to let them go free. But her parents, afraid for her life, drag her back home where she sits weeping: "I sat on, punishing myself, feeling guilty for all the times when I had felt uncomfortable before the war, and for all the misery which I had thought was misery before the war, and the pain I had thought was pain before the war" (114). In this context, Wafa Stephen has commented on the constructive role of women during war: "women have tried to appease the fighters by paying visits to refugee camps and military headquarters and putting flowers in the nozzles of guns" (3).

War puts every fact of life into question. Zahra and her mother clutch one another during successive bouts of street fighting among Lebanese factions, which makes Zahra close to her mother again like "the orange and navel."

My mother and I shouted out together as if we were once again as close as orange and navel, as we had been when we stood trembling behind the door, back in my earliest memories .Now she moved across from one corner to the other room as the room was lit up by explosions .We crawled down to the basement, the noise all the while moving closer until it was as though it had its source inside my head. Before I could cry out, an explosion had burst near-by and my heart had dropped between my feet. I was left completely empty, except for my voice, but even this I could not control any more. I lifted my head and saw my mother crying like a child, hiding her face in her hands, unable to move an inch. (136)

War has drawn them closer than before since they are horrified by its barbaric face. For instance, both shout upon seeing a newspaper photograph of a whole family killed while playing cards, "still clutching the cards in their hands, the shrapnel mingling with parts of their bodies, everything else looking normal, children's underwear still hanging in the room" (136). These days make Zahra remember her childhood relationship with her

mother and how "she wanted to draw her towards me, to draw myself close to her, to touch her face and have her eyes peering into mine. I wanted to disappear into the hem of her dress and become even closer to her than the navel is to the orange!" (8). But in spite of Zahra's closeness to her mother, her feelings towards her are contradictory. Zahra, in her early childhood, was constantly hurt by her mother's abandonment of her every time a man came along: "(t)he man became the centre of her life, and around him was nothing but flying embers" (8-9). Zahra also remembers how her mother used to take her along to conceal her love affairs, resenting the fact that she had been used to deceiving her father, leading to her mixed feelings of love and hatred toward her mother – "I no longer knew what my feelings were, to whom I owed loyalty"(15). Within this context, Roger Allen comments "(w)hen a young girl growing up in a thoroughly traditional, male-dominated society is presented with a model of maternal love that is so fraught with conflicting ideals and emotions, it is hardly surprising that she should be somewhat disturbed" (332). And this may account for Zahra's inability to build trust in her mother and belief in women's togetherness where men "seem to matter much more than women. This could be what leads her to madness and death in the end" (Accad 45-6).

Al-Shaykh deconstructs the masculine idea of war by exposing its ugly side and how it affects the social fabric in a disastrous way. For example, we see that war has transformed Ahmad from the time he was a boy whose father wanted to send him to America – "(m)y father's one dream was to save enough money to send my brother Ahmad to the United States to study electrical engineering" (25) – into an uncivilized militiaman who feels tremendous pride in raiding people's homes to loot, desecrate and destroy. "Ahmad had begun to return with other things apart from his rifle and his joints of hashish. He would try to conceal these objects behind his back as he went across the living room and into our parent's bedroom."(169). For Ahmad, killing means masculinity⁹ – at least he is not like a woman, sitting at home. Ahmad comes to symbolize "the petulant and domineering attitudes within the society that, having helped engender the war, now sustain it" (Allen 1995: 239). War has given him power over the others and a way to gain money by robbing and looting. He is even worried about the end of the war, which would mean an end to the twisted identity that the war has bestowed on him.

I don't wish for the war to end. I don't want to have to worry about what to do next. The war has structured my days and nights, my financial status, my very self. It has given me a task that suits me, especially since those first months when I was so nervous and afraid. Once those first months were over I became like the cock of the roost (168).

Ahmad's words reflect the way in which war has given him and his comrades an occupation "that they did not have before and without which they would not know what to do" (Accad 1990: 53). He is proud to belong to the patriarchal system and embraces its masculine values.

Al-Shaykh also portrays how war has brought out the disintegration of Lebanese society, which motif is manifested in the use of drugs, the loss of moral values, and the disruption of traditional institutions. In regard to drugs, Ahmad talks proudly about the legitimacy of using drugs during the war.

Drugs have given the war on a new dimension. I can't really explain it. They help you see the war through a filter that screens the eyes...it cancels out the guns, the rockets, the firing, even though we go on fighting, and if I asked myself what I have accomplished, I answer that I have obeyed my commander's orders and achieved much. I have not stayed at home with the women. (168)

Concerning loss of moral values, Zahra is shaken by Ahmad's audacity in masturbating in her presence. She wonders how war could have changed moral values to such an extent that everything has become permissible during the war.

I looked up to see him touching himself. I could not say why I should be so upset. How was it that the war had changed things to this extent: that Ahmad could sit and fondle himself without a thought for my presence as if he were on his own. Oh, war! ... Ahmad, you sit in the next room, fondle your genitals and inhale hashish. You smoke grass and fondle your groin, and can only come back to being yourself after you have killed and robbed, hated and fled. (164)

Zahra is able to criticize the decay of moral values and hold herself apart from the patriarchal system so that she can develop values of peace, tolerance and equality. She is

also aware that war is a male activity and that women are the ultimate victims of its horror. Within this context, Virginia Woolf argues,

women 's exclusion from patriarchal traditions makes them uniquely free of the greed and egotism fostered by those traditions and more willing to criticize them; denied the economic and social rewards for aggression and greed granted to men, women are freer to develop values necessary for peace such as cooperation, equality, and creativity. (1966: 56)

War also suspends Zahra's father's oppressive, patriarchal role, which has receded into the background.¹⁰ He leaves the wounded Beirut, returning with his wife to their ancestral village, apparently still untouched by the war. They leave behind Zahra, who would not otherwise have been allowed to live on her own, without the oppression of patriarchal convention: "(m)y father turned to face us, and I had never seen him so feeble. He could hardly speak for weakness as his head went on shaking and he tried to persuade Ahmad to leave everything and go with us to the village" (139). Even her father's belt no longer carries any threat for Zahra as the war has made it completely powerless (173). It is the same belt that had beaten her mother and instilled fear in Zahra.

War disrupts traditional institutions. Such disruption of the entrenched moral order affords Zahra some breathing space. Zahra moves into a house of her own and is able to channel her energy into her own survival. Within this new space created by war, Zahra's formidable energies are channeled into affirming a new set of humanistic values that enable her to resist the law of the jungle, represented by Ahmad and his generation. Her deep indignation with her brother's speech and his stolen goods is clearly expressed: "I covered my ears with my hands and screamed, 'Stop telling me any of these things!' and took refuge, crying in my room" (170).

Zahra's complex relationship with the sniper is meant to stop the war even as it makes use of the language of seduction. For Zahra, if she is unable to stop war and death, at least she can defer it by creating new values of love, mutual coexistence and tolerance. Every time she sees the sniper, she wonders

What could possibly divert the sniper from aiming his rifle and startle him to the point where he might open his mouth instead? Perhaps a troupe of dancers would do it? Or Perhaps a gipsy with a performing monkey? Or perhaps a naked woman, passing across his field of fire? May be if such a sight crossed his vision he would pause for just one moment and wonder whether the world had indeed gone mad in the midst of this war. (157)

Walking topless in front of the sniper is Zahra's attempt to distract him from his fatal job. Put differently, Zahra makes it her moral duty to come to the sniper and communicate with him sexually and verbally, hoping that such forms of communication might alleviate some of the gruesome facts of the war and heal the wounds of her shattered and wounded country. In her relationship with the sniper, we find Zahra using her body language to humanize this "monster" – "I had given him my body, my chance of life or death" (152) – asking herself endless questions, trying to understand what makes a sniper a sniper, to such extent that it becomes the meaning she craves to find in her life. "What had made him into a sniper? Who had given him orders to kill anonymous passers-by?" (154).

Zahra's body, ravaged by her painful past, is now used creatively for a meaningful purpose. She experiences ecstasy for the first time, something that she lacked in her previous, traditional relationships with Malek and her husband Majed: "What, now, had become of me? Crying out, lying on dusty floor tiles in an abandoned building, breathing the air's fear and sadness, my lord and master a god of death who had succeeded in making my body tremble with ecstasy for the first time in thirty years" (154). Here, a new purpose has rejuvenated her, and peace has descended on Zahra for the first time, even to the extent of contemplating marriage with the sniper, the only man who has accepted her as an equal. "My one wish is for the war to end so we can make our bed elsewhere. I wish to marry and take this sniper for my husband. I wish to stay with him for ever, but cannot live with him unless we are married." (173).

The bodily exchange between Zahra and the sniper is a symbol of Zahra's faith in peace and the values of humanity. Her desperate attempt to stop the war by giving her body and soul to the sniper is seen as instrument of empowerment. Through it, Zahra is able to advocate a more humane, peaceful and less barbaric society than that governed by the

oppressive patriarchal ideology that destroys any hope for a better future for women. She contemplates meeting the sniper to discuss their future marriage once the war is over:

Tomorrow, when I see him again, I will speak frankly. We will discuss everything concerning sniping and marriage. Tomorrow will decide my future. There is nothing I don't want to know. I am impatient to know everything. Tomorrow will decide my future. There is nothing I don't want to know. I am impatient to know everything. Tomorrow will decide my life. (174)

At the end of the novel, Zahra informs the sniper that she is pregnant, which generates a masculine response from him – "My God, Zahra. You must get an abortion!" (203). Her lover shortly changes his stance and assures her that that he will marry her. "Tomorrow morning. I'll call at your home and bring my family" (210). The thought of legitimacy and hope makes Zahra believe that the war has ended and it is time to build a new future: "It begins to occur to me that the war with its miseries and destructiveness, has been necessary for me to start to return to being normal and human"¹¹ (161). But it seems that her feeling is not meant to last. She feels an excruciating pain and finds herself lying in the street with blood draining from her body.

The pain is terrible, but I grow accustomed to it, and to the darkness. As I close my eyes for an instant, I see the stars of pain. Then there are rainbows arching across white skies. He kills me. He kills me with bullets that lay at his elbow as he made love to me. He kills me, and the white sheets that covered me a little while ago are still crumpled from my presence. Does he kill me because I'm pregnant? Or is it because I asked him whether he was a sniper? It's as if someone tugs at my limbs. Should I call out one more time, 'Please help!' (214)

Zahra's tragic death at the end of the book can be seen as proof that war has not swept clear the traditional, patriarchal forces that legitimate all that oppresses women: "(t)he war has swept everything away, for the rich and for the poor, for the beautiful and for the ugly. It has kneaded everything together into a common dough" (184). This may be why Al Shaykh has to situate the sexual encounters between Zahra and the sniper on the stairs of an abandoned building, haunted by the smell of death – "lying on dusty floor tiles in an abandoned building" (154) – which indicates the futility of this relationship, which is doomed, killing any hope for new life.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, Zahra is victimized both by patriarchy and by war. Zahra falls to the same patriarchal structures, now in a form of the sniper, which had caused her pain in her youth. She had falsely thought that war, in spite of its ugly side, could be a new beginning, the start of a healthy and normal life. In *The Story of Zahra*, Al Shaykh has articulated an empowering discourse for women. That is seen through Zahra's life from her silence to her determined pursuit of meaningful action, far away from any limited political affiliation, to put an end to this barbaric war. *The story of Zahra* registers women's rejection of the discourse of war and the patriarchy that engenders it. Zahra, a silenced, oppressed woman, casts off these constraints and asserts her right to speak out against the dominant patriarchal order. In this regard, Accad says, "both women and men should work together towards a reformed nationalism striped of its male chauvinism, war and violence" (1990:26). Hence, without the deconstruction of patriarchy and its ugly manifestations, any attempt to stop it will be a feeble endeavor, done within the oppressive patriarchy, as seen in Zahra's final tragic death.¹² Finally, Zahra's actions on behalf of humanity and civilized values symbolize a humanistic statement in advocacy of peace, love, and tolerance.¹³

Notes.

1. Mona Fayad observes that, "aware that such a process of mythification places Woman outside the movement of history, Arab women writers have developed a number of strategies to produce a counter-discourse to such a historical representation. One such strategy is a move to reclaim history and specificity." (147. Nawal al-Saadawi also stresses this point when she calls for a re-reading of Arab history from the viewpoint of Arab women so they can be aware that the struggle of Arab women against sexual, national, and class oppression is not newly born, and that the Arab women's movement doesn't come from the void, and is not modeled on women's movements in the West, but is evident throughout the course of Arab and Islamic history, extending over fourteen centuries. See Saadawi, *Towards a Strategy for Incorporating and Integrating Arab Women in the Arab Nationalist Movement* 471-91.
2. All references will be henceforth taken from Al- Shaykh, Hanan. *The Story of Zahra*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.
3. Within this context, Evelyne Accad says that *The Story of Zahra*'s "explicit sexual descriptions, its exploration of taboo subjects such as family cruelty and women's sexuality and its relation to the war, caused such a scandal that the book was banned in several Arab countries." (1990: 44-5:). Larson adds that Hanan Al Shaykh's bold depiction of a Muslim family with no "sense of cohesiveness" (14) is the primary reason for the novel having been banned in several Islamic countries.
4. See Walther, "Out of Sight: Toni Morrison's Revision of Beauty Black American Literature Forum" and Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*.
5. Radhakrishnan presents the dichotomy of nationalist rhetoric as based on an inside/outside opposition that is translated into gendered terms, in which nationalist rhetoric makes "woman' the pure and a historical signifier of 'interiority'", with interiority assuming an essential identity that constitutes "tradition" (77-95). Partha Chatterjee also criticizes critiques the notion of scientific rationalism as reinforcing the dichotomy traditional/modern, and thereby placing the discourse of nationalism within the Western Enlightenment discourse. See Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. London: Zed, 1986.
6. Evelyne Accad observes that "(o)ne of the codes of Arab tribes is *sharaf* (honor), which also means the preservation of girls' virginity to ensure that the women are kept exclusively for the men of their tribe." (29).

7. Several West African nations house very large Lebanese communities. In the Ivory Coast, for example, "80 per cent of the buildings belong to Lebanese, as well as more than 70 per cent of the wholesale and 50 per cent of the retail trade." Even more significantly, in the context of this novel, "since large-scale fighting broke out in Lebanon in 1975, 'other' Lebanese have arrived here ... Some of them give the impression of coming here for a rest between spells of fighting in Beirut. They're terribly arrogant." See "The Ivory Coast's Lebanese Scapegoats Face Hostility", *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 25 Mar. 1990.

8. In her protest against war, Virginia Woolf says, "(w)e daughters of educated men are between the devil and the deep sea. Behind us lies the patriarchal system; the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility. Before us lies the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed. The one shuts us up like slaves in a harem, the other forces us to circle, like caterpillars head to tail, round and round the mulberry tree, the sacred tree, of property. The question we put to you, lives of the dead, is how can we enter the professions and yet remain civilized human beings; human beings that is, who wish to prevent war?" (1966: 39).

9. Judith Stiehm notes that "too often peace activists find themselves protesting wars already in progress or peace agreements already signed. The reports describe efforts to institutionalize women's role in international peacemaking and building. Insuring presence is preemptive and almost certainly advantageous. Unfortunately, women have not yet developed the kind of strategic thinking about peace that men daily and at great expense devote to war (2003: 1232).

10. Cynthia Enloe observes that the military has a special role in the ideological construction of patriarchy because of the significance of combat in the construction of masculine identities and in the justification of masculine superiority. Paul Higate says that militaries are perceived as masculine institutions not only because they are populated mostly with men but also because they constitute a major arena for the construction of masculine identities. See *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*. To read more about masculinity and the men who wage war, please see Carol Cohen, "A Conversation with Cynthia Enloe: Feminists Look at Masculinity and the Men Who Wage War." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* .28:4 2003. 1188-1207.

11. Nadine Puechguirbal comments on how war affect women and temporarily suspend patriarchal structures. She writes, "(t)oday between 60 and 80 percent of women are single heads of households .Shortages of food, wood, water, and health care have created great burdens for them. Women and girls often have to travel long distances to find resources, inadvertently exposing themselves to violence by thugs roaming the countryside." (2003: 1273).

12. Meredith Turshen writes that "(w)ar also destroys the patriarchal structures of society that confine and degrade women. In the very breakdown of morals, traditions, customs, and community, war also opens up and creates new beginnings" (1998: 20).

13-In this regard, Miriam Cooke says that the war had opened up new vistas, but within its own logic. It could not yet be used to transcend it. Sherrill Whittington argues that it is essential that the principle of gender equality and nondiscrimination be mainstreamed into all policies and programs. United Nations peacekeeping operations must guarantee that the protection of women's human rights is central to allocations that promote peace, implement peace agreements, resolve conflict and reconstruct war-torn societies.

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