'Vision in Obscurity': Discerning Peace in Fearful Times

TINA BEATTIE

> 'Yet it is in this loneliness that the deepest activities begin. It is here that you discover act without motion, labor that is profound repose, vision in obscurity, and, beyond all desire, a fulfillment whose limits extend to infinity.' Thomas Merton

This paper does not set out to offer a structured argument, but rather to offer a series of reflections on peace, war and motherhood, in the context of the profound mystery of our human capacity for destruction and creation. At the end of the most violent century in history, at the beginning of a new century which has already plunged us into new forms of terror and violence, we know that we have a capacity to drive ourselves and one another over the rim of chaos into some primal abyss where there is no longer any boundary or any meaning, an abyss represented not only by the physical reality of violence, but also by the spiritual and social realities of fear and hopelessness that are so often the catalyst for violence. But we also recognize our ability to bring forth life from the abyss, to listen to the music of the 'silence of the spheres'[1] and to nurture into being those fragile and elusive glimpses we all have of another way of being in the world.

I first encountered the writings of Thomas Merton when I was in hospital with complications during my fourth pregnancy. Perhaps that is why, in contemplating Merton's writings on war, I find myself thinking of motherhood and birth. In traditional societies, war and childbirth are sometimes seen as the gendered struggles we face in becoming adult men and women. Just as the man must go out and slay his enemy, shedding blood and risking his life in the process, so the woman too faces a violent and bloody struggle to bring her children to birth. In birth, a woman faces not only her own mortality but the mortality of another whose life may be more precious to her than her

own. Living as we do in a society that has dramatically reduced maternal and infant mortality rates, it is easy to forget how dangerous childbirth can be. One woman dies every minute from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, and poor women and those from minority groups are often most at risk. An African woman is 500 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes than a woman in Scandinavia. In the United States the risk of childbirth for black women is nearly four times as high as for white women.[2] In Angola, a child has nearly a one in five chance of dying before its first birthday. In Britain, chances are two hundred to one that it will survive.[3]

Suffering and death bind together motherhood and war in many ways, and reflections on one can open into reflections on the other. But in war, killing is intrinsic to the meaning of the word. A confrontation that involves neither death nor the threat of death on a significant scale is not a war. The intention of war is to kill or be killed, although of course that intention is never presented to us as its purpose. War is always sold to us as the regrettable means to a noble end. Particularly in our modern world, we kill people for their own good. We have become like parents who, as they beat their children, say, 'this is hurting me more than it's hurting you.' Birth is the symbolic opposite of war. Even if it brings with it the threat of death, that threat is accepted in the hope of giving new life. It is not death in the service of violence and killing. The shedding of blood in childbirth, however traumatic, signifies something different from the shedding of blood in war. Consider, for example, the following two examples.

René Girard has written extensively on the relationship between social bonds and sacrificial violence. In one essay, he reflects on the question as to why blood is surrounded by so many taboos and fears, and he suggests that it is because it is associated with the chaos of violence:

> When men are enjoying peace and security, blood is a rare sight. When violence is unloosed, however, blood appears everywhere — on the ground, underfoot, forming great pools. Its very fluidity gives form to the contagious nature of violence. Its presence proclaims murder and announces new upheavals to come. Blood stains everything it touches the colour of violence and death. Its very appearance seems, as the saying goes, to 'cry out for vengeance.'[4]

This is a revealing insight, because it arises out of a thought world informed by exclusively masculine perspectives. It is true that for men, there is a direct and simple relationship between violence and blood.

A man's body only bleeds when it is wounded. But for women, blood is a much more complex symbol, because it is at least as much about life and fertility as about wounding and death. Consider, for example, the very different imagery that informs Linda Walter's reflection on birth and the Eucharist:

> The year is 1976. It is the time of my third child's birth. A difficult pregnancy, and anxious delivery of a tiny but healthy girl and then massive haemorrhaging. A curette, more voluminous bleeding, a close call necessitating an emergency hysterectomy. I found out about blood then. Blood is not unclean. Blood is precious. Blood from a pierced side, blood from a womb – it doesn't make much difference to me. Blood is the life of the body. Women know about blood. We do not faint at the sight of it. Month by month we see it and know it as part of the gift of our fertility. Yes, it is a nuisance – a costly gift. But why has it been called the curse?[5]

By using these two quotations side by side, I hope to indicate something of the complex question I am raising in this paper: to what extent might the language of maternity and birth be a resource for thinking anew about peace, in a way that might take us beyond the rhetoric of violence, terror and war that dominates so much contemporary political discourse? By introducing this language into a reflection on Merton's writings on war, I not only want to ask how an ethics of motherhood might relate to an ethics of peace, I also want to open Merton's language up to a possibility that presents itself more clearly today than it did in his time. Fiona Gardner makes the point that 'Merton wrote as a man in a man-centred society – he wrote before the second wave of feminism had broken – and his non-inclusive language bears reference to this.'[6] Rowan Williams writes of the importance, not of knowing more about Merton, but of finding out 'how I can turn further in the direction he is looking, in prayer, poetry, theology, and encounter with the experience of other faiths; in trust and love of God our saviour.'[7] This means allowing Merton's insights to become part of an ongoing dialogue in our quest for peace, so that new language and meanings can emerge. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur writes,

> If it is true that poetry gives no information in terms of empirical knowledge, it may change our way of looking at things, a change that is no less real than empirical knowledge. What is changed by poetic language is our way of dwelling in the world.'[8]

How then might we change our way of dwelling in the world, by learning to speak differently about the world?

In a posthumously published essay on 'War and the Crisis of Language,' Merton discusses the 'denatured language'[9] of contemporary society. He refers to 'speech that is at once totally trivial and totally definitive,'[10] and to the ways in which language can express an 'unconscious aspiration to *definitive* utterance'[11] that seeks no communication, understanding or dialogue. This, he argues, is the language of war as well as of the advertising industry and of some forms of religion (he refers to speaking in tongues):

> War-makers in the twentieth century have gone far toward creating a political language so obscure, so apt for treachery, so ambiguous, that it can no longer serve as an instrument for peace: it is only good for war ... . [T]he language of the war-maker is *self-enclosed in finality*. It does not invite reasonable dialogue, it uses language to silence dialogue, to block communication, so that instead of words the two sides may trade divisions, positions, villages, air bases, cities – and of course the lives of the people in them. The daily toll of the killed (or the 'kill ratio') is perfunctorily scrutinized and decoded. And the totals are expertly managed by 'ministers of truth' so that the newspaper reader may get the right message.[12]

When language becomes closed to meaning and truth, when 'ordinary modes of communication have broken down into banality and deception,'[13] then, argues Merton, violence becomes our mode of communication instead. This is true of anarchists and revolutionaries as well as of politicians and military generals. The self-enclosed rhetoric of modern politics, which expresses 'a basic contempt for man,'[14] produces a revolt which manifests itself in revolutionary violence as well as in revolutionary language. This language, writes Merton, 'represents a healthier and more concrete style of thought,'[15] but, despite being 'racy, insolent, direct, profane, iconoclastic, and earthy, ... it remains another language of power, therefore of self-enclosed finality, which rejects dialogue and negotiation on the axiomatic supposition that the adversary is a devil with whom no dialogue is possible.'[16]

Merton was writing at the height of the Cold War, in a very different political climate from our own, and yet how prophetic his words sound today. In this world of terrorism and war, George W. Bush has given us a whole new insight into what it means for political language to become almost entirely devoid of content and meaning, and the Bush-Blair

alliance has revealed just how fragile our much-vaunted values of international law, democracy and human rights really are. On the other side, those who have seen through the veils and guises to recognize the vacuous violence of western society have become the harbingers of ever-more extreme forms of violence and terror. On either side, the adversary is indeed a devil ('the Great Satan' versus 'evil' terrorists), 'with whom no dialogue is possible.' Peter Ustinov once said that 'Terrorism is the war of the poor, and war is terrorism of the rich.' What language might we discover, to speak of peace in this time of global terror?

In recent years, a number of thinkers, recognizing the crisis in our language, values and politics, have begun to explore alternative ethical visions, some of which appeal to the imagery of birth and motherhood. Different writers use different expressions for this. Hannah Arendt refers to 'natality';[17] Julia Kristeva writes of an *herethics*, a deliberate play on words to suggest a maternal ethics as heresy;[18] Grace Jantzen proposes a religion focused on flourishing images of maternity and natality, rather than on what she calls the 'necrophilia' of the Christian tradition with its focus on death and the life hereafter.[19] Pope John Paul II has called for women to be involved at all levels of culture and politics, to create a 'civilization of love' as opposed to the 'culture of death' that prevails in western society today.[20] All are seeking to introduce the language of mothering into our public discourse and political debate, in order to turn our vision away from violence, domination and exploitation, towards a vision of nurturing, relationality and care, rooted in the body's vulnerability and dependence.

Women have of course been mothers since time began, but mothering has largely been seen as a natural thing for women to do. The qualities, virtues and characteristics of maternity have been the subject of much devotional and romantic literature, but they have not been the focus of philosophical and theological reflection. In the last half century, with more and more women entering the public sphere, and with the opening up of philosophical and theological debate to women's perspectives and ideas, there is a growing attentiveness to the possibilities that might present themselves if we explore more deeply what we mean by feminine and maternal values, seeking to liberate these words from their traditional stereotypes in order to discover what meanings might emerge when women themselves are part of the conversation. Jean Bethke Elshtain writes,

> Women, in and through their powerlessness, understand what it means to be vulnerable. Their openness to beginnings, even under conditions of hardship and privation, terror and torture, has daily renewed the world, making possible future beginnings. The challenge for women at this fateful juncture is to keep alive memories of vulnerability as they struggle to overcome structurally sanctioned inefficacy and to reaffirm rather than repudiate interdependencies as they seek a measure of institutional 'legitimacy.' ... That women alone cannot give civic birth to a transformed politics is undoubtedly the case. But women, from a double vision that straddles powerlessness and power, are in a powerful position to insist with Albert Camus that one must never avert one's eyes from the suffering of children and, seeing that suffering, one is required to act.[21]

However, let me introduce a caveat. In exploring the potential of a maternal ethics, I am not romanticising motherhood or suggesting that only mothers can be part of this conversation. Mothers, as we all know, are 'human all too human,' and the maternal relationship is just as caught up in the messy struggles of everyday living and loving as any other. Many fathers are very good at mothering, and many mothers are not. Childless people, motivated by compassion and concern for the vulnerable other, may be much better at the kind of mothering I am referring to than mothers whose values are skewed by the greed and selfishness of many modern nuclear families. So I am not idealising motherhood *per se*. Rather, I am suggesting that the maternal body, and the relationship between mother and child, can be a source for symbolic transformation, taking us beyond the individualistic, power-driven rhetoric of the culture we live in, to discover a new way of being in, for and with the world in all its fragile diversity and beauty.

In considering how maternal language might offer a new resource for thinking and speaking about the world, let me refer to Merton's short essay on Mary in *Seeds of Contemplation*. His language in that essay is so completely focused on Mary's emptiness and her nothingness before God, that it falls into the trap of a rather unoriginal Catholic romanticism, and I wonder if this might be true of his work more generally. As a man of his times, living in a predominantly male world, it would not be surprising if his work lacked maternal insight. He writes of Mary that, 'To share her humility and hiddenness and poverty, her concealment and solitude is the best way to know her: but to know her thus is to find wisdom.'[22] Of course, the idea of the emptying of self that Merton sees supremely in Mary is a theme that runs through all

his works and it is a vital aspect of Christian spirituality. But if we remember that he expresses some admiration for revolutionary language that is earthy, racy, direct, and more authentic than the language of orderly power, it is interesting that his language about Mary makes her the least earthy and most insubstantial of mothers. It is this lack of the earthy, bodily vitality of maternal language, and its capacity to break open our tired old ways of speaking, that I seek to address. The psycholinguist Luce Irigaray argues that this lack of maternal awareness, this forgetfulness of our bodily dependence on another – on the maternal body, and on the body of mother earth – may be a root cause of the abstraction, violence and power that prevail in our modern western culture.[23]

It may be, then, that if we are to discover a way of speaking that can go beyond the trivialization and violence of modern language that Merton describes, we also need to go beyond the limitations of his language. Instead of representing maternal femininity in masculine stereotypes of idealized humility, hiddenness and poverty, do we need to ask what other metaphors and images might give us a more active sense of a maternal potency that nurtures life in the face of death, and that shows an attentive concern for the daily needs of vulnerable people in order that they might survive and flourish? The Brazilian feminist theologian Ivone Gebara writes,

> When women's experience is expressed in a church whose tradition is machistic, the other side of human experience returns to theological discourse: the side of the person who gives birth, nurses, nourishes, of the person who for centuries has remained silent with regard to anything having to do with theology. Now she begins to express her experience of God, in another manner, a manner that does not demand that reason alone be regarded as the single and universal mediation of theological discourse.[24]

This maternal vision is not, of course, new to the Christian tradition. Julian of Norwich wrote of the motherhood of God, and we find in the writings of many of the saints and mystics a much more fluid and poetic attitude towards gender than we find in modern writings. One need only wander round the old European cathedrals such as Chartres to realize that the medieval world was permeated with a sense of maternal presence. Holy Mother Church, the Virgin Mary and the saints, the emphasis on the incarnation of Christ, meant that the language and imagery of birth, nurture and bodily dependence were central to the

Christian way of being in the world. The Reformation began a process during which these images and the values they represented were purged from the public sphere, and motherhood became increasingly confined to the private, domestic world. The seventeenth century saw the emergence of the rationalist and scientific world view that has so decisively shaped our modern society, and scholars such as Sarah Jane Boss,[25] Jean Bethke Elshtain[26] and Caroline Merchant[27] have shown how this was accompanied by the devaluation of embodiment, nature, motherhood and female sexuality. From a medieval world in which human beings were an organic part of creation, and the earth herself was a maternal body to be treated with respect and integrity, we arrived in the seventeenth century at a world in which the man of reason set himself over and against nature, which had to be controlled, subdued and exploited for human gain. Today, in our so-called postmodern era, we are counting the cost of that transition to modernity in terms of environmental abuse and human alienation. We need a language, not of nostalgia for a golden age that never was, but capable of recovering what was lost and shaping it to today's concerns and visions, and that includes the language of maternity, embodiment and dependence on one another and on the earth.

But once we start to look for this language, we find it not only in the early and medieval Church, we also find it in the scriptures. There are maternal images that open up to us the hidden aspect of God that has long been forgotten by a western theological tradition which, since the rise of the medieval universities, has been developed primarily by celibate men. Consider, for example, God's question to Job:

> Has the rain a father?
> Who begets the dewdrops?
> What womb brings forth the ice,
> and gives birth to the frost of heaven ... (Job 38:28–29)

One of the most interesting quotations in this context are the following two verses from the Book of Isaiah:

> Yahweh advances like a hero,
> his fury is stirred like a warrior's.
> He gives the war shout, raises the hue and cry,
> marches valiantly against his foes.
>
> From the beginning I have been silent,
> I have kept quiet, held myself in check.

> I groan like a woman in labour,
> I suffocate, I stifle. (Isaiah 42:13–14)

It is fascinating that the prophet represents God in the third person as an advancing hero and a furious warrior, but when God speaks in the first person, she speaks as a woman who has been silent too long, in metaphors not of war but of childbirth. This is the God who also says in Isaiah,

> For Zion was saying, 'Yahweh has abandoned me,
> the Lord has forgotten me ...'
> Does a woman forget her baby at the breast,
> or fail to cherish the son of her womb?
> Yet even if these forget,
> I will never forget you. (Isaiah 49:14–15)

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen who longs to gather her chicks under her wings (Matt. 23: 37–39), and in the letter to Galatians, Paul describes himself as being 'in the pain of childbirth' (Gal. 4:19). These verses inspired St Anselm to pray to both Jesus and Paul as his mothers:

> O St Paul, where is he that was called
> the nurse of the faithful, caressing his sons?
> Who is that affectionate mother who declares everywhere
> that she is in labour for her sons? ...
> And you, Jesus, are you not also a mother?
> Are you not the mother who, like a hen,
> gathers her chickens under her wings?[28]

What all this makes clear is not how odd it is that we should begin today to talk in metaphors of birth and mothering, but how odd it is that we ever stopped. What agenda of domination and power dictated this forgetfulness in language? What new agenda of peace and reconciliation might overcome our amnesia, and enable us to recall what it means to be a mother rather than a warrior, a person who gives herself for the other, not in the sacrificial violence of war, but in the sacrifice of love that lies at the heart of the Christian tradition? And what new insights might we gain into the love of God, if we open ourselves up to this language of (m)otherness?

Consider how Wendy Wright relates the bodily changes of motherhood to the love of God:

> One is never the same. After each birth, the body readjusts. But things are never as they were before. Silver-webbed stretchmarks are only an outward sign. More hidden are the now elastic vessels of the vascular system, the pliancy of muscle walls, the flat pouch of the once inhabited womb. Each child impresses upon waxen flesh the unique imprint of its life. Inscribes one's own life with an image all its own.
>
> Often I have thought how true that is of the heart as well. Each child occupies its own space and in growing presses and pushes out the bounded contours of one's heart. Each fashions a singular, ample habitation like no other. A habitation crowded with an unrepeatable lifetime sorrow and joy. A habitation inscribed with a name. How could it be otherwise in the heart of God?[29]

Or consider the vision of justice and hope that shines through Maria Bingemer's reflection on the Eucharistic significance of maternal love, in the context of the poor of Latin America:

> Throughout Latin America, in the rural areas and the poor districts on the edges of cities, there are millions of women conceiving, bearing, and suckling new children of the common people. Sometimes they do it with difficulty, pain, and suffering, sometimes with the last trickle of life left in them. This female body, which is extensive and multiplies in other lives, which gives itself as food and nourishes with its flesh and blood the lives it has conceived, is the same body that wastes away and dies tilling the earth, working in factories and homes, stirring pans and sweeping floors, spinning thread and washing clothes, organizing meetings, leading struggles, chairing meetings, and starting singing. It is the woman's body, eucharistically given to the struggle for liberation, really and physically distributed, eaten and drunk by those who will – as men and women of tomorrow – continue the same struggle of patience and resistance, pain and courage, joy and pleasure. Breaking the bread and distributing it, having communion in the body and blood of the Lord until he comes again, means for women today reproducing and symbolizing in the midst of the community the divine act of surrender and love so that the people may grow and the victory come, which is celebrated in the feast of true and final liberation.[30]

In these various quotations and reflections, I can do no more than suggest the possibility of a new ethics, brought about by a new way of speaking about the world. But before we can speak, we have to learn to listen, and that means listening to the many ways in which women are

beginning to contribute something different to the language and values of public life. Of course, I am well aware that women like Margaret Thatcher and Condoleezza Rice have made a somewhat different contribution to politics and society, and I am not suggesting that simply by virtue of being women, we are better, wiser, more loving or more peaceful than men. But women have been deeply conditioned by those hoary old values of maternal femininity, and however problematic and stereotyped they might have become, they still speak to us of self-giving, tenderness, compassion and a concern for the weak and the vulnerable that we need so urgently in our world today. Can we breathe new life and meaning into those values, so that they become woven into our prayer and worship, our politics and public debate, our social relationships as well as our domestic worlds?

However, as Christians, we also know that change must begin within our own hearts, through the indwelling of God's Spirit. So I want to end this paper by thinking about a different kind of chaos, which might take us into that profound silence where God speaks beyond all human understanding.

Merton writes, 'In this fatal moment of choice in which we might begin the patient architecture of peace, we may also take the last step across the rim of chaos.'[31] Today, our world seems to stand on the very brink of chaos, and we may need to 'begin the patient architecture of peace' from the far side of that abyss. Chaos can mean anarchy, terror, the disintegration of order and stability, but it has other meanings too. Chaos is also the word we use for the discoveries of quantum physics, which reveal to us an infinitely more complex and mysterious world than Newton ever imagined possible, a world in which matter emerges out of the dance of sub-atomic particles in a cosmos that shimmers with energies that we do not understand. But chaos is also the primal silence of the spheres, the space of holy awe, the space of contemplation where the soul encounters God in perfect oneness, silence and union. Is that the space wherein we need to dwell, in order for God to open our lips that we might praise her name, in order that we might sing a new song to the Lord?

In Hesiod's *Theogyny*, chaos is the original abyss out of which the gods emerge, including Gaia, the Earth. In this context, chaos is not disorder and violence but the emptiness out of which order takes shape, not unlike the formless void of Genesis. Perhaps, in these chaotic times, we need to discover within ourselves that primal chaos, that deepest

silence before the creative mystery of God. It is not in the frenzy of political activism that peace is reborn, but in the hearts of those who, in the forgetting of self before the suffering face of the other, begin to weave together the broken bonds of our humanity.

Merton describes the difficulty of coming into a state of pure contemplation. He writes of:

> an 'I' standing on the threshold of the abyss of purity and emptiness that is God. From our side of the threshold this darkness, this emptiness, look deep and vast – and exciting. There is nothing we can do about entering in. We cannot force our way over the edge, although there is no barrier.[32]

When we are transported into that space, all language falls away: 'Metaphor has now become hopeless altogether. Talk about "darkness" if you must: but the thought of darkness is already too dense and too coarse.'[33] This 'ecstasy of pure love'[34] is the height of the contemplative life, and for many of us it may seem unattainable. But we are also a culture that avoids this profound silence. We fill our lives with noise, we keep the abyss at bay. We are afraid of the dark. Is this because we no longer know how to contemplate that maternal silence that encompasses us at the beginning and end of the existence of the 'I'?

Psychoanalysis tells us that at the outermost margins of human consciousness, there is a dimension of unspeakable, unknowable mystery, the deepest, most hidden aspect of our psyche, that comes into being as we make the transition from our first relationship with the mother, to become conscious, speaking subjects who can relate to the world around us. This unconscious realm is associated with our sinking back into the abyss from which we came, the dissolution of the 'I' into nameless, formless non-being, and therefore it is associated with both the womb and the tomb. Perhaps we need to ask what relationship there might be between our capacity to nurture God in the silence of our hearts, and our capacity to face the unacknowledged fears that our culture creates in us – fears not only to do with death, but to do also with embodiment, dependence, vulnerability, fears that amount to a denial of that original trusting dependence on our mother and on God. In contemplation, do we enter the womb of God to be nurtured anew? Or do we, like Mary, become a womb for God, wherein the peace and love of Christ find space to grow and become incarnate again in our world? What have we yet to discover of chaos, and how might this become part of a maternal way of understanding ourselves and the world?

Perhaps it is in the chaos of that deep, wordless mystery, that no thing of God, that we will discover the beauty of the other chaos, the chaos that reveals a world whose order is not governed by laws and imposed by force, but a world that comes into being moment by moment, mystery by mystery, in its desiring to be. Then perhaps with Merton we too will discover what chaos can mean:

> What is serious to men is often very trivial in the sight of God. What in God might appear to us as 'play' is perhaps what He Himself takes most seriously. At any rate the Lord plays and diverts Himself in the garden of His creation, and if we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of it all, we might be able to hear His call and follow Him in His mysterious, cosmic dance. We do not have to go very far to catch echoes of that game, and of that dancing. When we are alone on a starlit night; when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children; when we know love in our own hearts; or when, like the Japanese poet Basho, we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary splash – at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the 'newness,' the emptiness and the purity of vision that make themselves evident, provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance. For the world and time are the dance of the Lord in emptiness. The silence of the spheres is the music of a wedding feast.[35]

Notes and References

1 Thomas Merton, 'The General Dance', in *Seeds of Contemplation*. Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1972, p.230

2 Figures taken from 'Facts of Life – and Death', *New Internationalist*, July 1998

3 Figures taken from http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html

4 Renè Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Patrick Gregory (trans.). Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977, p.34

5 Linda Walter, 'A Canterbury Tale', in *Feminism & Theology*, Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p.14

6 Fiona Gardner, 'Beyond Gender', *The Merton Journal*, Vol. 9, Advent 2002: 22–29, p.28

7 Rowan Williams, 'A Person that Nobody Knows ... a Paradoxical Tribute to Thomas Merton,' *The Merton Journal*, Vol. 9, Advent 2002: 46–47, p.47

8 Paul Ricoeur, 'Word, Polysemy, Metaphor: Creativity in Language', in *A Ricoeur Reader*, Mario J. Valdès (ed.). Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, p.85

9 Thomas Merton, 'War and the Crisis of Language', in *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, William H. Shannon (ed.). New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1995, p.301

[10] *Ibid*. p.304
[11] *Ibid*. p.303
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] *Ibid*. p.301
[14] *Ibid*. p.313
[15] *Ibid*. p.314
[16] *Ibid*.
[17] See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958
[18] Julia Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', in *Tales of Love*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p.263
[19] See Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998
[20] See Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, and 'Letter to Women', 29 June 1995, both on the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/
[21] Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'The Power and Powerlessness of Women', in *Beyond Equality and Difference – Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds). London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p.122
[22] Thomas Merton, 'The Woman Clothed with the Sun', in *Seeds of Contemplation, op. cit.* p.131
[23] See Luce Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference*, Karen Montin (trans.). London: The Athlone Press, 1994
[24] Ivone Gebara, 'Women Doing Theology in Latin America', in *Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America*, Elsa Tamez (ed.). Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1989, pp.39–41
[25] See Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary*. London and New York: Cassell, 2000
[26] See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993
[27] See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco CA: Harper & Row, 1979
[28] Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. Sister Benedicta Ward. London: Penguin Books, 1973, pp.15–153
[29] Wendy Wright, *Sacred Heart: Gateway to God*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002, p.119
[30] María Clara Bingemer, 'Women in the Future of the Theology of Liberation,' in *The Future of Liberation Theology – Essays in Honour of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (eds). Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1989, p.486
[31] Thomas Merton, 'Merton's Prayer for Peace', in *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays, op. cit.* p.328
[32] Thomas Merton, 'Pure Love', in *Seeds of Contemplation, op. cit.* p. 219–20.
[33] *Ibid*. p.221
[34] *Ibid*. p.224
[35] Merton, 'The General Dance', *ibid*. p.230