Lecture for the Colloquium ‘Intended and Unintended Suffering: The Legacy of Meg Stacey’s Ideas and Work’, Wednesday June 29 2005.

‘Feminist Antimilitarism: Scope, Problematic and Difficulties in a Global Social Movement’

Cynthia Cockburn

It is a great honour to be asked to speak at Meg Stacey’s memorial conference. Meg was highly respected for a quality I believe to be very important (and sometimes costly): combining good academic work with a commitment to feminist action within, outside and beyond it. The last contact I had with her was through the network Women in Black against War, of which we were both members. I shall refer to this network again below.

After torture, war-making is perhaps the clear-cut case of ‘intended suffering’, the term used in the title of today’s conference. If my subject were to be war-making itself, this would be a very depressing lecture. But in this paper I intend to address not the practice of war, but the practice of resisting war: women’s organized responses to militarism, militarization and war-making. It is often remarked that women are noticeably active for peace not only alongside male activists but also in women-only peace groups, organizations and networks in many different countries. Just what women’s antiwar activism signifies is a question I am trying to answer in my current research. However, given that the project still has 12 months to run, this paper should be seen as no more than a preliminary response.

At the last international encounter of Women in Black in 2003 in Italy, the network established its first and only element of structure -- an international group linked in an e-mail listserv, briefed to consider how communications might be improved. The group is called ‘Wibcomm’, and I am one of its members. For purposes of my research project therefore I am located in the Sociology Department of City University London, but also, as an activist, in ‘wibcomm’. I think of the approach as ‘participatory action research’.

Being a member of Wibcomm was making me aware how incomplete was our knowledge of our own network, and of the activities of other women’s groups with similar aims. I believed it could be useful to observe us in global perspective, ask questions about scope and connectedness, look deeper into motivations and methods -- but above all understand better what is distinctive about women’s analysis of war and our strategies for opposing it. I decided not to limit my study to Women in Black but, starting within WiB, to look outwards to the many other manifestations of women’s activism against war. My hope was that the results could not only be of academic interest, but also actually strengthen our movement and make it more effective.

Mapping and typology

So, with the support of several charitable funders I have been able to do a good deal of travelling this last eighteen months. At one level, I am attempting a mapping -- inevitably incomplete -- to acquire a sense of where women activists are located and in what numbers. I have carried out case studies in selected countries - Turkey, Colombia, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Serbia, the USA, Sierra Leone, India and of a group active in the Pacific region. In selecting these locations I have been guided by where I might see a range of forms taken by militarization and armed conflict. In particular it has been important to listen both to women in war-afflicted countries, where death and danger are terrifyingly close, and to women activists in war-delivering countries, such as the USA and Britain, where death and danger are – perhaps feebly, perhaps acutely -- in the mind's eye and the political imagination.

I have also chosen places where it is possible to see a range of organized responses by women. In the process I have had to develop a typology, discovering and listing various species of organism. I began in the certainty of only one species: certain worldwide networks of women opposing war were my central reference point. I will mention three of them.

First, take the very old and highly respected Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. WILPF was founded during the First World War and is thus almost 90 years old. It has branches in 40 countries. It does commendable lobbying and campaigning work and runs an excellent web portal and news service (www.peacewomen.org). WILPF is notable for the connections it makes between war and other wrongs (injustice, poverty, racism and environmental destruction) all of which are addressed by its programmes. To achieve its effects, WILPF has been obliged to bureaucratize. It has paid staff, a headquarters in Geneva and an office at the United Nations.

Women in Black is in some contrast to WILPF. Far from bureaucratized, WiB is not even an organization. It has no decision-making bodies, no branches or elected officers. It is described in its website as 'more a means of mobilization and a formula for action' (www.womeninblack.org). Women in Black was initiated by Israeli women opposing the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1988, a year after the start of the Palestinian Intifada. It expanded rapidly during the Gulf War and Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, so that today there are possibly 300 groups in possibly 30 countries calling themselves Women In Black. But it is a feature of WiB that numerous organizations of different names from time to time 'perform' Women In Black, sometimes co-operating with other organizations to do so. The characteristic practice of Women in Black is vigils, usually involving the wearing of black, standing at regular times and intervals in some public space. The vigils vary in whether they are silent and whether they are strictly women-only.

Significant Women in Black networks – those in Italy, Spain and the former Yugoslavia in particular – developed not one but two primary 'missions'. The first was resisting 'home-grown' militarism and war, ie. especially in the

societies in which its members are located. The second was building bridges between differently positioned women. Such bridges have in practice been of two kinds: between ‘selves’ and those ‘others’ whom the state has designated ‘the enemy’; and between ‘selves’ in war-afflicted countries and ‘others’ in Western power-projecting countries. For instance, on the one hand, it is characteristic that the women of Women in Black in Israel have been attempting to maintain contact with Palestinian women across the Green Line; and women in Serbia have actively worked at sustaining or rebuilding trust between women, represented respectively as Orthodox/Serbian, Catholic/Croatian and Muslim (of Bosnia, Sandjak, Kosovo etc), divided by war-makers. They also address the animosity between refugees and host populations. On the other hand Women in Black in Italy (*Donne in Nero)*, and in Spain (*Mujeres de Negro)*, as well as other western European countries, have invested energy and funds in support for such women in doing that kind of bridge-building activity. For example, sometimes they have invited co-speakers (say a woman from Israel and one from Palestine) to come on speaking tours to Italy or Spain.

Another, newer, international and potentially worldwide network is Code Pink, started soon after September 11 2001 by Medea Benjamin, Starhawk and other women in the USA. They depend on their website and e-mail list to model and disseminate a rather different kind of action – first across the USA, increasingly in other countries (www.codepinkalert.org; Code Pink 2005). Code Pink are a far cry from the serious, dignified, silent vigils of WiB. Where Women in Black wear black, Code Pink women and their male allies wear shocking-pink clothes or accessories. Where Women in Black are mostly immobile, Code Pink invade political meetings or perform street theatre. Where Women in Black favour silence, Code Pink use music and poetry. The three styles of WILPF, WiB and Code Pink attract women with different aesthetics and perhaps somewhat different feminisms. They also have different political uses.

Remaining for the moment in the mode of mapping and typology, it is evident that the movement of women opposed to war is far more than such purpose-designed world-wide networks. First, there are thousands of stand-alone women’s groups around the world, addressing one or other aspect of the overall problem in one locality. Near home, take for instance the women’s group that for twenty years has focused attention on the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston in southern England. Their strategy has included camping at the base, and monitoring, publicising and campaigning against the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. This example happens to point up two other features of this field. First, ‘camping’ as one of many modalities of protest. The most dramatic and sustained manifestation of this was the women’s peace camp opposing the siting and deployment of cruise missiles at Greenham Common, for more than a decade from 1981. Second, overlapping memberships: several of the women involved in this camp are also, as individuals, members of the London group of Women in Black.

Some discrete local groups are tied into regional alliances. For instance *Women Act against Military Violence* in Okinawa, Japan, are part of the *East Asia, US, Puerto Rico Women's Network against Militarism*, which monitors the system of US bases in the Pacific. I attended an interesting meeting of that network in Manila recently, where I found groups from Hawaii, the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Puerto Rico and the USA, sharing information about the US presence in their countries and evolving strategies together.

Additionally, there are women's *sections* or initiatives within many mixed organizations – a handy example would be the Women's Portal of the *International Action Network on Small Arms* (www.iansa.org). I am beginning to perceive, also, the importance of less visible, *ad hoc*, goal-directed networks, that come into being for certain purposes, but may not necessarily endure long. For instance one could ask who was it that mobilized to get the United Nations Security Council to adopt its Resolution 1325 mandating the recognition and inclusion of women in peace-making and peace-keeping operations, and who now monitor its implementation? A network such as this has no name nor any formal existence. It includes women in UN agencies, in international women's NGOs and individual women in various universities.

A global social movement?

Taking a worldwide perspective like this, it is logical to think of using a language of 'global social movements'.[1] This is a conceptual framing with a positive and heartening feel to it. But how would we define or name this movement? Movements do not have boundaries, they are not structures but flows. They do not possess formal representatives, headquarters buildings or postal addresses. It is difficult therefore to say with any authority that a global social movement exists. One can only talk of currents of activity, intermingling -- now swelling to a flood, now dwindling to a trickle.

Does it makes sense, then, to think in terms of a current we could call 'women opposing war', 'feminist antimilitarism' (not quite the same thing), or something of the kind for which we barely yet have a name? Could we imagine it flowing near to, intermingling with, the worldwide women's movement (and does that itself exist?); the mainstream antiwar movement of men and women; the movement for human rights and economic justice (something that includes but is not limited to the Social Forum movement)? I believe it does make sense to think of ourselves using the concepts associated with 'global social movement'. But to say we actually *are* a global social movement, I am going to suggest, poses questions more than it supplies answers. The statement may have less analytical than inspirational value.

[1] The concept of 'social movement' and 'global social movement' have been variously defined and elaborated. A useful introduction with examples may be found in Cohen and Rai (eds) 2000.

Motivation in women-only organizing

Let's go beyond mapping and typology, to look for a moment at motivation and methodology. Why do some women pull away from men to organize as women against war, militarism and related phenomena? There is a good deal of consistency, I find, in what women say. They state three clear reasons.

First, they say, women have a gender-specific experience of war with which other women can empathize. Displacement from home, the sustaining of children, the ill and the elderly through times of crisis, are obvious instances. Another is sexual abuse. There are women worldwide, at this moment, for instance, who are anxious and activated about the conditions being experienced by women in Darfur. One can pick up this concern from numerous Internet media.

As with war-fighting, militarization too, as a long-term process and condition, has gender-specific effects. So, for instance, the *East Asia, US, Puerto Rico Women's Network against Militarism*, mentioned above, whose focus is US military bases in the Pacific, identifies some problems that are common to both sexes, including wrongful appropriation of land and toxic pollution from weapons testing. They also however address women-specific realities: military prostitution in the camp-towns around the bases, particularly the exploitation of ever-younger girls and the birth to local women of fatherless Amerasian children, who, everywhere the US military are or have been located, constitute sizeable populations with distinctive problems.

Second, women note that women are often silenced, marginalized and misrepresented. They therefore set out to give women's experience of war a clearer analysis, to vocalize and emphasize it. One of my case studies, for instance, has been of a project with the cumbersome title *International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat*: *Redressing Violence against Women Committed by State and Non-State Actors.* In 2002 there was a murderous outbreak of violence by Hindu extremists against the Muslim community in Gujarat. This is a place where 'war' took the form of 'pogrom'. It involved several thousand violent deaths and the torching of Muslim properties across the state. A huge number of rapes were committed, many by gangs of armed men. Many of the rape incidents ended in the burning alive of the women victims.

The Indian government and human rights organizations, in their responses to the genocide, were barely mentioning the rapes. So two women's groups in Mumbai, the *Forum against the Oppression of Women* and *Aawaaz-e-Niswan*, the one with strong links in the Hindu community, the other in the Muslim community, called together a team of nine women experts from India and abroad to take evidence from Gujarati women. This case is interesting for a combination of three strategies: a conscious use of feminist theories (of gender and nationalism); the use of legal argument (law of genocide); and a bid to internationalize the problem as a means of mobilizing pressure on a national government. Panellists from the UK included Nira Yuval-Davis, then of the University of Greenwich (Yuval-Davis 1997) and Anissa Helie, of

Women Living under Muslim Laws (www.wluml.org). Feminist lawyer Vahida Nainar brought experience from the International Criminal Court, and Gabi Mischkowsky from her monitoring of the International Tribunal which considered rape as genocide in Yugoslavia. They wrote a powerful report calling on the Indian authorities to pay heed (International Initiative for Justice in Gujerat 2003).

If Gujarat is an example of a conflict in which women's experience of violence was overlooked, Bosnia-Herzegovina is an example of one in which it was often misrepresented. The epidemic -- some say campaign -- of rape in Bosnia was eventually reported with dismay in international media. But rape was exploited by nationalists on all sides, who while they were happy to use the issue to score points over their ethnic enemies, refused to acknowledge rapes perpetrated by their own men (Zarkov 2001). This kind of misrepresentation prompted women to organize cross-ethnically as women in support of rape survivors and also to write and publish their own analyses (eg. Stiglmayer ed. 1995).

Women's methodologies of organization and action

Third, women are quite clear that they organize as women in order to be in control of process. They say they feel they have developed distinctive methodologies of organization and action with which they can be comfortable - practices they cannot rely on finding in the wider antiwar coalitions, particularly where these are dominated by Trotskyist and other 'hard left' elements with a preference for dogma, hierarchy and centralism. Some of the methods women discuss, design and adopt are as follows.

I sense that women tend to connect war very directly to women's own lives. A social movement, in John Keane's words, 'controversializes power' and often does so from within or very close to the 'spaces of everyday life' (Keane 1998). It is characteristic of women's opposition to war and the war system that a great deal of the energy comes from rage and despair at the way militarism and violent conflict distort and damage everyday life. That is very clear for instance in Colombia, where women are caught in the midst of a violently destructive three-way conflict between guerrillas, rightwing paramilitaries and government forces that has turned ordinary villages and urban streets into battlefields. What women are demanding in Colombia is precisely the 'demilitarization of everyday life' (Ruta Pacifica 2003).

A second widespread commonality in process I believe is principled non-violence – and that means verbal as well as physical non-violence. Women often say their group tries to avoid negative images -- dwelling on bombs and guns for instance. They prefer to state what they are for (eg. justice, inclusion) rather than merely what they are against (eg. racism, war-mongering). A third is prefigurative tactics in which the 'means' do not betray the 'ends'. Spanish women speak of 'coherencia entre fines y medios'. In other words, the struggle is shaped to have the same form, spirit, relationships as the world it strives to bring into being. This introduces an element of pleasure, inclusiveness and care.

Some social movement theorists propose that opposing an 'adversary' or 'enemy' is constitutive of a social movement.[2] This does not I think well reflect women's engagement in such movements. It is in any case not a universal perception. Peter Waterman suggests that social movements precisely do not contest 'universal enemies' but identify 'global problems' (Waterman 1996). I am finding in fact that women's antiwar groups are almost always at pains to make it clear they see neither 'men as a sex' nor 'men in uniform' as the enemy. Often women on demonstrations engage with individual soldiers, policemen and politicians, assuming their humanity, until it is disapproved. Women's groups are less ready to 'hate' 'capitalists' or 'the USA' or 'the military' than are some mixed groups. They prefer to make enmity itself the problem.

Of course these methods and processes are not necessarily 'natural' to women - they are intelligently chosen as effective, as well as convivial, practices. Nor are they exclusive to women. There are parts of the mainstream movement that value them too. But very often, within mixed organizations, when the quality of process becomes an issue, it is women that make it so.

Analytical divergences: 'pacifism'

So - if the many women I have interviewed in the last 18 months are in any way representative, there is a certain unanimity of motivation and rationale within the women's movement against war. There are also certain processual qualities one can be fairly confident of finding in women's organizations and networks. But I want to move on to consider our analysis of militarism and militarization, communal violence, armed political conflict and war-fighting. What are women activists thinking? Do we all see the problems the same way? And, equally important, do our actions adequately express those thoughts?

In the second half of this paper I would like to explore certain incoherences I am encountering as I talk with women about their thinking and their strategies. I shall single out three -- two that signal differences of analysis and one that signals a gap between analysis and strategy.

I am making a careful choice here to use the term 'incoherences' rather than 'disagreements'. I emphatically do not want to baldly assert at the outset that there are divergences and conflicts threatening our harmony. On the other hand, I will not say these are merely 'differences': while a good deal of difference should be accepted and celebrated, incoherences should be taken more seriously. They need addressing if they are not to generate inconsistency in practice.

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[2] Manuel Castells for instance translates and paraphrases the second of Alain Touraine's three principles of social movements (*principe d'identite, principe d'opposition, principe de totalite*) as an adversarial principle, where 'adversary refers to the movement's principal enemy, as explicitly identified by the movement' (Castells 1997:71, referring to Touraine 1965 and 1966).

I should make it clear here in passing that not all the issues of concern in the women's movement against war are gender issues. There is no reason that they should be: it is reasonable to expect that as women we have a positioned point of view on the whole world, not only on 'women's matters'. The first incoherence of analysis I want to discuss is a case in point: it has very little to do with gender. It concerns the tension between peace and justice. Of course this is a well-worked theme within the mainstream peace movement these many years. The debate in which principled pacifism is challenged by 'just war' theory goes back many years and fills many volumes.[3] In a world characterised by so much injustice and oppression, can we always deny the legitimacy of the use of force? Disagreements on this permeate feminist discussions on women in the military, for instance (Enloe 2000, Peniston-Bird 2000). Some European women who now support women's actions for peace in Latin America tell me that they formerly organized in solidarity with armed liberation movements, e.g. the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Some of them are now rethinking their own political history. One said to me 'I sometimes feel as if I have two heads'.

This tension struck me forcibly when reviewing the recent history of Sierra Leone. I was there earlier this year visiting an interesting and brave group of women called the Mano River Women's Peace Network, which spans Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. During the terrible 10-year war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, rebels abducted, recruited, drugged and armed thousands of child soldiers. They turned the country into a vicious, anarchic killing field in which an estimated 10,000 had a hand or foot amputated by machete, thousands of young girls were abducted, countless women were raped and many pregnant women disembowelled. There was cannibalism. Despite the rebels' proclamations of a social and political agenda, it became more and more clear they were little more than gangsters seeking control of diamond-rich territories. The national army disintegrated as its soldiers defected and joined the various rackets (Abdullah 2004).

There seemed no prospect of an end to the violence in which Sierra Leone was engulfed. West African peacekeeping forces tried but failed. A huge exercise by the United Nations involving a force of 17,000 peacekeepers from Bangladesh, India and elsewhere, also stalled. Five hundred United Nations personnel were taken hostage and the UN was powerless to rescue them. Then in May 2000, the British government sent in the Navy and fighting units with helicopter gunships. They rescued the hostages and stayed on to pacify the country, reorganize and train the State army and re-equip it with weapons (supplied by a UK exporter) (Koroma 2004).

I was at first surprised to find that none of the women I spoke with in Sierra Leone, and no Sierra Leonean writer I read, saw this intervention as armed neo-imperialism. Civil society and democratic political parties in Sierra Leone had been struggling to recover electoral rule and many people had died in the

[3] See for example Michael Walzer, 1977. His position is that there exists a space between pacifism and militarism for moral argument about justice and force.

attempt. Sierra Leonean democrats and feminists now seem to be united in the belief that British intervention had been Sierra Leone's salvation.

These conversations in Freetown made me review what I might have been thinking at that moment in the year 2000. I am ashamed to say I cannot now remember. But even if I missed some important discussions on the issue of Sierra Leone among our Women in Black group in London, I doubt if we resolved the tension between our reasonable if idealistic suspicions of British militarist reflexes and our pragmatic understanding of West African civil society.

Recently I found Italian women preoccupied with similar thoughts. I asked one group 'on this issue of principled pacifism versus necessary violence, how do you position yourselves?' One woman replied, 'With great discomfort! My personal background would lead me to think of myself as a pacifist. But that's too easy to say, here in Italy. What I would say if I were actually in a war, I don't know.' Women positioned in diverse situations around the world, might well answer differently the question 'which is right, which is most effective, in securing a chance for democracy and human rights -- principled nonviolence, or the use of limited force?'.

Analytical divergences: 'nationalism'

A second incoherence I have come across while talking to women antiwar activists has to do with nationalism - or rather with ethno-national identity. I stumbled across this when, within a matter of days, I visited Women in Black groups in both Serbia and Spain.

It did not surprise me at all that women in Serbia, given the degree of ethnicization of those wars, make opposition to national identities and nationalist politics a central tenet in their activism. All of us who knew women from that region during those years heard them struggling with their own 'names'. Am I a Serb because that is what they call me? Can I voluntarily renounce this name? Women of the former Yugoslavia, striving to put back civility into relationships between the various South Slavs of different 'names', were obliged to radically dissociate the individual sense of self from the coercive identities of nationalist political projects.

However, when I travelled to various regions of Spain I heard women, also feminist, also antimilitarist, saying (and I freely paraphrase here) 'Hold on a minute! Look, I'm a Catalan. During the dictatorship we were banned from using our language, our culture was repressed. If I say now, "I'm a Catalan nationalist", that doesn't mean I condone violence, that I want war or separatism. It doesn't mean I tolerate Catalan patriarchy (yes, we have here it too!). It's just that we could do with your support in our struggle to maintain our distinctiveness, keep alive aspects of our culture, and teach the Catalan language to our children.' (Since Basque separatist violence continues in Spain, relationships between women around Basque nationalism are even more complex and painful.)

Different positionalities in relation to 'nation' have generated tensions from time to time even within Women In Black (*Mujeres de Negro)*. Those in metropolitan Spain, let us say in Madrid, can feel more unquestioningly at ease with, let us say, Serbian women's emphatic anti-nationalism than can those of a suppressed identity group, who may feel sometimes that people in Madrid (or Zaragoza or Sevilla) can sometimes be blind to the nationalism of the Spanish state itself, and so unconsciously share in it.

During these journeys I came to realise that I understood both positions all too well. I could identify with the 'anti-nationalism': I feel distaste for the union flag and the anthem I am supposed to love and honour as a British national. At the same time I understand perfectly well that if Virginia Woolf could say 'as a woman, I have no country, as a woman I want no country, as a woman my country is the whole world', she could do so only because she was a white Englishwoman, citizen of a colonial, imperialist country who, like me, could well afford to refuse the national identity the patriarchy had ascribed to her (Woolf 1986:125, first published 1938). She would have found those words less easy to write had she been one of the colonial peoples aspiring to independence at that moment. Or a Palestinian woman today.

Yet I was somehow surprised to encounter this particular incoherence in our own movement. Why was I surprised? I had spent years already studying in minute detail, and writing extensively about, the way Republican Irish and Unionist Protestant women in Belfast, equally longing for a resolution of the violence in Northern Ireland, in order to work together co-operatively had to negotiate very consciously, with extreme patience, skill and care, the way they understood and uttered national identifying names associated with dangerous political and military agendas (Cockburn 1998). It is surely inevitable that nationalism will be an explosive issue in building an international movement of women against war.

Compromises of practice

The third incoherence I would like to explore has to do with the way we understand the sources of militarism and war, our women's 'take' on these things, in relation to the way we express ourselves publicly. When explaining war, 'realist' international relations theorists invoke concepts such as national sovereignty and security (Walz 1994), while Marxian anti-militarists cite capitalist expansionism and neo-imperialism, where the bottom line is economics, the power to control resources, exploit labour power and dominate markets (Chomsky 1999, Berdal and Malone 2000). Yet others fall back on Darwinian arguments about the survival and adaptation value of aggression (Wilson 1975).

And women who organize against war, how do they see it? We may perhaps deduce this from the reasons, cited above, that they give for organizing as women. They said, you will remember, first: 'It's because women have a gender-specific experience of wartime and peace time'. That indicates clearly a belief that we live in a world in which male and female, masculine and feminine, are deeply differentiated; that there is a gender division of life and

labour, war and death. Secondly, they said: 'It's because our voices are otherwise not heard', suggesting we believe gender relations to be unequal and women to be valued less than men in our societies. A third reason was: ' We prefer women's ways of organising'. Experience has shown women, it seems, that not only men in mainstream institutions but even our male political allies on the left and in the antiwar movement are in the main uncritical of hierarchy, authoritarianism and exclusion.

Notwithstanding differences they may have in their relationship to feminisms, there is little argument among women antiwar activists with the notion that we live in various forms of patriarchy: hierarchical systems in which gender is an organizing principle, investing authority in men, disempowering women.[4] We share a belief that the patriarchal or male-dominant sex-gender system privileges and institutionalises violence and tends to generate and reproduce, through cultural means, masculinities that specialize males in the use of force -- over other men, and over women.[5]

The incoherence I detect here, therefore, is less a matter of theoretical disagreement than of a gap between a shared, if implicit, theory and our public actions. So far among these groups I have been visiting I have not often seen, in leaflets, on placards, or in public statements by women activists any clear indication that one important factor in the perpetuation of militarism and war is patriarchy, or systemic male dominance. The M-words - men, male, masculinities, misogyny – may be common currency between us conversationally, but we find them difficult to use publicly. I think we are afraid that if we point the finger explicitly against male power as a system, against masculine cultures of violence, we shall risk being seen as:

- being essentialist about what is a man or woman (however often we may assert that gender is socially constructed);
- blaming all men;
- exonerating all women of violence;
- indulging in special pleading for women as an interest group;
- abstracting from our humanity, our human-beingness;
- alienating potential allies;
- giving the impression of a failure to grasp politics with a capital P;
- and deflecting attention from the immediate problem – let us say, stopping an imminent war.

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[4] Even among those who firmly believe in the importance of understanding male-dominant gender relations as an enduring and powerfully influential social system, the use of the term 'patriarchy' to describe its contemporary expression is contested. The male-dominant sex-gender system manifests itself in historically and societally specific forms. In 'modern' and especially in 'Western' societies we have seen a shift from literal 'rule by the father' to a more generalized mode of male dominion (Pateman 1988). During my current research however I have met many women activists continuing to use the term patriarchy quite comfortably, if with a conscious caveat, as a convenient shorthand.

[5] Feminist analysts vary in the emphasis they give to patriarchy as a source of militarism and war. Some emphasize patriarchy as fundamentally causal (eg. Reardon 1996), others use the term patriarchy in discussing militarism, militarization and war alongside reference to other social structures such as capitalism and nationalism (eg.Enloe 2000).

This leads to a strange anomaly - that though we strongly believe gender is not synonymous with women, that a gender analysis is precisely about *relations between* men and women, *between* masculinities and femininities, nonetheless our public pronouncements as women organising against war almost always 'do gender' as if it meant 'women'. We proclaim ourselves 'women', we speak 'as women', we fill our leaflets with facts and figures about women's suffering in war. This reflects part of our thinking. We point the finger of blame for war at capitalism, imperialism, nationalisms and fundamentalisms. And this reflects another part of our thinking. But that element of our thinking which says that the persistence of war over centuries has something to do with patriarchy, with a systemic male dominance that meshes with all of those other 'isms', structures them and is structured by them, makes them dangerous in a special way for women, and indeed dangerous in a special way for men - that part of our thinking does not very often get clear expression.

Oddly, it is the women for whom it would seem to be most risky that are the ones most likely to break this taboo. So for instance the women of *Vimochana*, a women's project in Bangalore, India, are up against forms of Hindu nationalism and Muslim traditionalism that are often literally lethal for women. Yet they are bold enough to represent in their leaflets the pursuit of atomic weapons supremacy by the Indian state as quote 'macho posturing'; they speak of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as 'wars of militarized faiths rooted in a hypermasculinized polity'. And they describe the fascist Hindutva movement too as 'hypermasculinized' (e.g. Women in Black Bangalore leaflet for International Women's Day March 8, 2002). You do not often see this kind of terminology in our Women in Black leaflets in London or New York.

I think there are three reasons for this odd silence, the gap between what we say to each other when we are among women, and our public statements. One is the calculated rubbishing of feminism that has made many women fear to be associated with feminist thinking. Another is our default reality, inhabiting the heterosexual family. It is truly very hard to voice a critique of patriarchy - of masculine cultures that celebrate violence, of the normalization of aggressive and exploitative sexual practices - while understanding and forgiving, loving, admiring, and sorrowing for, individual men and boys. In theory it should not be impossible, but it is undeniably experienced as difficult.

Third and most important, I believe as women we censor ourselves in part due to a notable (yet actually seldom noted) lack of a visible movement of men who are for their part ready to critique patriarchy and its violent, masculinist and misogynist cultures. Some men will do this when surrounded by friendly women, but few will do so publicly, among men, in more hostile places.

To point to this gap between theory and practice is not to blame our movement but rather to open a discussion about strategy, to ask ourselves: what are appropriate strategies for feminist antimilitarist activists who believe

that transforming gender relations and ending the strategic use of violence must go hand-in-hand? How can feminists best reach other women who have had less exposure to a political critique of gender relations?

Aspirations and realities

So these incoherences in the women's antiwar movement around the world -- and they are not the only ones - have alerted me to a certain superficiality, even triumphalism, in the language of 'global social movement' with which I incautiously began this paper. It is good to aspire to be or to become such a movement. But something yet is needed to make it more than rhetoric. For a start, effectiveness depends on good communications. I have not begun to discuss in this paper the issue of intelligent (and ethical) use of communications technology and air travel on which the discussion and negotiation of shared aims and concerted international actions rely.

Instead I have limited my discussion only to the substance of our analysis and strategy. And on this, nothing can be taken for granted. The individuals and groups that comprise our putative global social movement are rooted in a huge variety of ethno-national states, regions and sub-cultures. For example, some of us are in situations where principled non-violence may be a productive strategy for achieving justice. But others of us may be living in situations where it is sheer idealism -- even suicide, where it will result in the death of those we love. Some of us are in situations where gender relations are such that if we speak out our critique of male power we shall be listened to respectfully; in others we may be ridiculed and marginalized; in others again they may throw us in prison or condemn us to death.

A global social movement sounds like a phenomenon that simply occurs, a gigantic 'happening', a force of nature, a joyful wave we can surf. I am beginning to see how naive that is. I am beginning to remember how the rhetoric of the international labour movement ('workers of the world unite') belied divergent interests: 'my' high wages were bought at the cost of 'your' poverty; 'my' job security was undermined by 'your' exploitability. It may be necessary, then, to climb down a little from this aspiration, and revert to that old subject of alliances. Alliances are not found, they are made. Women's alliances against militarism and war have to be negotiated woman by woman, group by group, network by network. There are countless specific instances of our attempts to reach each other, to make possible cooperation between, say, women of a given ethno-national name and their 'others', between women who are religious and those who are agnostic secularists, between women endowed with education and those deprived of it. Some women practice alliance building with impressive skill; others of us, less experienced, fumble at it.

Coming from this direction however has the merit of supplementing aspiration with technique. It means we could be bringing to the global scene a different body of knowledge - the understanding, painstakingly acquired in particular pasts, in particular locations, that there's no shortcut to coherent, sustained,

shared organization and action. It can only be achieved through the careful choreography of 'transversal politics'.

The term *politica trasversale* was first deployed in the late 1980s in informal papers by Elisabetta Donini, Raffaela Alberto and other Italian feminist antiwar activists to describe the kind of process they found they needed in working co-operatively with women situated on conflicting sides in contemporary wars. It means, as some of us elaborated on it some years later, 'the practice of creatively crossing (and re-drawing) the borders that mark significant politicized differences. It means empathy without sameness, shifting without tearing up your roots…' It means 'on the one hand [to] look for commonalities without being arrogantly universalist, and other hand affirm difference without being transfixed by it' (Cockburn and Hunter 1999).

In bringing together our discrete and specific activisms into something that could rightfully claim to constitute a global social movement we need to take as much care in every instance of international contact as we are accustomed to do (at best) when we negotiate our immediate, local, identifications, positionalities and values. To bring the matter right home: unless we develop the competence to handle differences of identity, positionality and values in (for instance) the London group of Women in Black, we stand little chance of making meaningful connection with, and coordinating powerful acts of resistance among, other women's groups in other countries and continents.

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