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Mending our Nets : Toward a Feminist Vision of Redemption in Dialogue with the Newfoundland
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Mending Our Nets:
Toward A Feminist Vision of Redemption and Labrador
in Dialogue with the Newfoundland Fishery

by

Darlene Brewer

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Theology,
Saint Paul University,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks toward the construction of a contextual understanding of redemption in light of women's experiences in the Newfoundland and Labrador¹ (NL) fishery. Specifically, I consider how we might speak about redemption in a way that is meaningful to their experiences in the midst of the 1990s fishery closure in the province. With the closure of the fishery there has been much loss in the way of personal and cultural identity, belief and way of life. There have been many economic, social, ecological and cultural impacts on women and men and the whole ecological system of the fishery. Women's experiences in the wake of the impact of the closure of the NL fishery make a significant contribution to a contextual understanding of redemptive hope. The Christian language of redemption is appropriate for an understanding of how we speak, theologically, about social and ecological hope.

Redemption is embodied in an earthly hope, given by God and embodied in action toward the building of communities of solidarity and an ethical approach rooted in the here and now of people's everyday lives. Redemption also involves an eschatological horizon where the Mystery of God's creative and redemptive love is beyond our imagining. This promise is made known to us historically through our lived experience. Both dimensions of redemption are relevant to a construction of redemption in light of women's experiences.

In the NL fishery context, the language of redemptive hope is especially pertinent

¹In this thesis, I will refer to Newfoundland and Labrador in its abbreviated form as NL except when citing another source.

in light of women's experiences of personal and community loss and devastation. This devastation is also ecological because of foreign, and, to a lesser extent, domestic overfishing that has led to the closure of the fishery and the almost non-renewability of a species - northern cod. Fundamentally, how we speak about our salvation as human beings is inextricably linked with the whole ecological well-being of our local and global communities. Theological discourse, especially around salvation and our human participation in it, fails to have meaning if it is not directly connected with our earthly, historical realities, especially in relation to experiences in times of crisis.

I have chosen to focus solely on insights from women's experiences in the fishery because women's experiences as fish plantworkers and fishers are rarely highlighted. From the methodologies of feminist and liberation theologies, an experience of redemption or liberation begins with the action of God in the history of those most excluded in our societies, whose voices have not been heard. Ecofeminist theologians explore theological constructions from ecological perspectives, citing the earth itself as our place of salvation. There are many theologians who have written about redemption from liberation and ecofeminist perspectives. I will draw from three theologians - Edward Schillebeeckx, Ivone Gebara and Rosemary Radford Ruether to consider how they speak about a socially-engaged redemption. In dialogue with these theologians' insights on redemption, I use NL women's narratives, from the fields of sociology and health, to consider women's voices during the years immediately following the closure of the fishery.

Then, I consider these narratives and what they are saying theologically, individually and collectively. Specifically, I choose to articulate an understanding of redemption out of the particular context of women's lives in a fishery closure. It is my finding that these women's narratives, in dialogue with theologians' insights, contribute to a new way of speaking about redemption for today. I hope this thesis will contribute to new ways of speaking about NL women's experiences in the fishery and the fishery itself and consider new avenues for discourse on contextual, lived experiences of redemptive hope. It is a contextual understanding of this particular context and as such is one avenue of bringing the complex notion of redemption into view. It does not intend to offer a comprehensive treatment of redemption.

In the context of the NL fishery I speak about the possibility of community building and ecological sustainability. These are two major components of a vision of redemptive living in the NL fishery. By taking these women's experiences into account and the reality of the ecological community of the whole fishery, I consider our redemptive hope from the perspective of interdependence of human with other life. With this development of a contextual theology around redemption in the NL fishery, I also reconstruct an understanding of the person of Jesus Christ and God born out of dialogue with theologians and women's experiences in the fishery. This new theological understanding of redemption involves the cultivation of resistance and resilience as modes of redemptive living. This is the major finding of the thesis and shapes a contextual, earth-centred, creation-focussed theology of redemption.

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Chapter 1 The NL Fishery:

Background, Closure and Impact on Communities

(1) Introduction

I was born in NL and have deep roots there. My maternal grandfather was a fisherman for many years in a region called Placentia Bay. Nlers have a strong connection with the land and sea and with their ancestral roots. The population of the province of NL is about 509, 677. The geographical shape of the province includes 111, 390 square kilometers for the island itself and 294, 330 square kilometers for Labrador.¹

The province is 3 times the size of the Maritime Provinces (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick). St. John's is the province's largest city, located on the Avalon Peninsula, with an approximate population of 181, 113 people. Major linguistic and cultural influences of the province are English, Irish, Scottish, French with some other cultural connections with Spanish and Portuguese. The First Peoples were probably ancestors of the Beothuk people who inhabited NL from their settlement there until 1829, when the last Beothuk died. NL is the place most likely identified as Vinland in the notes of Norse explorers' travels. The Beothuk and the Vikings might have encountered one another at L'Anse Aux Meadows on the northern Peninsula in the early 11th century.

There is a deep connection that Nlers feel with their island home. This sacred connection is a cosmic, geographical and social bond with the land, the sea

¹Data accessible at www.newfoundlandandlabrador.com. For this thesis, I will refer to Newfoundland and Labrador in the abbreviated form as NL except where quoted from sources.

and the people. It is a profound interdependence that NLers live, whether they are city people or outport people, that never allows them to be severed from the place of their innermost identity.

In NL, over 40,000 people and hundreds of communities were impacted by the collapse and closure of the groundfish fishery in the early 1990s.² The foreign overfishing that caused the collapse of the fishery and its subsequent closure also brought devastating ecological impacts. To my knowledge no theology, from a feminist, has been written to address the concerns brought forward by this social and ecological crisis. Particularly, the voices of women who are fishers and fishplant workers have not been heard within the context of this NL fishery crisis. This thesis seeks to provide a theological framework for these voices through the language of redemption.

On the Canadian theological scene, not much has been written in the way of a contextual theology to speak to the various social realities in our country. NL is a unique place with cultural, social and economic challenges in the wake of the closure of the fishery and the future that remains so undecided. The time is right for finding a theological voice to speak to their realities, the uniqueness and tenacity of the people and the sea on which they depend and from which NLers draw their identities.

In this thesis, I will shape a feminist, constructive framework for redemption within the Christian context. The thesis is primarily constructive. My goal is to construct

²“Collapse of the Resource Base,” *Charting A New Course: Towards The Fishery of the Future*. (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 1993).

a tentative framework of redemption as resistance/resilience in the context of narrative experiences of women in the NL fishery and the ecological context and through the use of the works of Edward Schillebeeckx, Ivone Gebara and Rosemary Radford Ruether on redemption. To do this, I will draw upon insights and narratives from research in sociology and theology. I will draw from works in sociology and these theologians to consider women's experience in the NL fishery.

For the work of this thesis I consider resilience as that characteristic of personal and communal survival and well-being, both within the social and ecological communities, that finds a way to maintain identity, hope and planning for the future in the midst of crisis and adversity that threaten existence and flourishing. I argue that this resilience emerges in women's words in the NL fishery context, in the midst of the closure of the fishery and subsequent social, cultural and ecological losses. In the NL fishery context, and in dialogue with women's stories, this resilience is found in defining a new relationship with their communities and the fishery and in claiming for themselves a right to have a say in the future and to survive and to plan for future even in the midst of devastating losses and changes. Theologically, this ground for hope amidst death and devastation finds voice in the language of redemption within Christianity.

(2) NL Fishery Context: Brief Introduction

(a) Current Fishery: Closure of the Fishery, Social and Ecological Impact

Drastic changes have occurred in the NL fishery over the past thirty to forty years.

One of these is the ever-increasing focus on the international monopoly of the fishery, the globalization of the fishery. This trend toward export-oriented fishery and a movement away from the use of the fishery for local community greatly impacts the life of non-human and human communities. It means huge transitions for people in rural communities who had lived by the fishery for their own needs as well as providing fish for commercial sale to buyers. Trends toward globalization also means an overdependence on fish to the point of exhausting the fish numbers and making it impossible for the fishery to renew itself. The social impact is felt in every aspect of community life including 1) less jobs for fewer people because of an increased globalized focus on technology requiring less human involvement, 2) professionalization of the fishery which outlines a narrowed eligibility for many to acquire full time status as fishers, affecting women particularly, and 3) decisions being made less and less in dialogue with the input of those most affected by these changes. The outport fishing communities have been abandoned by government and industry in favor of modernization.³

Until the 1990s, groundfish accounted for two thirds of the total landings of Atlantic Canadian fisheries and two thirds of the employment in rural communities.⁴

³Rosemary E. Ommer, "Newfoundland : Environment, History, and Rural Development," *Ecology, Economy and Society in Rural NL*, (St. John's, ISER Books, 2002),35. This article is one of several in this edited text which speak to the place of the outport with respect to economic, social and ecological contexts in NL. Specifically, Ommer outlines the promise for the rural communities of today and the possibilities of hope in rural contexts.

⁴"Collapse of the Resource Base," *Charting A New Course: Towards The Fishery of the Future*, (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada), 1993. Will further be cited as *Charting a New Course*.

Canadian catches of groundfish stocks, such as cod, turbot, redfish, haddock, pollock, and flounder, peaked at 775,000 tonnes in the 1980s. By 1992, catches had declined to 418,000 and then to 250,000 by the following year. By 1994, the catch was, at best, 50,000 tonnes. The decline shows a dramatic loss of 90 percent over five years.⁵ In terms of what this means for people and their livelihoods, 1,000 tonnes of groundfish generate 30 full time jobs, both for fishers and plant workers.⁶

The collapse of the ground fishery, mostly because of the decline of numbers of northern cod due to overfishing, resulted in the loss of over 40,000 jobs for Atlantic Canadians. Most of the loss was concentrated in NL. Other provinces, namely Nova Scotia and Quebec, also felt the negative impact of this closure. In NL, before the events that led to the moratorium and the drastic decline of fish numbers, especially codfish, catch from groundfish accounted for 80 percent of the fish caught.⁷ For NL communities such as St. Anthony, La Scie, Twillingate, Carbonear, and Fogo Island, to name a few, the cod moratorium was particularly devastating. Many communities relied solely on the fishery for their livelihoods. On NL's South Coast, groundfish accounted for 94 percent of fish production and most of the jobs in the communities.⁸ In the last years leading up to the moratorium, the groundfish fishery supported over 40,000 people, most of those in

⁵*Charting A New Course*, 19.

⁶*Charting A New Course*, 19.

⁷*Charting A New Course*, 19.

⁸*Charting A New Course*, 19.

NL and Nova Scotia.

To understand how we find ourselves in this current crisis, it is helpful to consider the history of the fishery in the last few centuries. I will provide a brief historical sketch of the development of the fishery in NL as it relates to the current fisheries crisis.

(b) The Fisheries Crisis : Its Beginnings

The NL Economy and Ecological Crisis in the Fishery

It is useful to begin with a brief history of the NL rural economy and its relationship to the ecological crisis. The moratorium on codfishing did not occur in a vacuum. The present crisis which spawned the moratorium is part only of a much larger history of ecological breakdowns born out of abuse of resources over the past two centuries. This mal-development contributes to a sense of frustration felt by NL people.

The province of NL operates within a resource-based economy, depending upon resources such as the fishery and forestry, mining, and lately the promise of Hebron brings another anticipated oil deal. to make itself economically viable. Much of this resource base has been developed along with the rise of the rhetoric of progress and the machines of industrialization that drive the economies of the Western world. For our purposes we will only consider the impact of industrialization on the fishery.

The major shift from a less formalized, subsistence-oriented fishery to a formalized, export-oriented, industrialized fishery, according to Ommer, is part of the development of a fisheries crisis that hinges on resource mismanagement and action taken

with a disregard for the environmental realities involved.⁹ The cod moratorium is one of the peak points, if you will, of the ongoing problems in the fishery in such a ‘for profit’ model held up by government and by business sectors. This shift in approach to the fishery and its ability to provide for large scale export production to the outside world had a great impact on people’s lives.

European settlement in NL between the 16th and 18th centuries signals the beginning of the commercial fishery.¹⁰ In the late 19th century, fishers became concerned for the well-being of the fishery. These fishers were concerned about the impact of new technologies designed to offset lower than usual catches of fish. The fishers highlighted conditions that could become problems of conservation and management, expressing concern that these new technologies, employing trawl lines and larger vessels, would mark the beginning of a crisis situation in the availability of fish.¹¹ Small rural communities of the 19th century found difficulty in relying on other sources, such as sealing industry, pulp and paper industry, and agricultural endeavors because of lack of stability in these industries. Incentives for large scale fishery activity in the commercial sector not offered elsewhere made it virtually impossible for people to make a living in any other way than in the fishery as it was becoming designed for international

⁹Ommer, “Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development,” 31-36. In these pages, Ommer outlines the link between the NL fisheries crisis of the 19th and 20th centuries and the cod moratorium, through the push for industrialization and the end of subsistence fisheries.

¹⁰Ommer, “Newfoundland: Environment, History and Rural Development,” 25.

¹¹Ommer, “Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development,” 25.

competition.

One of the main developments in this new competitive industrial fishery of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, culminating in the 1940s, was the use of new technologies of the European fleets. This change had a profound effect on the provincial fishery. The fishery was moving from an inshore base to an offshore fishery. By the 1940s, new technologies were being used by several new partners in the offshore fishery including the former Soviet Union, East and West Germany, Norway and Iceland.¹² The amounts of fish caught dramatically increased with the increased use of trawlers for inshore and offshore fishing from the 1940s to the present. The total catch from Norwegian and Icelandic vessels yielded 150,000 tonnes in the 40s. With the increase of trawlers from Canada and other nations around the world, fishing in the waters around the province allocated for catch, the situation reached a point of no return. By the 1960s, the reported maximum catch peaked at 810,000 tonnes. Between 1962 and 1977, the biomass of cod for harvest declined to 526,000 tonnes, a loss of 82 percent cod in the water.¹³ Canada, along with other nations, participated in this movement toward new levels of industrialization of the fisheries. Further technological innovation, such as radar technologies for locating fish, led to the depletion of the cod and reduced this species' ability to recover from this increased catch because of disturbance of places for cod to

¹²Ommer, "Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development," 30.

¹³Ommer, "Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development," 33.

spawn and to regenerate.¹⁴ These changes in the large scale fishery development precipitated changes in the inshore fishery in the 1970s and 80s.

The expansion of the inshore fishery in the 1970s and 1980s brought new devastation for the cod stocks. It led increasingly toward a more formalized sector for the fishery. Boat size, trap size and amount of traps and fish nets increased while mesh size in nets decreased, all meaning near impossibility for the recovery of the species.¹⁵ These combined efforts to plumb the sea of an already failing amount of cod precipitated the crisis in the cod fishery. It culminated in the Canadian government action to declare a moratorium on the northern cod fishery, announced in 1992, to be followed by a second moratorium called in 1994 on all Atlantic groundfish species.

Along with the shift toward industrialization of the fishery and a thrust toward larger, worldwide markets came the development of an attitude that the rural economy and way of life was somehow less valuable than the more urbanized, modern approach. With developments toward single-species licensing, longliners, and freezer-plant technologies, efforts focused on the development of the fishing industry in the national and international market, turning away from the household production of fish.¹⁶

The current moratorium and the state of the fishery in NL points to older realities of ecological crisis springing from economic moves toward large scale fishery

¹⁴Ommer, "Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development," 31.

¹⁵Ommer, "Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development," 33.

¹⁶Ommer, "Newfoundland: Environment, History, and Rural Development," 33.

production, moving from what was thought a limitless and renewable resource to a very limited resource that may not recover for the next several decades. This destruction for the environment and its interdependent elements has created the social and economic devastation for the local people.

(3) The Collapse of the Cod Fishery

(a) Ecological Issues: Decline of the Fish

The fisheries of Atlantic Canada contribute substantially to the economic wealth of Canada. The groundfish moratoria have done little to actually negatively affect the monies generated from the fishery on a national level. This is due in large part to the fact that other species are now being fished to make up for the considerable loss of the codfish landings and those of other northern groundfish.¹⁷ This report tends to see the death of the groundfish as one event from which we must move forward. It focuses on the possibilities for exploitation of other fish such as skate, monkfish and winter flounder, emphasizing, “*In short, there is far more to the Atlantic fishing industry than the groundfish crisis.*”¹⁸

Fisheries and Oceans Canada - Sustainable Fisheries Framework: Atlantic Groundfish is a Report of the Auditor General of Canada, published in 1997. The Report records the

¹⁷*Report of the Atlantic Groundfish Fishery.* This report is accessible at http://www.parl.gc.ca/36/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/fish-e/past_rep-e/95repen2.htm.

¹⁸*Report of the Atlantic Groundfish Fishery.*

decline of the groundfish industry, particularly in its destructive speed.

The decline of the groundfish stocks was dramatic. From domestic and foreign annual total catches of 2,000,000 tons in the 1960s, groundfish landings fell to approximately 120,000 tons a year after the collapse. Historically, groundfish had represented two thirds of the entire Atlantic catch tonnage and 40 percent of its landed value.¹⁹

In the decades leading up to the moratorium, the groundfish fishery supported over 40,000 people, most of those in NL and Nova Scotia. Again, this report focuses on the possibilities for other species and fails to consider the social and cultural impacts of the collapse of the groundfish fishery. It does, however, give clear information as to the overall decline of the species and the number of people affected. However, the Report signals that the ecological devastation was severe. John Crosbie, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in 1992, says,

Not only were stocks declining, but the individual fish were growing more slowly: for example, in four management zones, the weight of the individual cod at age seven had decreased significantly between 1977 and 1993...The Fisheries Resource Conservation Council...concluded that fishing of many of the groundfish stocks should be stopped to allow them to rebuild.²⁰

Current estimates project it will be well into the middle of the current century before northern cod are able to recover and renew themselves. These reports of the federal government do little to speak to the social, cultural and personal impact of the fisheries closures on people, communities and ecosystems. The analysis carried out in

¹⁹1997 *Report of the Auditor General*, accessible at <http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/dominoreports.nsf/html/ch9714e.html>. May 2006.

²⁰1997 *Report of the Auditor General*.

these reports is in aid of considering the economic realities of the future, with the impact on the country and on the wealth of Canada being the focal point. There is little effort to speak to the intertwined realities of the ecosystem and the NL people in the midst of such change.

There exist many conflicting views as to the reason(s) for the collapse of the groundfish fishery and, particularly, the drastic decline and almost complete disappearance of the northern cod. Many see the causes of the collapse as a complex web of social, ecological, economic and cultural factors.

The 1996 *Taskforce on Incomes and Adjustments in the Atlantic Fishery*, chaired by Richard Cashin, produced a thorough document which works through general theories as to the causes of problems in the fishery and outlines the major contributing factors to the collapse of the northern cod and other groundfish numbers in Atlantic Canada.²¹

The *Taskforce* Report highlights three major problems within the Atlantic Canadian Fishery. These are:

- 1) Overdependence on the fishery as a major problem which stems from three causes:²²
 - a) A social, historical tradition of “the right to fish” among Atlantic Canadians;
 - b) a lack of economic alternatives and c) the use of the fishery as employer of last resort.

The argument used for overdependence is that there are too many people and too much harvesting of fish. The fishery to sustain itself because of overdependence on the part of

²¹*Charting A New Course*, 14-25.

²²*Charting A New Course*, 20.

the fishers. Also, because of the nature of the fishery itself, many people rely on unemployment benefits and income assistance to make ends meet.

2) Too much pressure on the fish. This argument says that the resource is finite while the human population growth adds increasing pressure on the fish stocks. Mismanagement of the ecological realities such as species interaction and lack of knowledge concerning habitat are added pressures.

3) Overcapacity in harvesting and processing is the result of the two prior factors.

“Too many harvesters use too many boats with too much gear trying to supply too many processing plants by finding and catching too few fish.”²³ The theory is often referred to as the tragedy of the commons.²⁴ It considers forest, water and fish as common property which people exploit without measure. Some have applied such a theory to the NL fishery collapse. The Report says it this way,

Too much is being demanded of the fishery. This is inescapably obvious today in bad times, but it was just as true when times were good. A basic reason is that a fish swimming free in the ocean belongs to anyone with a legal right to catch it. It is the common property of everyone holding an applicable license. Everyone wants as much of the resource as possible. So, without adequate controls, the resource declines. And, if more people can put pressure on the resource, average returns decline even faster.²⁵

The implication here is that the average fisherperson catching fish for the commercial

²³*Charting A New Course*, 14.

²⁴For an in-depth explanation of the theory and critique of its arguments, see Fred Mason, “The Newfoundland Cod Stock Collapse: A Review and Analysis of Social Factors,” *Electronic Green Journal*, available at <http://egj.lib.uidaho/egj17/mason1.html>. 2006.

²⁵*Charting A New Course*, 15.

fishery is as equally responsible as the people directing huge trawlers with technological capacities beyond anything the average fisher uses. In reference to the theory of the tragedy of the commons, Fred Mason argues the tragedy of the commons theory to be over simplistic, failing to take into account the ecological, economic and other social factors contributing to the decline.²⁶

Mason suggests that these problems in the fishery are linked with the causes of the current crisis in the groundfish fishery which began in the 1960s and culminated in the 1980s and 90s.²⁷ More specifically, it lists the following as major factors which played a role in the decline:

- overly high Total Allowable Catch (TAC) levels for many stocks, set too high because of overoptimistic scientific projections, inadequate understanding of stock dynamics and inaccurate data on commercial fishing activity;

(The total allowable catch refers to the total tonnage of a particular fish species allowed to be caught in a given year.)

- under-reporting of actual catches, which caused harvesting overruns, and misleading data for management and scientific assessments;
- destructive fishing practices such as highgrading, discarding and dumping of immature fish or non-target species; (Highgrading²⁸ refers to discarding fish in order to make room for more valuable fish that bring a better return economically.)

²⁶Fred Mason, "The Newfoundland Cod Stock Collapse: A Review and Analysis of Social Factors," *Electronic Green Journal* Mason, 1.

²⁷Mason, "The Newfoundland Cod Stock Collapse," 21.

²⁸Mason, "The Newfoundland Cod Stock Collapse," 21.

- foreign overfishing or straddling stocks on the Nose and Tail²⁹ of the Grand Banks;
- failure to control expansion of fishing effort, which in part has been in response to the demands of a processing sector plagued by overcapacity, and failure to minimize the possible adverse effect of various fishing gear technologies; and,
- unforeseen and possibly long-lasting ecological changes, including cooling water temperatures since the mid-1980s, changes in water salinity, and shifting predator-prey relationships, particularly among seals, capelin and cod, which have affected adversely the growth, abundance and distribution of various species.³⁰

Anthony Charles, author of “The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse,”³¹ explores the collapse of the groundfish stocks in a different way.

Charles offers an important alternative for rethinking the traditional reasons for the collapse given by government and fishing industry officials. Charles explores the attitudes of the institutions governing decisions concerning the groundfish stocks and develops a view of the attitudinal problems that come from people in power over groundfish. In his own words, Charles takes a

...nonstandard approach to examining the Atlantic Canadian groundfishery collapse, focusing on human attitudes rather than on possible causes that are perhaps more concrete, such as excessive foreign fishing, predation by seals, cold water, gear technologies, government management, problems with the science and political factors. This is because underlying many of these considerations lie the

²⁹Mason, “The Newfoundland Cod Stock Collapse,” 21. ‘Nose and tail’ refers to geographical regions of the Grand Banks fishing zones.

³⁰Mason, “The Newfoundland Cod Stock Collapse,” 21.

³¹Anthony T. Charles, “The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse,” *Dalhousie Law Journal* Vol. 12 (1995): 65-83. Charles is Professor of Management Science at the Faculty of Commerce at Saint Mary’s University (Halifax). He specializes in fisheries and aquatic research, particularly addressing issues of management, economics and policy, as well as resource assessment and bioeconomic dynamics. While I am focusing on the NL fishery, this discussion is still pertinent to the thesis.

attitudes, the philosophical underpinnings, which drive decision-making.³²

Charles names four areas of concern and prevailing institutional attitudes as problematic in the management and functioning of the fishery. These are, briefly:

1. The first of these areas is the role of the regulator.

With respect to the role of regulator in the fishery, the prevalent attitudes of government are:

A) The attitude on the part of government and fishing organizations, especially of overseas trawlers, is that the resources of the ocean exist to gratify the pursuit of the maximization of profit.³³ This free enterprise and its characteristic goal of maximization of profit is in direct opposition to the goal of long term sustainability.

B) The attitude, at the other end of the spectrum, says that there needs to be total control over fishers, vessels, and processors.³⁴ This approach builds a top-down mandate, giving the Minister of Fisheries great power and fisher people very little power. This approach creates an “us versus them” mentality, where powerful government officials identify local fishers as taking too many fish.

³²Charles, “The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse,” 65,82.

³³Charles, “The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse,” 66.

³⁴Charles, “The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse,” 67.

2. The second area of concern for Charles is in the lack of consideration for conservation.

A) Charles perceives an attitude according to which greater value is given to the exploitation of fish than to conservation.

If one pursues exploitation, one risks massive stock and ecological collapse. If one pursues conservation, then harvests may be lower than necessary and people have less money for their livelihood. Charles points to a number of major mistakes. Scientists discovered, in the mid-1980s, that they had been overestimating stock numbers due to assumptions made about reproduction in fish. Quotas given with scientific estimates were often much too high. Here, the government and scientists acted with the attitude of promoting exploitation rather than conservation. Hence, the fisheries collapse was inevitable.

B) The second attitude to consider here is in the approach toward technology use and conservation. Charles points to the overuse of short-term, catch-maximizing gear which drags the bottom of the ocean with large-scale negative impact. Some argue that this large-scale negative impact is difficult to prove. On the other hand, if government were to encourage the use of gear which promotes long-term conservation, then there would need to be a radical shift in our fisheries methods.

3. The third area of concern is the notion that conservation can wait.

Here, Charles names as problematic the desire to continue to meet and sustain harvests of fish, at the institutional level, in order to avoid disrupting the harvesting

process. Here, the government often exceeded its own declared conservation goals. In this case, the most evident issue was the 50% rule which existed within the Atlantic Canadian Fishery through 1992, the year of the moratorium. This rule meant that when scientific evidence pointed to the need for reductions in fish catches, management would reduce the amounts slowly, by 50% of the difference each year. This approach did not put conservation as its priority. The fish stocks were simply unable to recover from such exploitation.

4. The system works.

Charles identifies a choice. Recent fisheries closures identify problems within the system which call for radical reform. Government and others can look on this as an opportunity to restructure the fishery and management of its systems or it may choose to operate as usual. In the NL fishery they chose to ignore the warnings or found faulty explanations.

Charles cites instances where the ocean itself is identified as the cause of declines in stocks. Some identify events such as the cooling event of El Nino as causes of disaster. Charles disagrees. "The principal underlying cause of the collapse is more likely to be due to high levels of resource exploitation."³⁵ In Charles' view, this approach is simply an overgeneralized approach to cover up for the gross mismanagement by fisheries officials. Charles argues that if we continue to buy into this approach, we will never truly identify the abundant problems in the management offered by those in power in the fishing industry of Atlantic Canada.

³⁵Charles, "The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse," 77.

Charles cites these four areas and their accompanying problematic attitudes as the reasons for the need for major change towards the promotion of conservation, in order to help the fishery recover and avert another collapse.³⁶ His approach differs greatly from the writers of the two previous reports I have considered. To be sure, the complexity of the consideration of the decline of the groundfish, particularly the cod fish, lies in the consideration of all angles of the issues involved. In one sense, this decline has been coming for decades.

(b) Social Issues: Globalization and the Fishery

The trend toward globalization has had an impact on the NL fishery, especially in its quest to meet the demands of the world market for fish. Canadian ethicist Marilyn Legge speaks about the impact of globalization on communities here in Canada. She defines globalization as,

...that process which has led to the creation of a single, international (global) financial or capital market...Globalization is a system of rapidly expanding political and economic interdependence. The current phase of corporate globalization has been developed on the basis of what is known in Canada as the neo-conservative or neo-liberal agenda. Its primary belief is the unrestricted markets and the unfettered movement of capital, goods, and services. It holds that competing forces of economic self-interest are guided by an invisible hand that will ensure optimum good as each individual pursues his or her own financial gain

³⁶Charles, "The Atlantic Canadian Groundfishery: Roots of a Collapse," 83.

and security.³⁷

Globalization is the gradual process by which economic, social and cultural barriers are disintegrated in order to promote an understanding of the world as one, as a ground for the pursuit of the maximization of profit and the commodification of resources for the benefit of those rich countries that trade well. The benefits go directly to those in power to govern the trades. The free market ideology at the heart of globalization is at work in the NL Fishery.

The impact of globalization on the NL Fishery and the current collapse and ecological crisis can be named in three ways:

- 1) For centuries, the demand, both onshore and offshore, of the globalized market has put enormous strain on fish communities and their ecological habitats. Supplying this demand has put unbearable pressure on stocks, not allowing the rebuilding of these ecological communities.
- 2) Trawler technologies, used in the inshore and foreign fishing fleets of NL, have advanced technologies which drag the ocean floor. These trawlers impact in serious ways - i) destroying habitats which take decades to rebuild, ii) netting young fish which disrupts the possibility of new generations for reproduction, and iii) fishing in amounts that do not allow for fish to renew and create new life. Also, these trawlers are governed

³⁷Marilyn J. Legge, "Building Inclusive Communities of Life," *Intersecting Voices: Critical Theologies In A Land of Diversity*, edited by Don Schweitzer and Derek Simon, (Novalis: Saint Paul University, 2004), 291-92.

by the private companies and provincial government. It takes the right to fish away from the local fisher person.

3) The growing demand to meet the export needs for fish gives people work in fish plants but also takes away fisher people's control over their own boats and fishing. In addition, as we will see, communities are strongly impacted. For NLers and Labradorians, the community relied on fishing. It became the cultural, economic, personal and social bedrock of community life. With the collapse of the fishery, this community life is severely affected. The social and personal links built between people around the fishery which shaped community have disappeared, along with many communities themselves.

Restructuring programs which encourage people to leave the fishery make it difficult for people to become eligible for fishers' licenses. This, too, contributed to the loss of personal and cultural values. Indeed, the pursuit of profit at the expense of local people and the ecological system has been ongoing for centuries. This ethic of the neo-liberal agenda for pursuit of maximum profit in the fishery began with the landing of John Cabot on the shores of NL in 1497 and the relentless exploitation of the ocean for profit that has continued throughout the centuries.

Today, this pursuit of profit is worsened by onshore and offshore advanced technologies in the industry which make little allowance for sustainability and for people's livelihood in local communities, or for the life of the local communities themselves when the ocean is so overfished that it can no longer support the lives of local fishing people. However, profit-oriented fishing continues to support the trawler fishing

for the commercial provincial fishery and the export-oriented fishery. Marilyn Legge summarizes the impact of globalization on local communities in this way, "Major sectors of wealth and decision-making have decided to value short-term accumulation of profit and capital at the expense of permanently writing off many economically depressed communities."³⁸

While it is true that NLers and Labradorians have always experienced less than prosperous lives, the fishery, until the collapse of the groundfish, had provided the foundation of the lives of thousands of people, and many communities. With the loss of local fisheries and the loss of livelihood for so many, the impact on community life, cultural identity and the province as a whole is profound. Again, Marilyn Legge points to the crippling effects of globalization.

...globalization erodes community by altering the material reality - the social, economic, and political infrastructures - that are embedded in communities as the frameworks for their common action and identities...Globalization draws a vision of unlimited wealth and success for all but erases particular identities, cultures, and species...human beings under corporate globalization are construed as isolated individuals rather than persons in community.³⁹

In the globalized economy, fishers and plant workers have less and less say in the control of the fish, how much is to be caught and how the fish is sold and sent because, in order to survive and feed their families, these fishers must come under the direction of large corporations which direct the catch, the use and the selling of the fish which,

³⁸Legge, "Building Inclusive Communities of Life," 293.

³⁹Legge, "Building Inclusive Communities of Life," 295.

predominantly, is sold to foreign markets. This means less independence for fishers and plant workers and more of a dependency for the whole provincial fishing industry.

Dependence on such exports and on the fishery as the only industry takes away from the development of small businesses within outport communities, again removing control of the economy from the hands of many people and concentrating wealth and economic development in the hands of a few.

With respect to the ecological impact, we see the continued development and use of large trawlers and vessels without regard for sustainable living with respect to the human and non-human communities. This kind of development exists only to satisfy the demands of rich regions to satiate the desires of the few places in their world where markets can demand and demand without limit. While the export fishery is important, there is need for a balance against the huge demands of the global market. This balance must include the capacity of the ocean to reproduce fish and the needs of the local people.

With the arrival of huge trawler vessels in the 1950s, cod and other species' numbers have dropped dramatically. These vessels are hundreds of feet long and are designed to 'strip-mine' the sea, hauling from the oceans in vast quantities cod and other species with nets that will drag in whatever they catch. These nets are over 3,500 feet in circumference and do not account for size of the fish, age of the fish, and other factors in the renewability of groundfish species. It is estimated by Canadian scientists that between 1647 and 1750, marking the beginning of European involvement in the NL fishery, 8 million tons of northern cod were caught, encompassing an average of 30 years of

generations of codfish. By the late 1960s, within 15 years of the arrival of factory fishing, trawlers took that same amount of cod. These foreign trawlers were the beginning of the end of many species including the cod, flounder, halibut and haddock.⁴⁰ In the last 30 years Canada has built its own deep-sea trawler fleet and built on the destruction begun four centuries before. Of course, many other underwater species interrelated with the cod and other groundfish are impacted by the dragging of the trawlers on the ocean floor. The disturbance of these ecological communities takes decades or centuries to undo.⁴¹ Domestic overfishing is also responsible, in part, for the current fisheries crisis.

For a global picture of the impact of these vessels in the last 50 years, it is important to consider their use in the fisheries worldwide. In an hour they can haul in as much as 200 tons of fish. By the 1970s the former Soviet Union had 400 factory trawlers on the sea, to be followed with high numbers of vessels from Japan, Spain, Germany, France and Britain, devouring the hake stocks of South Africa, pollock from Alaska and the Bering Sea, krill in Antarctica and northern cod from NL.

Today, the groundfish fishery remains very restricted and cod have failed to recover. Additional closures further evidenced the growing ecological impact of overfishing and the subsequent inability of groundfish, including cod, to renew themselves. Current assessments of cod numbers and of the whole groundfish population,

⁴⁰Marine Conservation Biology Institute, "A Run on the Banks: How Factory Fishing Decimated Newfoundland Cod," 2006, 5. Information available from <http://emagazine.com/view/?507>.

⁴¹Marine Conservation Biology Institute, "A Run on the Banks," 7.

provided over the last three years, show no signs of imminent recovery.⁴²

Impact on Local People

The government of Canada introduced two special aid supplements as a result of the closure of the cod fishery. Two programs, N.C.A.R.P. (Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program) and T.A.G.S. (The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy), the latter commonly labeled 'the package.' Other part-time job-creation programs were put in effect but without a real impact in many communities. Many rural communities have experienced a downward spiral because of 1) unemployment related to fisheries restructuring policies, 2) the end of government financial aid in the midst of the fishery crisis, and 3) personal and social problems exacerbated by the fisheries crisis and the specific context of the cod moratorium.

(c) Feminist Issues: Gender and the Fishery

Women are particularly impacted by the collapse and closure of the fishery. Women have many different roles within the NL fishery, both as public participants and as people behind-the-scenes. Their roles include mothers, wives and daughters themselves involved within the fishery as part-time or full-time fish plant workers and fishers. Women are also involved directly in the fishery through the behind-the-scenes

⁴²Fisheries and Oceans Canada, "A Recent Account of Canada's Atlantic Cod Fishery," 2003, 1-10. Available at Fisheries and Oceans Canada website <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca>.

jobs of book-keeping, household management, raising the children, and caring for the vulnerable within the community.

As is often the case for women in publicly male-dominated work, women are unrecognized for the private and often public work in the fishery that is theirs, whether these are roles they willingly take on or roles to which they have been socialized. Women have been active participants in the life of the provincial fishery since its beginnings, in both the formal and informal sectors. In the whole of Atlantic Canada, some 40,000 people were dramatically affected by the closure of the cod fishery. NLers are among some of the most affected. Where over 35,000 fishers and plant workers have been laid off, 12,000 were women.⁴³ In the years immediately prior to the fishery closures, women constituted one third of the fishery's labour force and made up 14 percent of the province's fishers, either in their work as crew members on their husband's boats or fishing independently.

The impact of the fishery closure was particularly traumatic for women who were expected to keep community infrastructures going in small communities, most of which collapsed with the closure of a major industry. Not only women who worked directly within the fishery but all women in these communities have been impacted. However, I will confine my considerations of women's experiences in this thesis to women directly involved in fishing themselves as fishplant workers or fishers. I will explore these issues

⁴³Martha Muzychka, *The Impact of the Cod Moratorium on Women in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Review of the Literature*. (St. John's: Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women), 4.

more deeply in the next chapter.

(4) Methodology: How to Write A Theology of Redemption in the Aftermath of the Fishery Collapse

(a) Theories of Redemption

Theology is a language about hope, hope through God's creative and redemptive action in the world. For feminist and liberation theologians, this redemptive hope is experienced by human beings through historical realities, in their local and global contexts. As such, redemption is understood in feminist and liberation theologies as a movement toward wholeness, neither solely as an eschatological mystery of hope in the future which only God knows nor as a vision of justice experienced fully in the present.

While I do not engage a cosmological analysis and engage ecological concerns from earth-centered stories of creation, I do address the ecological realities that are such a crucial part of women's lives and the wider context of the fishery crisis that so impacts their lives. Therefore, I must include eco-feminist and ecological analyses in order to understand women's lives and to speak to the wider crisis in relation to a contextual understanding of redemptive hope. My work is explicitly related to the Christian understanding of redemption and attempts to sketch out an understanding of redemption in relation to women's experiences in the NL fishery, especially in light of the collapse

and closure of the fishery. I am not constructing a feminist vision of redemption in relation to the Earth. A well-developed, eco-theological work on ecology in the fishery would be another thesis entirely. Nonetheless, the depletion of fish stocks is a dimension and expression of the ecological crisis and so must be addressed. It concerns the depletion of the fish in the North Atlantic.

My inclusion of the earth and the water, in relation to the fishery and women's lives, needs to be understood as one dimension of this work. It is addressed from a Christian perspective and in relation to ecological and social crisis in the fishery. It does not place these events in a full evolutionary context. It is more modest. The thesis addresses the situation of NL women whose lives were impacted greatly and who experienced turmoil because of the human-made tragedy of the fisheries collapse. The thesis asks whether their experiences can be placed in a Christian redemptive context. More precisely, the thesis asks whether their story can help us to understand the Christian story of redemption better.

It is the hypothesis of this research that women's experiences during this crisis in the fishery in its ecological context can be placed in dialogue with theologians' work on salvation. The account of their experiences can contribute to the shaping of a new dimension of a theological understanding of redemption. No theology attentive to the NL fishery crisis is complete if women's experiences are not acknowledged and considered. The language of redemption is most fitting for such a contemporary theological inquiry.

To achieve this the thesis will engage the works of Edward Schillebeeckx,⁴⁴ Ivone Gebara,⁴⁵ and Rosemary Radford Ruether⁴⁶.

Contributions of Schillebeeckx, Gebara and Ruether

These theologians have contributed insights toward an understanding of redemption that is rooted in the historical, lived experience of people in dialogue with an understanding of eschatological horizons of hope. In order to give an initial framework to

⁴⁴Edward Schillebeeckx is a Dutch theologian who has written about salvation in the Christian context since the 1960s. His major works include the following: *Church: The Human Story of God*. Translated by John Bowden. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*. Translated by John Bowden. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993, *Interim Report on the books Jesus & Christ*. Translated by John Bowden. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*. Translated by Hubert Hoskins. New York: Seabury Press, 1979, *On Christian Faith: The Spiritual, Ethical and Political Dimensions*. Translated by John Bowden. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987.

⁴⁵Ivone Gebara is Brazilian eco-feminist theologian who writes about theology in the context of women's experiences and ecology. Her works include the following: *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*. Translated from the Portuguese by David Molineaux. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experiences of Evil and Salvation*. Translated by Ann Patrick Ware. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002. These will be the major works I draw from in this thesis.

⁴⁶Rosemary Radford Ruether is an American theologian who has been writing for over 30 years in the field of feminist theology. She has not written about redemption in a systematic way but introduces redemption in relation to ecofeminist theologies and women's history in Christianity. I will draw from her work on redemption in relation to these areas. *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism*. New York: Crossroad, 1981, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975, *The Radical Kingdom: The Western Experience of Messianic Hope*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1970, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward A Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1983, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, ed. *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism and Religion*. New York: Orbis Books, 1996.

understand their notions of redemption that I will make use of in this work, I will briefly outline their viewpoints. They will be elaborated in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Edward Schillebeeckx

For Schillebeeckx, our liberation as human beings is connected to our remembrance of the suffering of the past or as an experience in the present, with a view to changing such oppressive realities. Salvation or redemption means to be made whole. It affirms that our own wholeness is incomplete without that of the 'other.' Schillebeeckx speaks of human suffering in the context of our human efforts to explain suffering or bring it to an end. His response is that our response to suffering in the face of evil in the world and pain in people's lives consists of an attitude of resistance. For Schillebeeckx such an ethic of resistance comes into play specifically in times when we experience hopelessness and turn toward one another in a relationship of solidarity.

...It must first be conceded that if we cannot justify evil and the unfathomable mass of human suffering, or explain it as the unavoidable obverse of God's fundamental plan in his will for good, then the only meaningful reaction to this history of suffering is in fact to offer resistance, to act in a way meant to turn history to good effect...For one can refuse to allow evil the right to exist, on the basis of the insight that it has no justification for existence, and therefore refuse to give a theoretical answer to what is experienced as the darker reality of evil in its specific historical proportions and distortions. However, that is only consistent and coherent if this refusal is linked with a powerful involvement in resistance against all forms of evil. That means that *in practice*, too, people must refuse to allow evil the right to exist: they must espouse the cause of the good and refuse to

treat evil on the same level as good.⁴⁷

For Schillebeeckx, it is precisely through the transformative experience of suffering and a solidarity with those who suffer that human beings experience fragmentary redemption. A perspective on final salvation, or eschatological salvation, comes only in a *negative awareness*, experienced through suffering when we are in solidarity with those who suffer. Schillebeeckx's notion of 'negative awareness' can be applied to the ecological crisis and its impact upon the lives of NL women active in the fishery.

But it is not enough to speak about the negative experience. One must, in a Christian understanding of theology, also connect this reality with the story of Jesus and the eschatological message of hope in the midst of suffering, loss and death. Christology and eschatology, as dimensions of salvation, are two main lenses of inquiry for Edward Schillebeeckx. In his monumental work, *Christ : The Experience of Jesus as Lord*⁴⁸, Schillebeeckx offers a way of speaking about redemption rooted in the experience of Jesus as Lord and in our own attempts as human beings to deal with suffering in the forms of oppression and unhappiness.⁴⁹ His understanding of Jesus as resister of evil lends itself to the vision of an alternative way of constructing redemption, seeing

⁴⁷Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*. Translated by John Bowden. (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1993), 727.

⁴⁸Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 727.

⁴⁹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 726-27.

redemption in the active modes of resistance and resilience.

In the life of Jesus, God's nearness shows itself to be saving, namely in the practical consequences of this nearness: the sick are healed, the lame walk, demonic powers are driven out...In his goodness, God is also against evil and suffering. Where Jesus appears, salvation begins to live...He (Jesus) identified himself with the sufferer...In his ministry, Jesus sees the suffering of others as his own task. The death of Jesus is the consequence of the incorruptible power of good." Schillebeeckx goes on to name the redemptive quality, as embodied in Jesus, "suffering through and for others as an expression of the unconditional validity of a pattern of doing good and resisting evil and suffering."⁵⁰

I will draw from the christological and eschatological dimensions of

Schillebeeckx's work in order to build an understanding of redemption in the NL context.

Schillebeeckx' vision of redemption challenges traditional theology to reshape redemption in its historical meaning, to see redemption as a process and experience of being in communion with God, despite and in the midst of negative experiences of contrast. Only a socially aware and socially engaged notion of redemption fits the context.

Ivone Gebara

Gebara writes from a Brazilian perspective and names herself an ecofeminist theologian.⁵¹ She is interested in ecological and feminist perspectives that arise out of concrete needs. Gebara's horizon of theological exploration is the cosmological. This means that her questions about Jesus, God, the human person, ecology, and concepts such

⁵⁰Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 795.

⁵¹Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*. Translated by Ann Patrick Ware. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002), Introduction.

as good and evil are deeply rooted in a world view that embraces the cosmos as the place of wholeness and belonging for all.

Gebara's approach involves reconsidering Jesus through the categories of humanity and divinity. She critiques the ways in which patriarchal christology has held a monopoly on the experience of Jesus, specifically with regard to the dogmatic conclusions about Jesus' own humanity and divinity.⁵² Gebara's approach to Jesus is to imagine Jesus as someone who sought out liberation for all those oppressed by structures, particularly women. In this context, she understands Jesus as one who encouraged people's resistance to their own oppression and to the evil embodied in social systems. Gebara moves us away from a christological focus and reconsiders Jesus as one human being who uniquely challenged the injustices that prevent women and men from participating in their own liberation in the here and now. Both Schillebeeckx and Gebara see a uniqueness in who Jesus is within a redemptive context for people in the context of suffering, evil and hope.

In her text, *Out of the Depths : Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, Gebara shows how she views women's experiences of salvation. In a manner somewhat similar to what I propose for the NL women in the fishery, Gebara has gathered stories, words, and experiences. In these stories she locates her reflections on women's lived experiences with a specific methodological approach. In her theological reflection on evil and

⁵²Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 175-179.

salvation, she reconstructs concepts - in this case of salvation - through a dialogue with women's lived experiences. She describes her method as follows:

Starting with the phenomenology of evil from a woman's viewpoint demands a methodological and theological coherence. In fact, theological reflection must adopt a phenomenological approach process; that is, it must be founded on personal and collective historical experience, even if it is always open to hope beyond all hope. Methodological coherence means the capacity to understand, through observing the life of witnesses, when and where salvation can be found.⁵³

In other words Gebara's approach is in line with my own project as she points to the need to re-vision our theological categories in the light of women's experiences. She hopes it will lead to a feminist reconstruction of redemption. Her writing is contextual, considering women's lives in Brazil from a theological perspective. In this way, Gebara has made a methodological path which I will also walk in a re-visioning of salvation or redemption. From the revelation of women's lives, it is evident that salvation or redemption can no longer be only a universal hope in a here-after. It is rooted in the everyday, small moments, in our personal and collective resurrections. Gebara notes, through the witness of women's lives, that "...salvation seems to be a movement toward redemption in the midst of the trials of existence."⁵⁴

Indeed, this is also true in the lives of women in the NL fishery.

I borrow from Gebara's phenomenology to take women's words and experiences and, through them, begin to construct a contextual vision of redemption in the NL context.

⁵³Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 121.

⁵⁴Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 124.

Gebara's contribution to the thesis is her phenomenology of women's lives and experiences. The "texts" we consider are texts derived from women's lives and are part of their experience of the ecology of the province, especially after the closure of the fishery. In this way, I implement a phenomenological method, in the way Gebara describes it, to begin to speak of a language around redemption grounded in women's experiences and ecology.

Rosemary Radford Ruether

Ruether's work has roots in a Christian feminist liberation theological methodology. Her main work has been to uncover the oppressive and liberating realities of women's past through a historical-critical approach. She seeks to unmask the ways in which traditional theological categories, particularly those of Christianity, have created social constructions that oppress women.⁵⁵ Of this, she writes,

The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive...The uniqueness of feminist theology is not the critical principle, full humanity, but the fact that women claim this principle for themselves. Women name themselves as subjects of authentic and

⁵⁵See Ruether's development of the history of women's subordination through male/patriarchal systems of thought and patterns in society. In particular, Ruether outlines how women have been dehumanized through religious conquest, negation, and sublimation of the role of mother. See her *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 6-22.

full humanity.⁵⁶

Her theological method has been called socio-historical, ecofeminist and practical. In it, Ruether lays a foundation for speaking of a new vision of redemption in relation to women's lives. That vision is her main contribution to my thesis. Her critique of traditional approaches to redemption lays a foundation for understanding how we might create new ways of speaking about redemption in the lives of women, particularly in relationship to the earth. For Ruether, redemption is bound to a connection with the divine but her emphasis is placed on our participation in the building of structures of justice in relation to humanity and the whole life community.

Although she does speak about redemption in many of her works, Ruether has not put forward any systematic understanding of redemption that might be labeled a theology of redemption. She does not address redemption as its own topic but instead considers redemption in the light of deconstruction and reconstruction of Christian concepts. While she does not present a systematized theology of redemption, her deconstructions are valuable. I draw from her insights about redemption in relation to christology and ecofeminist theology. These are helpful to me in a feminist construction of redemption.

Ruether's vision of redemption is rooted in a this-worldly, practical engagement of the social realities of women that is centered in the story of the earth. Ruether speaks of the interwoven dominations of the earth and of women. This is particularly significant

⁵⁶Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward A Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 19.

in the NL context. Here, too, there is a deep connection between the oppression of women and oppression of the earth - in this case the careless and ruthless desecration of the fishery. Ruether names eco-feminism as one of the most important challenges to patriarchal structures. The domination of women and the domination of the earth are tied together to cultural-symbolic and socio-economic understandings of both.⁵⁷ The coming together of ecology and feminism in 'ecofeminist' theology also looks toward the construction of structures of justice through ecological and social healing.

For Ruether, the Christian context of women and redemption is rooted in christology. Jesus' story is one which encourages a new humanity because he was bound in solidarity with those who suffered as a consequence of patriarchy.⁵⁸ She holds that women must consider along with the story of Jesus the stories of women who act as liberators so that women can tell their own stories of struggle and liberation alongside the story of Jesus.⁵⁹ This approach changes the ways in which we think about Jesus Christ, salvation and women's empowerment over their own lives, moving away from a focus on Jesus as *the* Savior and toward new paradigms of Jesus in relation to wider soteriological

⁵⁷For Ruether's analysis of these interwoven dominations, see Ruether's Introduction in *Women Healing Earth : Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism and Religion*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ecology and Justice Series. (Maryknoll, NY : 1996), 3. Here, Ruether explores the varying ecofeminist approaches to theology, outlining how women in Asia, Africa and Latin America have brought into the discussion the considerations of race, class and gender in their own contextual realities with regard to the domination of women and the earth, especially with reference to women's experiences of colonialism on these continents. For further discussion of the cultural-symbolic and socio-economic roots of domination, in particular the links between ideology, utopia and ecofeminist analysis, see Heather Eaton, "Ecofeminist Ethics : Utopic Conversations," *Ecotheology* 8 (2000), 43-55.

⁵⁸Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 137.

⁵⁹Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 278.

questions. In this way, I will use Ruether's deconstructive and reconstructive methods to move toward a construction of who Jesus is in relation to learnings from women's experiences and ecology in the NL fishery and in the midst of crisis.

Contributions from The Three Theologians

Firstly, these three authors' notions of redemption or salvation are rooted in 1) people's everyday life experiences, 2) the notion of resistance to suffering and evil, and 3) the hope for concrete action, praxis, in the world. These elements common to their works embody an eschatological hope for humanity. Schillebeeckx offers a complex but accessible framework through which to consider concrete, contextual experiences. Schillebeeckx seeks to bring together in dialogue this concrete experience of injustice which calls for resisting the evil and furthering the good with an experience of redemption. His framework is rooted in the experiential realities of our everyday experiences of good and evil which are anchored in the wider universal scheme. In this way he finds common ground with Ruether and Gebara. Such frameworks emerge in the works of Gebara and Ruether in their earth-centered, historically-grounded approaches to redemption, especially in relationship to ecological concerns. None of these three authors presents an understanding of redemption in light of socio-ecological questions within a very specific context. This will be my original contribution to a theological reflection in dialogue with their work.

Secondly, eschatology and christology are common categories among all three authors, though used differently in their work. Gebara and Ruether use an ecofeminist methodology to speak about good and evil, despair and hope, within the interdependent web of life, rooting the person of Jesus in that structure. I explore connecting points between the christological and the ecological in Gebara's and Ruether's work. The dimension of Gebara's and Ruether's work that deals with Jesus deals more with the person of Jesus Christ. Their work does not contain an explicit christology. I will refer to the person of Jesus Christ for all three theologians. For Schillebeeckx, eschatological hope or joy is born for us out of following Jesus as the divine embodiment of hope.

Schillebeeckx's understanding of salvation is rooted in the christological but leaves room for wider discussion on redemption. For both Ruether and Gebara, Jesus embodied in a unique way the living out of a redemptive ethic of wholeness, sustainability and solidarity with all life. Creating a dialogue on redemption between these three authors and NL women's experiences will provide critical insights for the development of my thesis on redemption, that is a contextual understanding of redemption within the context of the NL fishery. This will be the construction of a theology of redemption as resistance/resilience.

Redemption, as a Christian process toward an experience of wholeness and hope, is known and communicated through historical, lived experiences. That is, the experience of redemption engages local and global realities where the hope of human beings and the whole of creation are implicated. Thus, theology is contextual, ready to be reshaped with

respect to particular contexts of geographic, social, gender, ecological, cultural and economic realities.

4 (b) *A Methodology Grounded in Women's Experiences*

I use a constructive methodology in this thesis. Feminist theologies often begin with women's experiences - using a variety of frameworks - for theological reflection. In most cases women are approached from a particular perspective, that is, from their exclusion of participation in social, economic, and cultural decision-making. God comes to be known to us through the experience of being in solidarity with those most excluded. Theology, then, from liberation and feminist perspectives wants to take these excluded voices into account. Women's voices, in dialogue with theologians' insights, bring new ways of understanding our Christian understandings of God, Christ, salvation, sin, cosmology and the whole of salvation history.

This, too, is an aspect of the situation in NL. The women under consideration in this thesis are fishplant workers and fishers in the NL fishery. This thesis, first of all, listens to the narratives of women themselves. Women in the NL fishery communicate their experiences in the midst of a fisheries crisis. The narratives come out of sociological and healthcare research.

I explore these women's words, as individuals and as a corporate group, for their articulation of a redemptive hope during the years immediately following the collapse and

closure of the cod fishery. I make use of interviews conducted through a report by Ennis and Woodrow titled, *Women of the Fishery: Interviews with 87 Women across Newfoundland and Labrador*.⁶⁰ I draw from Brenda Gzretic's unpublished Master's thesis⁶¹ to get an understanding of the impact of the fishery closure on women. Both of these texts are sociological. In other words they point to the social realities of the closure of the fishery and the future of life in small outports from a gendered perspective. I am particularly interested in the oral reports of the women. I will have more to say about the narratives of these women and the narrative methodology to be applied to these stories in the next two chapters. I will draw from these materials and others to point to the realities women face and the impact of overfishing on ecology.

I am aware that, though I am familiar with the context of the NL fishery, I am not an insider or participant in the narratives themselves. It is a risk to venture interpretation of a particular set of events or experiences within which other people are engaged. I approach the interpretation of this dialogue with a deep awareness of the importance of being open to the learning experience of the process itself. I realize the tentativeness of theological reflections on lived experiences within a particular historical and social reality. Through the acceptance of this premise of the distance of the researcher it must be

⁶⁰*Women of the Fishery : Interviews with 87 women across Newfoundland and Labrador*, (St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador: Educational Planning and Design Associates, 1994).

⁶¹Brenda Gzretic, Unpublished Master's thesis. *Between Life and Death : Women Fish Harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador*. Master's thesis. St. John's, NL, 2002. Gzretic has recently published a book titled, *Women Fishes These Days*. Fernwood: Halifax, 2004. Her work in the Master's thesis referenced here is the basis for this new text. It is a very useful introduction to women's experiences in the NL fishery, especially in relation to health issues.

acknowledged that the researcher as outsider can contribute toward an identification of theological understanding within a particular context. Stephen Bevans defines contextual theology as follows⁶²,

as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the church; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change within that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation.

So, why have I chosen redemption as a theological locus for my integration of theology with women's experiences in NL? How have I come to see redemption in their lives through these narratives?

With my own interest in redemption as a framework for speaking about hope in the context of suffering and destruction, I want to develop an understanding of redemption that is interwoven with everyday experiences. To me, this is a basic hermeneutical principle of theological reflection. I was drawn to the stories of women in the NL fishery because they are grounded in the cultural, social and gender constructions that have shaped me as a NLER, a woman of a family of fishers. I also knew that nothing had been written on women's experiences in the fishery from a theological perspective.

The process of reading these women's comments on the fishery and their lives, families and communities, in conversation with insights about redemption from Schillebeeckx, Gebara and Ruether has given me an intuition about hope that has led to

⁶²Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Revised and Expanded ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 1,19.

the construction of a contextual vision of redemption as resistance and resilience.

This thesis develops a theological understanding of redemption in light of the reality of social and ecological devastation in the wake of the closure of the cod fishery in NL.

Furthermore, our own salvation as human beings is interwoven with the salvation of the earth and the salvation offered through our reawakening to our interdependence with the earth.

4 (c) *The Language of Resistance and Resilience*

I will use the language of resistance/resilience as a conceptual framework for a theological reflection on redemption that incorporates women's experiences and ecology in a specific context. The word resistance conjures up the idea of a struggle, a commitment to hope in the face of evil. However, something more than this word needs to be added to theological reflection on redemption. Resistance is about survival, about defending ourselves against something we know to be wrong. It takes energy to commit ourselves to social transformation. Resilience offers something toward the building up of that energy, that life-force within us that seeks to be redeemed through a vision for the present and future. I will develop this notion further in the final chapter.

Though women's experiences are varied and can never be named as a single homogenous reality, I find foundational elements present in their narratives which signal a fragmentary yet liberating redemption for women today in the NL fishery.

4 (d) *Redemption as Transformation*

In elaborating a new construction of redemption as resistance and resilience, I make explicit a connection between redemption and transformation. Often, redemption has been linked to transformation, with a focus on the transformative quality of redemption as one dies to this world and moves to embrace another reality beyond this earth.

There are other, more concrete ways of viewing redemptive transformation. It can be seen as an overcoming of the split with our selves and creation to a unified understanding of who the self and relationship with creation. Here redemption is also a transformation from a destructive relationship with creation to a creative relationship, a relationship that cultivates ecological sustainability. This kind of transformation is redemptive in its seeking for wholeness of the whole community of creation. The thesis asks how this redemptive experience is known in the context of the NL fishery, with particular reference to women's stories. The transformation sought is at the heart of the desire to become new again in the midst of adversity and death.

In the thesis I highlight the development of redemption as social transformation. I am here making use of the way Canadian feminist Angela Miles explores the link between women, transformation and community.⁶³ Transformation of society is

⁶³In her work, "Reflections on Integrative Feminism and Rural Women: The Case of Antigonish Town and County," *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada*, eds. Jeri Dawn Wine and Janice L. Ristock, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991), Angela Miles outlines connections between small moments of resistance in women's lives and experiences. Her context is Atlantic Canada so it is helpful to me to borrow from her work on the importance of feminism in relation to rural women's experiences to consider application in the context of women's experiences in the NL fishery.

connected to an understanding of redemption as resistance. Miles' work is useful in making explicit the relationship between redemption and transformation in women's lives. I will return to this in Chapter 4.

Angela Miles explores the relationship between women's involvement and transformation in the rural community of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Miles sets out to understand the role of feminism and its constitutive elements in this small town. Her insights are important because she promotes an integrative feminism. She defines integrative feminism as "*...a full politics*" that "*...speaks to the whole of society...*" as opposed to a feminism that seeks to ground perspective only in relation to women.

In that context, she says,

It moves feminism from pressure to be "let in" to existing male society and all its systems of domination - race and class, as well as gender. It thus provides the basis for a feminist struggle for liberation, rather than simply assimilation.⁶⁴

Miles set out to outline the experiences of women in the rural setting of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. She makes some important points concerning feminism which are helpful in defining what constitutes and what brings the conditions for social change for women in rural communities in Atlantic Canada. She makes three important points about feminism and women in rural communities.

(1) Feminism is present in rural communities even when it has no organized local voice. Our movement has succeeded at least to the extent that feminist questions and redefinitions are 'in the air'...

⁶⁴Angela Miles, "Reflections on Integrative Feminism and Rural Women: The Case of Antigonish Town and County," *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada*, eds. Jeri Dawn Wine and Janice L. Ristock, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991), 56-74.

(2) ...a feminism which affirms women's work and concerns and strength, as well as naming and refusing women's oppression, brings much needed support to rural women. Feminism which affirms women's specificity as a group, as well as their equality with men, makes sense to rural women whose identity and space is under threat. They recognize it in themselves...

(3) Women through the centuries have individually and collectively resisted the conditions of male domination, but a conscious commitment to collective resistance is not part of women's traditional culture. The conviction that men's domination is neither natural nor necessary, the vision of another and better world where women's agenda is the human agenda, and the commitment to build that world, is specific to feminism.⁶⁵

Miles did her research in the rural community of Antigonish. She saw that fundamental to resistance and to integrative feminism is a vision for social change. She affirmed women's place and their strength in community-building. In their hope for resistance, she saw the seeds of creating conditions for change. For her, this resistance takes root in the everyday realities of women. This form of resistance is not organized politically. Collective resistance, as Miles says, has not been a part of women's traditional culture in Nova Scotia.

Her insight is helpful to understanding the way women reacted to the collapse of the NL fishery. Also, here, resistance was not an organized, collective voice. Here, redemption as resistance lives in the quiet, small spaces where 1) women question the status quo and where 2) women begin to find ways of survival and wellness amidst

⁶⁵Miles, "Reflections on Integrative Feminism and Rural Women," 58.

devastating hopelessness.

In this thesis, I outline an understanding of the relationship between the experience of suffering and the experience of transformation/redemption within women's lives in the NL fishery in relation to the closure of the cod fishery in the 1990s. I name this ongoing conversation between suffering and transformation as a relationality in which hope is grounded. This relationality functions in the mutuality in which the experiences of suffering and the experiences of transformation define one another in our life experiences. We come to experience that we live within the ongoing experiences of suffering and hope for redemption. In these NL women's stories is a witness to this life experience of the mutuality of hope and loss, redemption and lack of freedom.

When I speak of resistance in these women's lives, I am speaking predominantly of the small ways in which women are finding their voices and identities to become subjects of their own lives and growing in relationships of solidarity with one another. Also, I am speaking of the possibility of creating conditions that set the foundation for an experience of redemptive living in the future.

(5) Women's Narratives as Source of Theological Reflection: Narrative

Methodology

Another dimension of the methodology of the thesis is to make use of the words and narratives of women who were impacted by the collapse and closure of the groundfish fishery.

Narrative Methodology: Drawing from Paul Ricoeur

Narrative methodology includes seeking out a theological language which engages the realities of women in their own words. Here, I am not attempting a quantitative or a qualitative analysis of the situation of women in the NL fishery in the time immediately following the closure of the fishery. This thesis uses a series of narratives spoken by women. The thesis explores the stories of these women to find a language in which they narrate their experiences. Hence the thesis uses these narratives to sketch out what I identify as a theological truth or understanding of these experiences. These are the words and ideas put forward by women in the NL fishery. In the use of their language I am discovering a language of resistance and resilience. I develop an understanding of this language of resistance and resilience in relation to a theological understanding of redemption.

In this understanding of narrative, I am trying to focus my analysis on these women's words, the moments of their refiguration of life with the collapse and closure of the cod fishery in the early 1990s. Thus, I am not attempting an historical survey and/or

sociological analysis of women's experiences. I am not seeking to interpret their lives today, twelve to fifteen years after the writing of these interviews and reports. The research is an attempt to understand NL women's experiences during the collapse of the fishery through the lenses of theological thought. The initial intuition for me was that their experiences speak of resistance and resilience. In order to speak about their words and the resistance and resilience within them theologically, I chose the language of redemption. The emphasis here lies on the process of their experiences, words and the theological flow within them.

In his essay, 'Life in Quest of Narrative⁶⁶,' Paul Ricoeur relates that the significance of a narrative is expressed in the "interaction of the world of the text and the world of the reader."⁶⁷

In considering NL women's lives through women's words, I am understanding the significance of these texts in relation to the interaction between the world of the text - these narrative moments of their lives - and the world of the reader - my interaction with the 'texts' as text. This is a process-oriented reading of women's stories. In this process I have started to sketch out a theological language that is happening in the interplay. The significance of this thesis is in finding a place where the meaning of these moments of women's lives plays out in theological language.

⁶⁶Paul Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative,' On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation, ed. David Wood, (New York:Routledge,1991), 20.

⁶⁷Ricoeur, 26.

In his work Paul Ricoeur draws from Aristotle's understanding of emplotment, particularly emphasizing for his work the meaning of plot as a well constructed story.

What Aristotle calls plot is not a static structure but an integrating process, which is completed only in the reader or in the spectator, that is to say, in the *living* receiver of the narrated story. By integrating process I mean the work of composition which gives a dynamic identity to the story recounted: what is recounted is a particular story, one and complete in itself.⁶⁸

In Ricoeur's understanding of the interaction between the world of the text and the world of the reader, then, the text is like a drama of life, a complete story in itself. In dialogue with Ricoeur, I understand the significance of the narrative as the process of the interaction between myself as reader of the texts and the texts that form the 'text.' Ricoeur understands the various elements of the story as being unified as a whole, an intelligible whole. It is this story, formed from the various elements of events and happenings, which is the drama, the plot.

We obtain an understanding of this composition by means of the act of following a story; following a story is a very complex operation, guided by our expectations concerning the outcome of the story, expectations that we readjust as the story moves along, until it coincides with the conclusion.⁶⁹

These NL fisherwomen and fishplant workers' words separately are fragmented and disconnected. Together, however, they form a whole, a story, a text which gives us a sense of the realities of life. These women's words, unified as a whole, and in interaction

⁶⁸Ricoeur, 20.

⁶⁹Ricoeur, 21-22.

with my own understanding and my world, have pointed toward a theological language. Their words and stories, together, are one story and reflect an event, a happening. In this sense I am examining the stories together as a unified story with attention to my own interaction with the 'text' of that unified story. I do not intend to make a claim that all these women's experiences are the same or to wipe out their differences.

I want to speak to a reality underlying these differences that unifies their words as one story concerning the life of women in this specific context of the collapse of the NL fishery. In no way does this method 'essentialize' women. There are real disparities of hope and despair and different life circumstances for the individual women. However, there is a universal element to their various locations within the collapse of the NL fishery.

Ricoeur also speaks of the world of the text as having

...before it a horizon of possible experience, a world in which it is possible to live. To appropriate a work through reading is to unfold the world horizon implicit in it which includes the actions, the characters and the events of the story told. As a result the reader belongs at once to the work's horizon of experience in imagination and to that of his or her own real action.⁷⁰

Hermeneutics, then, the act of interpretation, is an interplay between the reader and the text which takes on its own life. In this way, I am following the story of the women's texts, interacting with this narrative of their words. In this thesis I am following the story to interpret it in a new way, a theological way.

⁷⁰Ricoeur, 26.

(6) Defining An Understanding of Women's Experiences

It is necessary for me to define what I mean by women's experiences. Often women's experiences are not defined in relation to those of a specific group of women. Here, I am careful not to universalize women's experiences in North America or in the world. At the same time, there is a reality of exclusion of women's voices and stories common in many places around the world. In the thesis I listen to the voices of women whose lives are impacted by the moratorium in the NL fishery of the early 1990s. I am speaking of these women's experiences. In my listening to women's stories and in my analysis and interpretation of these women's stories, it is important for me, as a researcher and interpreter, to realize that these women's stories themselves are differing from one another. I need to keep in mind those differences in women's words so that I am careful not to impose a false hegemony on these women's experiences. However, in many ways, these women's individual stories corroborate each other, bringing forward common themes for theological reflection.

At the same time, it is important to allow the women's words to inspire theological reflection so that theology can take their varied and enriching ideas and experiences into account. These women's words are not theological in themselves but point to insights that can carry theology forward in consideration of new ways of visioning our human interdependence with the world and how hope can take shape in the midst of hopelessness. Thus, these women's ideas and insights from their own words make a genuinely original contribution to theological discussions and actions toward a

new way of living out redemption in everyday life. In this way, these women's narratives can inspire a new way of speaking about and doing theology.

This analysis is inspired by the approach that Canadian theologian Carolyn Sharp has taken to defining women's experiences.

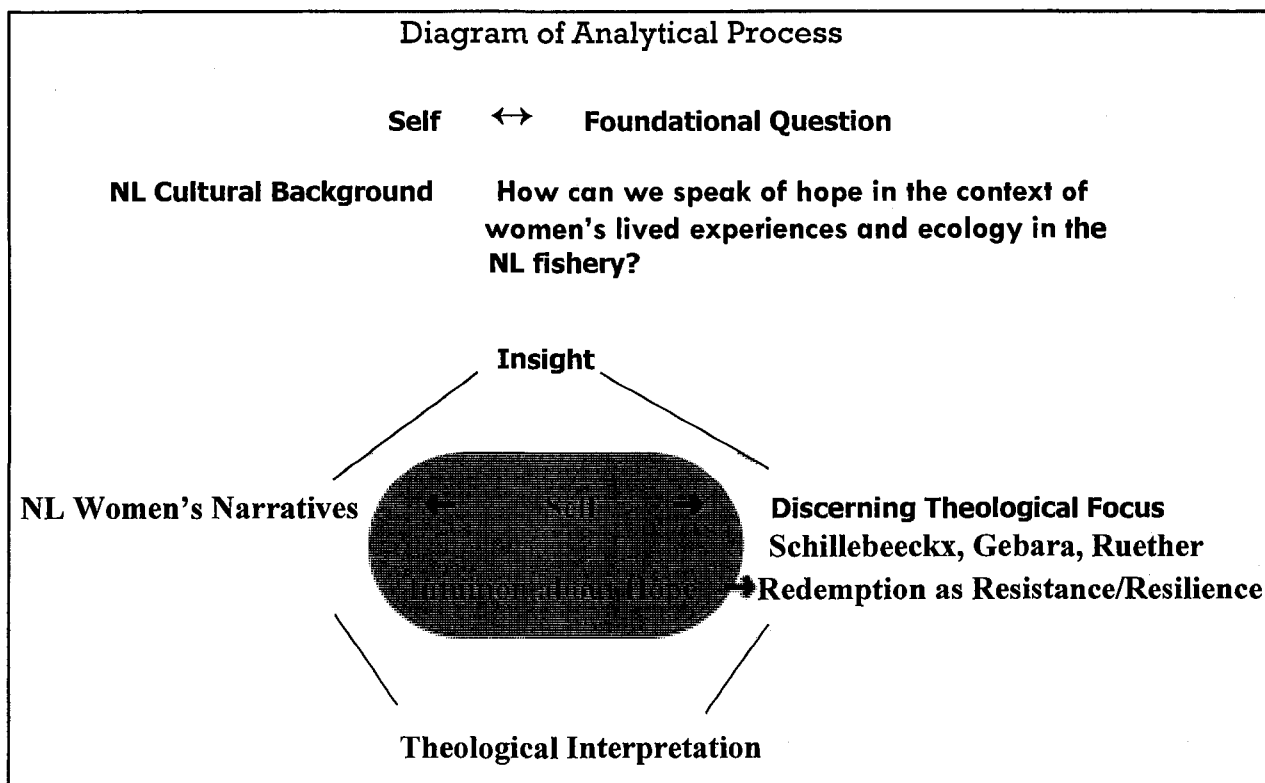
...(W)omen's experiences includes both the socially constructed definitions of what it is to be a woman and the concrete ways in which actual women have been accepted, rejected and modified these definitions in their everyday living.⁷¹

Though it is important to attend to the critique of feminist theory which warns against creating essentialist categories and universalizing women's experiences without attention to the individual particularity and diversity of all human experience, it is equally important to attend to the ways in which gender, constitutive of women's social experiences, as a category, exists for women. If we are too wary of outlining collective realities for women, especially within common social locations, we run the risk of eradicating gender as a category.

I have created a diagram of the open-ended analysis I use in this thesis. This diagram brings together the different strands of my research. It has adapted the diagram created by Carolyn Sharp in her unpublished doctoral thesis.⁷²

⁷¹Carolyn Sharp, Unpublished doctoral thesis, *Listening to Women and Speaking of God: Grounding the Question of God in the Lives of Working Class Women in Québec*, 1993, 89.

⁷²Sharp, 123.



This diagram I have created shows my process of beginning this thesis by moving with my experience as a Newfoundlander and a cultural familiarity with the issues involved with the fishery and theological reflection. Through this experience of the self in dialogue with the cultural and ecological collapse of the groundfish fishery, I began to formulate the foundational question which would ground the thesis. My own experience invited a profound intuition about redemptive hope within the context of the fisheries crisis. The women's narratives, in dialogue with the three theologians, opened possibilities for theological reflection on hope. With these developments, I gained insight into what I constructed as a language of redemption as resistance and resilience operating within the NL fisheries context through the lens of these women's narratives. Sharp connects this integrative feminist approach to working with women's narratives with theological reflection.

When grounding theology in women's experience, an integrative perspective is attentive to how women have been suppressed, how they have managed to create value and meaning in their lives and how they have struggled for themselves, their children and their world. Its challenge is to apprehend women's experience as one of oppression and struggle, survival and compromise, one of sorrow and pain, rejoicing and shame. It is in this context that feminist theology examines the faith which women have been given, the faith they have created and the faith which has maintained them.⁷³

One of the ways to address the category of women's experience in theology is the use of narrative. As a theological category narrative provides a direct way through which the researcher can outline women's specific experiences. The thesis therefore draws upon

⁷³Sharp, 90.

data from sociological interviews which provide NL women's narratives or stories.

I make use of an open-ended analysis of the women's narratives that seeks to preserve women's authority, the authority of women's individual voices and their collective voice. Carolyn Sharp describes such an open-ended analysis in the narratives of working-class women in Quebec. Open-ended analysis, as she sees it, carries with it an acceptance of women's stories as authoritative accounts of women's experiences and "honours the usefulness of women's naming of reality for guiding the researcher in her interpretation..."⁷⁴ In the thesis I follow Sharp's open-ended analysis of women's experiences and apply it to women in the NL fishery.

In 2002, I traveled to NL to obtain materials on the NL fishery. Through my first and second readings of the interviews of women in the NL fishery I was struck by the possibility to understand these women's narratives as stories of redemption. Theological themes emerged soon, with a particular potential for developing a language about women's lives as witness to hope. Also within their words and within the overall context of the fishery there emerged an understanding of how to speak about ecological realities in relation to redemption.

As I read through and considered the stories and comments of NL women involved with the fishery, I began to see the need of developing a theological understanding of hope in the context of their lived experiences. Throughout this reading, it was apparent to me that there is also a need to develop a theological understanding of

⁷⁴Sharp, 118.

hope in the context of the devastation of the fishery and the wider ecosystem in NL. In the beginning of the process of writing the dissertation, I had a strong intuition that this theology in the NL context would speak about place, people, struggle and perseverance.

(7) Toward A Contextual Theology

Contextual theology considers theological reflection within particular historical contexts and with attention to socio-economic, cultural, ecological, political and other important factors making up people's lived experiences. In developing a contextual theology, I think it is important to define what contextual theology means and its connection with narrative as a source for theology. In Sharp's words:

For a theology committed to contextualization, the use of present-day stories of experience is especially pertinent. A critical contextual theology requires making clear the connections between those who speak theologically, their intellectual and sociopolitical location, and the theology which they create. Because the use of present-day story locates the theologian and her community concretely, it provides a baseline to which and for which theological reflection is accountable...It is in and through the boundaries of stories that we know and speak...In speaking and listening, the believing community seeks out the patterns of life and suffering, creation and redemption which echo throughout stories."⁷⁵

The stories of these NL women bring us insight into how theology can be shaped to reflect the lived experience of women and the ecological reality of the province's fishery.

⁷⁵Sharp, 103.

(e) *Redemption as Resistance and Resilience: My Methodological Construction*

As I started to bring together common themes in the words of these NL women, I began to understand that this contextual theology, speaking to and of Nlers, was best articulated as *redemption as resistance*. This resistance occurs in the everyday. It refers to the small ways in which women and others move toward creating possibilities of persevering, hoping and opening up new tomorrows amidst the end of a way of life. Through considering these women's words and their stories, I realized that redemption could speak about hope. It relates to the struggle in women's lives and in relation to ecology. I name redemption here as resistance. The words of these women were words of frustration and sadness. They are a lament against a situation of injustice that brings suffering to them and to the fishery as a whole.

As a good director, my director challenged me by asking if this was enough. Was there something more? In the stories and words of NL women and in considering ecology after the collapse of the moratorium, is this the meaning of redemptive hope or was there something else, something that would make this 'resistance' even more meaningful and ground 'resistance' in a theological language?

As I continued to work through these ideas and to take in these women's stories and the ecological realities of NL to consider them from a theological perspective, I had an insight and intuition: redemption is not only 'resistance' but also 'resilience.'

I want to be specific about the *resistance* and *resilience* I see in the theological context of women's lives and ecology in the NL fishery. The resistance engaged is not a

political resistance nor a socio-economic resistance. The resistance these women know is an everyday resistance to despair and meaninglessness. To try to imagine a formed, political resistance in these women's lives would be to present a falsity. I want to capture in a contextual theology of these women's lives and of ecology in the fishery a sense of everyday resistance, a resistance that embraces limits and yet experiences a possibility of hope in the midst of hopelessness through relationality and through perseverance.

(8) Conclusion

This chapter has provided a general overview of the context of the NL fishery, especially in relation to the collapse and closure of the codfish fishery and women's lives soon after this closure and provided a methodological outline for my thesis. In the second chapter, I outline the data of women's experiences and ecology from which to speak about a contextual understanding of redemption. In the third chapter, I consider these experiences in the light of theological reflection on redemption from the framework developed above from the work of Schillebeeckx, Ruether and Gebara. Finally, in the fourth chapter I draw together insights from women's experiences and ecology, combined with theological insights on redemption, to present a sketch of a contextual understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience in the context of the NL fishery.

Chapter 2 Women's Lives in the NL Fishery

(1) Introduction

In this chapter, I explore women's voices and words as a place for theological reflection on the crisis in the NL fishery. In order to consider their contexts as women fishers and fishplant workers in the NL fishery, I first provide a brief sketch of women's involvement in the past and present fishery. Then I present women's narratives in today's NL fishery. These narratives or stories will be the foundation of my theological analysis in chapters 3 and 4.

As I have said, women and men have both felt the impact of the closure of the fishery on themselves, their families and communities. Why, then, have I chosen to focus my thesis on women's experiences in this context?

My reasons for doing so are fourfold:

1. Women's experiences within the fishery have, for too long, been excluded. Culturally, the fishery is male-oriented. Women are hardly considered as primary agents in the fishery and yet they are essential to the industry. Their contributions need to be acknowledged. Women face many challenges that are gender-specific.
2. At the heart of NL's ecological crisis, women's stories in the context of the ecological crisis in the fishery have been excluded in the decisions made in the response to the impact by different levels of government. Women's experiences in conversation with the wider ecological reality is necessary for any theological thesis that seeks to consider redemptive hope in the context of a sustainable future for women and the NL fishery.
3. Theology, intentionally or not, is always grounded in a particular context and needs to

be grounded in social realities. Central to this social reality is the role of gender. An ecofeminist vision of redemption begins with women's experiences and their involvement with the story of the earth as a prophetic call to solidarity and social transformation. Gender is playing a greater role in the way we do theological reflection. Since women's voices are often excluded voices, a focus on women's narratives will allow for a clearer view of a contextualized, gender-conscious theology.

4. Finally, we need to move toward new ways of sustainable living in Canada and move toward new ways of living community that challenges the structures that threaten to destroy our small communities. The presence of women in the fishery and their relation to the sea is part of defining a resilience at work in their lives and the ecological crisis in relation to the fishery. It is an indispensable part of our theological reflection. Their voices can be a call to challenge our involvement in Canada, especially when it comes to a responsibility to speak to and to create a sustainable way of life.

(2) Women's Abiding Presence in the NL Fishery : Past and Present

(a) Women's Past Heritage

In the tradition of the NL fishery, women were rarely directly involved in the catch of fish. They were primarily involved in the fishing industry in other ways equally essential to the life of the fishing industry. Women were involved in less publicly recognized ways, often referred to as the onshore 'skippers'.

It is important to note that women's important roles in relation to the operation of the fishery were undervalued and unrecognized. The whole industry of the fishery was seen to be men's domain. Yet women performed every task crucial to the operation of the industry except for the actual catching of fish. In the division of labour roles it was considered too dangerous for women to participate in the actual catching of fish centuries ago. Their place included the predominantly onshore work of raising the children, (both as a single family and communally, shared by women in the community), subsistence farming, food and clothing production, responsibilities for the care of the sick and old, picking and bottling berries, (a staple in the NL diet at the time), tending the animals, curing and drying the fish. In addition to all these tasks, of course, these women were wives, mothers, grandmothers and community providers. Often, women took the fish brought in by their husbands and fathers and continued the process of actually getting the fish to market through their skills working with fish on the flakes onshore and through their dealings with the merchants who supplied goods for fish. Despite the numerous tasks women performed in the fishing industry, they were an invisible force.

Government involvement was instrumental in the shift to end the engagement of women's traditional knowledge in the fishery and to return women to the roles deemed appropriate for them by business and government sectors. Such government involvement happened in order to expand the fishery. It was without thought to the cost to women, their families, and to the ecological breakdown that is created when so much is demanded of a single industry. Statements produced by the provincial and federal arms of the

government reflect this plan to exclude women from the active work of the fishing industry. Women were considered less able to deal with the hard work of the fishery and female labour is considered equivalent to child labour.

The general social improvement which has been taking place in the Province for some years is resulting in the liberation of women from the hard and unsuitable work of fish-making and allowing them to devote their time to their household duties and to live in an atmosphere of human dignity as wives and mothers. The committee considers that in a programme of development of the fisheries child and female labour should find no place, except in the case of young women who will be employed at suitable work in plants and senior school children who will undoubtedly continue to help in fish curing during the summer vacation.¹

This rhetoric planned the systematic exclusion of women from their traditional tasks in the fishery and attempted to create a fishery in which women would have no direct involvement. What is remarkable about this statement, as with many historical statements about women, is the power dynamic of the text. It is obvious in the text that women's voices concerning their roles in the fishery were strongly silenced.

This focus on encouraging women to leave their work in the fishery came hand in hand with the drive toward expansion of the fishery to meet the desired and increasing appetites of international markets for fish. Women's work in curing and drying fish used traditional techniques and the fish caught at the levels which supplied fish to a market to Europe, the United States and Canada alone did not drain the fishery of its renewability. However, with the shift from these women's traditional methods to the new technologies

¹Governments of NL and Canada. *Report of the Newfoundland Fisheries Development Committee, "Walsh Report,"* (St. John's, NL, 1953), quoted in Williams, 8.

which relied less on human labour and more on new methods and machinery, came the beginning of an uncontrolled ethic of development which would strain the limits of the fishery.

This ethic of development pushed women out and severely depleted the number of fish in the sea to the point where, in the 1960s and 70s, local fishermen and scientists were beginning to speak about the looming shadow of a major crisis. This reality would soon emerge as an ecological disaster in the 1980s and 90s. At risk today are several species including shrimp and salmon which face major threats in the strain of such international demand. It is agreed by many experts, such as local women and men and those in the academic field, such as renowned Canadian scientist David Suzuki, that there is an international fisheries crisis happening right now in our history.

(b) Government Policy and Exclusion of Women in the Past Fishery

The fishery gave some women an opportunity to work where they had not worked at all before. Through their work on the stages, splitting, curing, salting and drying fish for market, along with the business end of bookkeeping and handling of money, women gained valuable skills that contributed to their independence. In 1958, the curing work done by women was credited to men's incomes and eligibility for licenses and income was denied to women who fished with their husbands. Until 1974, employers were not

legally required to pay women the same as men for equal work.² In the 1980s and 90s, fish stocks began to decline. Women were more adversely affected than men because most of the people let go from plants were seasonal workers and part-time workers, the majority of whom were women. Female workers received little work and often did not qualify for Employment Insurance benefits (then called Unemployment Insurance). Women tended to have less seniority than men because of their work on night shift or as seasonal workers with their part-time status. Women often worked these night shifts and part-time jobs because their responsibilities with children interfered with their ability to work full-time.³

Significant numbers of women began fishing themselves in the 1980s, often alongside their husbands. Still in the 1980s, women were excluded from employment insurance benefits. "Women who were fishing, or working on shore baiting trawls, mending nets or drying squid, found that they did not qualify for Fishermen's UI. Their earnings from fishing were considered part of fishing work."⁴ Because of the decline of cod stocks in the 1980s, government made it policy to severely limit the giving of licenses to new entrants and part-time workers. By the 1990s, many new full-time workers were

²Susan Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake: Women and the Fishery Crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador*, (St. John's, NL: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of NL, 1996), 13.

³Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 15.

⁴Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 17.

reduced to part-time status by the Department of Fisheries, most of whom were women.⁵

(c) Women's Invisibility and Struggle for Recognition Today

Women have been active participants in the life of the provincial fishery since its beginnings, in both the formal and informal sectors. In the whole of Atlantic Canada, some 50,000 people were dramatically affected by the closure of the cod fishery. NLers are some of the most affected. Whereas 35,000 fishers and plant workers have been laid off, 12,000 are women.⁶ In the years immediately prior to the fishery closures, women constituted one third of the fishery's labour force and made up 14 percent of the province's fishers, either in their work as crew members on their husband's boats or fishing independently. The following statistics demonstrate women's involvement as fishers and as plant workers in the NL fishing industry between 1981 and 1990.⁷ (See Table below)

⁵Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 18.

⁶Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 18.

⁷*Charting A New Course*, 15.

Sector	Total	Male	Female
Self-Employed Fishermen	14,950	12,670	2,260
Wage Earning Harvesters	2,000	1,210	790
Processing Employees	26,960	14,110	12,850
Grand Totals	43,910	27,990	15,900

Data from Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board indicates that by 2000, women composed 20% of all fish harvesters in the province, including those women who fished themselves or who worked as part of the processing of fish. Though these women made up 20% of the fish workforce, many were at lower levels of certification than male colleagues.⁸ There are three levels of certification by government. The first level is that of Apprentice . This is a basic level wherein fishers are managed by someone who owns the license. The second step is called Level I. Here, fishers must have attained a minimum of two years full-time fishing activity and must have earned 55 credits through retraining or educational programs. The third level is called Level II . Now, fishers must complete an additional three years full-time fishing in addition to certification for Level I and must

⁸Brenda Grzetic, *Between Life and Death: Women Fish Harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador*, (St. John's, NL, 2002), 264.

have 60 credits from retraining or educational programs.⁹

As of 2000, in the entire fish harvesters industry, "...65 % of all women were at the apprentice level, 11% were at level I and 24% were at level II. This contrasts with the men where 27% of all men were apprentices, 6% were at level I and 67% were at level II."¹⁰ I bring this data forward to highlight women's struggle for recognition and advancement in the industry. I will explore the reasons for women's ineligibility later in this chapter.

It is clear that women's involvement in the fishery is strong. However, women have remained behind the scenes, unacknowledged as full participants in province's fishery. As in many resource-based economies in the world, women in the fishery have gone without recognition in their public and private work. On the public scene, it has not been until very recently that women are beginning to be recognized as fishers and participants in the fishery through their employment as fish plant workers. The acknowledgment of their work in the public sector is a slow process. It is evident that these women were very negatively affected by the fishery crisis. Not so evident are the thousands of women also impacted in the non-formal work they provided in the fishery through bookkeeping, cooking for crews and maintaining supplies. Women in fishery-dependent work such as child care, retail and food have also been laid off.¹¹ The impact

⁹Data taken from the website of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board. Website address <http://pfhcb.com>.

¹⁰Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 264.

¹¹ Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 1.

of the cod moratorium requires a gender analysis. It is important to consider women's unique experiences as they have often been excluded from decisions made affecting their lives. The cod moratorium has affected women and men differently in the last near decade of its existence.

The fishery crisis has affected women differently from men in terms of their incomes, their job prospects and their home and community responsibilities. Many women fishers and plant workers have had to fight to be eligible for adjustment programs because their work patterns have differed from those of men..." (Women work differently because of other responsibilities within the family and community such as child care and community involvement). "Women have found it hard to move out of their communities for training or jobs because of their family responsibilities. Many women have found themselves being trained for traditionally low-wage jobs with no future. In their family roles, women are bearing much of the stress of the moratorium. As community volunteers, women feel responsible for community survival, but they have few means to influence the decisions that are being made by governments about these communities."¹²

Women have long provided support in direct - through fishing and fish plant work - and indirect involvement - through onshore tasks such as raising children, caring for the sick and elderly, providing volunteer work for the communities heavily relied upon because of a lack of social programs. However, the respect, belonging and identity women have gained from the industry does not mean their involvement is fully recognized. As Susan Williams points out, "*Government programs continue to reinforce income inequalities between men and women, and decision-makers continue to define the*

¹²Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 1-2.

industry in terms of the work and the concerns of men and companies.”¹³

Women’s exclusion from public recognition for work in the fishery came to be institutionalized over the years. Government made laws and policies that gradually moved toward making participation in the many tasks they performed near impossible for women, making them voiceless in the increasingly political commodities of the fishing industry. Knowledge of and involvement in the fishery became a patriarchal affair, passed exclusively between men of descending familial generations with social exclusion of women in the role of active fishing.

Law and custom came to limit society’s recognition of women’s work on the fish and their rights to property in the fishery. At the end of the season, the work that a woman did curing the fish was credited to the fisherman in the merchant’s records. Fishing knowledge and access to fishing berths were passed from father to son. Laws stipulated male inheritance of property in place of their mothers or wives...In times of scarcity, sons seem to have been more likely than daughters to be kept working in the family fishing enterprise.¹⁴

Major Texts for Exploration of Women’s Narratives

In order to get a sense of the impact of the cod moratorium on the women’s lives in today’s fishery, I will draw from various reports, with particular emphasis on two works: 1) Susan Williams’ report, *Our Lives Are At Stake : Women and the Fishery Crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador*¹⁵, and 2) *Women of the Fishery : Interviews with 87*

¹³Williams, *Between Life and Death*, 18.

¹⁴Williams, *Between Life and Death*, 8.

¹⁵Susan Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake : Women and the Fishery Crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador*, (St. John’s, NL: ISER, 1996).

women across Newfoundland and Labrador.¹⁶ I will also draw from Brenda Grzetic's thesis work, *Between Life and Death: Women Fish Harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador*¹⁷, and a videorecording, *Rising from the Ashes : Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries*.¹⁸ In addition, I will look to analysis of women's experiences in the NL fishery through the work of Nancy Robbins, in her Master's thesis titled, *Images and Realities: Women's Experiences In A Newfoundland and Labrador Fishery Crisis*.¹⁹ The women's stories shared by these reports, theses and videos speak of the role of women in the present and future fishery, focusing on women's despair and hope in the midst of a cultural, economic and ecological crisis.

I am drawing together threads from each of their stories to weave a tapestry of their living in the midst of suffering and their shaping of a redemptive hope in their lives. I have chosen to include segments of these women's stories that reflect this dynamic interplay of suffering and transformation, of despair and hope in daily life. In particular, I want to highlight the presence of a resistance and resilience in their lives as individuals and as a collective. Again, it is not outside of the misery, pain, and uncertainty that

¹⁶*Women of the Fishery : Interviews with 87 women across Newfoundland and Labrador*, Frances Ennis and Helen Woodrow, editors, (St. John's, NL : Educational Planning and Design Associates, 1994).

¹⁷Brenda Grzetic, *Between Life and Death : Women Fish Harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador*. Unpublished Master's thesis, (St. John's, NL, 2002).

¹⁸*Rising from the Ashes: Women, Gender and Globalization*. Directed by Debra McGee, (St. John's, NL : School of Continuing Education, Memorial University of NL, 2001).

¹⁹Nancy Robbins, *Images and Realities: Women's Experiences In A Newfoundland and Labrador Fishery Crisis*, (Master's thesis, St. John's, NL, 1997).

women experience this resilience and resistance, but precisely in the midst of it and in an ongoing conversation with it. I have considered the present lives of women and their vision of the future, inside and outside the fishery. It is in their stories that I have discovered the presence of what I name as resistance and resilience.

The women in these interviews are those who are both working in the fishing industry and those who no longer have work there. Some of these women are retraining to find other positions and some are unemployed without hope of finding either retraining or employment in another field. Their fears and hopes center around issues of retraining, employment within and outside of the provincial fishery, women's place in the fishery, government exclusion of women for program benefits and employment and concern for the potential of another serious collapse in the fishing industry with another species. For the most part, these interviews express the individual concerns of women which share many common threads.

(3) Listening to Voices of Women in the NL Fishery Crisis

(3) (a) Women's Voices on the Impact of the Moratorium and Fisheries'

Restructuring Policies

(1) Women Responding to Restructuring in the Fishery

Mary has mixed feelings about the future of the fishery but she is hopeful about the future.²⁰ She describes her community as “*torn apart*” by the fishery closure and the

²⁰*Women of the Fishery*, 2.

restructuring programs through personal and social frustrations. Because of eligibility requirements for the new restructuring processes, people became envious and resentful.

The interviewer interprets Mary's feelings as follows,

...(S)he sees hope in the possibility that women in the fishery might stick together, support each other and work for a better future. She thinks women should meet regularly to share their feelings, and communities must make plans for their own futures. She feels that community leaders, the town council, counsellors and outreach workers, the MHA and a TAGS representative should get together to talk about people's experiences with the fishery closure. Otherwise, she says, the frustration will build until it leads to medical problems.²¹

Despite the feeling of being overwhelmed by the events in her community, she feels that people need to work.

That's why everyone should get involved and get something worthwhile. Not a make-work package. A make-work package don't mean very much to us. We want something so that we got a future.²²

Evan is a woman who worked at the Burgeo fish plant for 11 years.²³ The plant closed down with the moratorium. Her life after the plant closure has changed a great deal. The changes are very frustrating and stressful. Many women feel powerless. Though we can hear her powerlessness in her own voice, we can also hear a commitment to continuing with life even in the midst of so much lifelessness. Evan sees a small hope in her return to school to complete her high school education.

²¹*Women of the Fishery*, 2.

²²*Women of the Fishery*, 2.

²³*Women of the Fishery*, 2.

She says,

I help the kids with their homework, and when that's done and the children settled down for the night, I start my own school work. I get so frustrated at times with the stress of everything I want to crawl in a corner and pull my hair, but I pull myself together and carry on.²⁴

She would like to continue her work in the fishery, but she begins to consider the future and sees that it is bleak. If she moves away from her hometown, she will have to pay rent elsewhere and she worries that her children will not be able to adjust well to these changes. She expresses her hope best in this way, "The only thing to do is to try to have the courage to carry on one day at a time and hope and pray for the best."²⁵

This sentiment expresses the fear of many women interviewed. It appears as a fatalistic response to the devastation of loss of identity in relation to the fishery closure, but it contains within it a commitment to carry on, though it be one day at a time. Evan's actions to stay in her reeducation, to hope for a future for a fishery and to do what it takes to raise her children well show her resistance to the negative voices that are part of her life. Evan's story echoes other women's voices. There is a desire to be part of a new hope for their communities but many women express fear and anxiety when considering their personal futures and those of their communities. They become paralyzed with fear when imagining a future which is out of their hands.

One of the main frustrations with the possibility of being employed outside of the

²⁴*Women of the Fishery*, 16.

²⁵*Women of the Fishery*, 17.

fishery involves the challenge of retraining. The federal government, over a five year period, offered retraining programs for those desiring work outside the fishery. Many women interviewed feel that this retraining was done simply to encourage people to move into another way of life and to leave the fishery behind so as to open the way for the large scale, export-oriented fishery. This current shift toward large scale fishery and export threatens the way of life of thousands of local fishers and plant workers. It also degrades the ecological sustainability of the fishery because of the reliance on trawler vessels which devastate the ocean's life by trapping too many fish too fast with equipment that does not permit the regeneration of fish stocks. This overwhelming demand drains the power of the renewability of the various fish species by relying on few species at a time. Many women feel retraining in this new fishery is not a valid option for them or for their husbands because people are too old to take on another job and the positions are not suited to people's abilities.

Linda Miller worked for six years at the Fogo Island Cooperative Fish Plant.²⁶ Her work has been severely reduced since the moratorium. She finds this closure difficult to cope with but she sets her focus on retraining for another job, even outside the fishery. She says,

Women who don't think they will be in the future fishery should retrain with a goal in mind... Women should stick together and not let government tell them what they can do... They should decide for themselves and tell government what they want to do. Banding together as a women's group makes their voice stronger and

²⁶*Women of the Fishery*, 6.

creates a greater chance of being heard.²⁷

In reference to this retraining issue, we can consider Jackie's experience with a program called *Improving the Odds*, a retraining program for work outside the fishery.

Women have got to get on to the future for their children...

"Jackie is on the phone with anyone who can help her. Although she hopes the nursing assistant program (for which she is retraining) can be made available in her region, she knows that her goals for retraining might mean a move to a larger community."²⁸

Despite her fears, Jackie is committed to retraining for her own future and the well-being of her family.

Mary Macdonald notes that it is very difficult, as a single mother, to cope with the uncertainty of the future. The researcher summarizes Mary's thoughts on women's realities.

...she sees hope in the possibility that women in the fishery might stick together, support each other and work for a better future. She thinks women should meet regularly to share their feelings, and communities must make plans for their own futures.²⁹

These small moments of hope in women's lives reflect a deeper longing and movement toward hope in the midst of an experience of lament. These experiences reflect the depth of importance of the fishery in women's lives and their desire to remain part of the fishery, if at all possible. This is hopeful because women's experiences, wisdom and

²⁷*Women of the Fishery*, 6.

²⁸*Women of the Fishery*, 2.

²⁹*Women of the Fishery*, 1-2.

history in the fishery can contribute to the fishery of the future, knowing full well that it will be different than what they know now.

(2) Fishing and Identity

Vera Abbott has been part of a history of women participating in the NL fishery in her own town, Trinity Bay.³⁰ Her mother was active in the fishery in the onshore work of cleaning the fish and helping to mend the nets. Vera is proud of her identity as a fisher woman. “I was the first woman to fish from this port, and it was my first paid job...” Vera does not romanticize her work in the fishery. “It was a good, healthy living, but it wasn’t easy.” With Vera’s own words, we see the strong ties of the people with the ability to control their own boats and the strength of the ties between women and the sea.

Vera describes her time as a fisher with longing. She misses the early mornings - the contrasting sounds of work in the harbour and the silence of the town, the sun rising over the lighthouse at the Cape, and the look of Bonavista as the lights appeared when people rose to begin their day on shore.³¹

Vera has been fishing with her husband for over a decade and considers retraining a poor option for many people because people have little hope in the future and they will feel too old to be part of a new system outside the fishery.³² We see in Vera’s words the strength of the identity for people in the fishery and the difficulties faced by being

³⁰*Women of the Fishery*, 2.

³¹*Women of the Fishery*, 20.

³²*Women of the Fishery*, 20.

expected to stop their lives and enter into a whole new way of living.

Linda Parsons is married to a boat owner and her family has always depended upon the fishery as a livelihood.³³ She relied on the assistance of a government program which later ran out. During the time of the interview, Linda expressed despair at looking at paying bills, feeding her family and just surviving. Linda considers the impact of the closure of the fishery on her family and her community.

You are asking people in their middle and late forties, who have invested their time, money and lives in an industry, to make alternate decisions about the next twenty years of their lives, which, quite frankly, they are unable to do. Not because they don't want to, but because their life, guts and roots are in the harbours they live in.³⁴

Linda also indicates that she sees the fishery becoming centralized which will mean the death of rural NL and the loss of identity for many rural communities. She sees the importance of encouraging the local fishery as well as the export fishery. Ecological sustainability for the NL fishery will mean long-term visioning of people's needs as fishers and those working outside the fishery and will mean long-term visioning for the well-being of the complex ecological web of systems intertwined.

Mary is part of the group of many women who are wives of fishermen rather than fishers themselves.³⁵ Their membership in the fishery, however, is without doubt. They

³³*Women of the Fishery*, 20.

³⁴*Women of the Fishery*, 23.

³⁵*Women of the Fishery*, 23.

have continued the tradition of the women who for centuries did the work on shore, cooking and cleaning, raising children and salting and spreading fish. Mary laments the loss of this way of life, looking back on the past nine years of her fishing involvement with joy and looking forward to the future without the fishery with peril. "When the men came in with the catch the women also helped to cut and gut the fish. I think women were the strong force behind the fishery." She considers retraining for herself an unimaginable option as she is in her mid forties. "I have no interest in retraining, and besides, what am I going to retrain for at 45 that will get me a job? It would be good to get women together and get speakers in to educate us on what is really happening."³⁶ This comment expresses the need of the interviewee to be involved in the future of the fishery by being informed about what happened to it.

Mary's words signal the impracticality of many retraining programs and the lack of attention to factors such as gender and age when structuring such programs. Often, women are retrained without knowing the resources or planning needed as to how the skills learned will become used in employment. Often, too, women are not offered the same retraining possibilities as men or cannot take these opportunities because of family commitments and the expectation that women will raise the children in the family. Mary points to the need for awareness of the grieving for the loss of the fishery she and others knew, getting to know the real situation, and coming together as women.

Rosina is a 28 year old plant worker with the Labrador Shrimp Company facing

³⁶ *Women of the Fishery*, 23.

unemployment.³⁷ She points to the importance of ensuring that retraining opportunities are joined to employment prospects once one has completed the program. Again, this seems like an obvious thing but it has been the case that many women find themselves without these links. Rosina highlights women's role in the fishery of the past and women's respect in the fishery, especially as 90% of the women on the coast worked in plants, as she sees it. Rosina is one of the women interviewed who feels strongly that there is hope for women's future role in the fishery and that women should seek employment not only in the fishery but also in other areas. The interviewer captures Rosina's thoughts,

Despite the poor prospects for the fishery, Rosina feels that women still have an important role to play. She thinks they should get together now to talk about the changes, and to make plans for a future that might involve other types of work, like tourism. She thinks that the Premier, the local MHA and town council members should also attend these meetings and listen to the women's experiences.³⁸

Mary has been part of the fishery for 40 years.³⁹ She is the sole provider in her family and has lost her job with the plant. Mary's story brings together several of the issues faced, and also highlights the despair and hope in the context of her consideration of women in the fishery. One of the key elements of Mary's story that links it with other women's stories is her memory of her mother and grandmother who worked in the fishery

³⁷*Women of the Fishery*, 35.

³⁸*Women of the Fishery*, 35.

³⁹*Women of the Fishery*, 35.

involved in every part of the process of fishing except the actual catching of fish itself.

In looking toward women's future in the fishery, Mary is more hesitant and worried. "I think there will be no fishery. Foreign fishing, in my opinion, is playing a major role in this. If government doesn't take stronger action to prevent this crisis, I do not know what we can do."⁴⁰ Retraining is a problematic choice for women like Mary who cannot see themselves moving outside the fishery for work. She suspects that it is a scheme to put people out of the fishery. However, Mary does see hope in women's gathering. "As I listen to myself, I can see that getting together with women would be a good idea. Especially if we could get guests from government, fisheries and the union. That way not only me, but all women could voice their concerns and comments."⁴¹

Isabelle fished with her husband for years before her license was revoked by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in 1990.⁴² She and many other women involved in the fishery were deemed land-based workers and were considered no longer eligible for a license. She appealed the decision. We can see the importance of a gender analysis with regard to retraining and decisions made affecting women's lives. She was asked by one of the government officials, "Where were your kids when you were out in the boat?" She had obviously made arrangements for child care while fishing. The ridiculous question of such a process makes visible women's invisibility and the difficulties women have in

⁴⁰*Women of the Fishery*, 38.

⁴¹*Women of the Fishery*, 38.

⁴²*Women of the Fishery*, 59.

trying to earn a living from the fishery. Women are judged with different criteria from men. Men are not asked where their children were while they fishing. It is expected that women raise the children and care for all other matters but there is severe punishment when these women have their own licenses and independence. This situation is common among women in the fishery and is the reason so many women are struggling financially and cannot participate in the fishery as they once did. It is an example of policies and decisions being made that exclude women's voices and in doing so contribute to the downfall of entire communities.

(3) Women's Roles in the Future Fishery

Mary also sees most people in her community living in a state of denial.⁴³ She sees many changes around her community and fears for the worst, that the fishery will never be a way of life again for most people. She stresses the role of women in the past and future fisheries but comments on the discrimination against women to be independently licensed, despite women's active involvement. "In Mary's opinion things will change for women in the fishery of the future...with all the restrictions that will be put on licensing in the harvesting sector many women will be out of the boat - they will no longer be considered fishers."⁴⁴ Despite the despair with which Mary views women's recognition in the future fishery, she also sees hope in women's activism to have their voices heard. The

⁴³*Women of the Fishery*, 59.

⁴⁴*Women of the Fishery*, 59.

interviewer paraphrases Mary's words, "A lot of women don't want to take on leadership roles because they think that men are the better leaders...It's time for women to stand up and have a voice."⁴⁵ To Mary, this change would mean women taking on leadership roles and people listening to women's opinions in their communities.

Carol Ann is involved in organizing women for speaking out.⁴⁶ As part of a team, she helped to organize a project which explored women's roles in the fishing industry. She sees that women seem to be ready to speak out and to organize so that they can be heard. She speaks of the importance of making visible women's roles in the fishery and highlights the fact that many women were dismissed as fisherwomen in their own right. Carol Ann has been recording women's experiences in the past fishing industry to emphasize the importance of women in the fishery. She says,

We interviewed a lady the other day who fished with her husband for years. When he got sick and died, she took the boat out herself, learned the navigational part of it, and took her son with her and went out fishing...When people asked her what she worked at and she'd tell them she was a fisherwoman, they'd snicker at her and laugh. These women were never recognized.⁴⁷

Many women see gendered issues within the future of the fishery.

Marie thinks that with a scaled down fishery and fewer jobs, men will get the jobs first. The plants will become more automated and men will be hired to operate the machines. Women don't have the seniority in the more skilled jobs...⁴⁸

⁴⁵*Women of the Fishery*, 59.

⁴⁶*Women of the Fishery*, 61.

⁴⁷*Women of the Fishery*, 61.

⁴⁸*Women of the Fishery*, 40.

Though there are problems particular to women facing women in the NL fishery, Marie thinks it is good for women to get together,

Marie would like to see a committee formed in Marystown so women could come together and discuss their issues and concerns...if support groups were formed to listen to women, she says, then there would be women performing skilled trades jobs. She thinks this could be a big accomplishment for women.⁴⁹

Linda is a single parent who retrained in aquaculture in order to have an income to support her child and herself.⁵⁰ She sees the main problem with the death of the industry as tied with “technology and large corporations that are responsible for the groundfish failure.”⁵¹ Linda has not qualified for programs offered by the federal government because of criteria which many women cannot meet. Many are classified as part-time workers or land workers though their livelihood depends on the sea. She sees the impact of the closure of the fishery on her community in the increased violence in the community and in the loss of community vision for the future. Linda points to destructive technology as the main issue in the ability of the fishery to recover and the fish to regenerate themselves. She advocates returning to ‘hook and line’ fishing as a way to an ecologically sustainable option which will also mean hope for people to return to the fishing industry as a livelihood.⁵²

Joan expresses deep anxiety about her own future and that of communities

⁴⁹*Women of the Fishery*, 40.

⁵⁰*Women of the Fishery*, 68.

⁵¹*Women of the Fishery*, 68.

⁵²*Women of the Fishery*, 68.

affected by the moratorium.

...I am facing earth shattering changes to my life, and decisions about my family that I'm unable to think about at this time. With the uncertainty of my husband's job, and my job gone, I have no answers. I go on day to day. I honestly feel that I am at a stage in my life where my aspirations of becoming anything more than what I am now, mainly a homemaker, is really not in the cards...I see the young people crossing the gulf regularly and going to other provinces looking for jobs. More people are hanging on to what they have and making do...What will happen to our communities?⁵³

Margaret identifies the devastation wrought by the fishery closure. "I'm just one of thousands whose lives have been turned upside down. Life as I knew it does not exist anymore."⁵⁴ However, Margaret is committed to change in herself and within her community. She wonders why people are not moving toward changes which could improve the situation of unemployment, lack of income and hopelessness. She describes the discrimination plant workers experience.

We are strong, hardworking, knowledgeable people, but we have one thing going against us. I think, as a group, we have very low self-esteem. Society has classified plant workers as an uneducated, unintelligent group of people with no insight into world events happening around them. I assume if a person hears negative comments about themselves often enough, they will unconsciously start believing it themselves.⁵⁵

Margaret is forthright about the discrimination women face and all plant workers face.

However, she does not allow it to break her spirit. Instead, she sees it as a reason to

⁵³ *Women of the Fishery*, 71.

⁵⁴ *Women of the Fishery*, 74.

⁵⁵ *Women of the Fishery*, 74.

motivate herself and communities to resist against this injustice.

I can't do much alone. But when women unite, we can voice our concerns and views. Government has had two years already handling things their way, and their way is clearly not working. Now it is time we make them aware of ideas we have that might be more beneficial to both the government and the displaced workers...⁵⁶

Margaret sees that this takes time, "moving (the discussion) out of the kitchens, grocery stores and other places where women meet and talk."⁵⁷ She envisions women meeting with government, with fisheries and media present to spread the word that change is needed.⁵⁸

Madeline worked in the Aquaforte fish plant for the last 20 years until the moratorium.⁵⁹ She finds it very hopeless to think about the future. However, she does think it is useful for women in the community to gather to speak about the impact of the closure on their personal lives and the communities as a whole. This impact especially affects communities as people will have little to keep themselves active. One way to relieve some of these frustrations, she says, is to have a dialogue,

Why can't fishers and fish plant workers get together more and hear each other's side of things? Who can't we all be united and work together more? After all, we want the same goals. Let's get together and see what comes of it.⁶⁰

⁵⁶*Women of the Fishery*, 74.

⁵⁷*Women of the Fishery*, 74.

⁵⁸*Women of the Fishery*, 74.

⁵⁹*Women of the Fishery*, 30.

⁶⁰*Women of the Fishery*, 30.

In these women's stories, not surprisingly, similar themes resound. These include

- 1) Loss of identity for women themselves, their families and their communities.
- 2) Witness of the strength of women involved in the past fishery and, at the same time, the reality that women, in the past and at present, have been invisible and unheard.
- 3) Loss of livelihood for individuals and communities whose livelihood and cultural values are rooted in the fishery.
- 4) Hope lives in the possibility that some women see change happening in small ways, through the leadership of women in their communities.
- 5) Women have an important part to play in the future of the fishery and outside of it, to participate in the reconstitution of communities, as they have always played such a role and will continue to do so now and into the future of the province.
- 6) Call for dialogue and sharing of information and prospects.

As I have noted, there is much ambiguity in these women's lives. Women lose hope easily because of lack of direction and/or purpose, often blaming government for the situation. Sometimes they remain passive and fatalistic rather than hopeful. Some women see few possibilities for themselves or others to build up their families and communities. Despite the realities of these struggle women face, they do find hope amidst the negation of their meaning as members of the fishery.

(3) The Response of Government

(1) Government Compensation Programs

The moratorium began in July 1992 and brought with it unemployment for over 20,000 people in the NL and Quebec. The greatest impact was in NL itself, where northern cod stocks amounted to 40 percent of the fish caught. The fishers themselves and the fish plant workers were devastated. Under the Northern Cod Adjustment Recovery Program (NCARP), which later was replaced by The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS), people were compensated financially by the government. In 1994, a second moratorium was called on most Atlantic groundfish in Atlantic Canada. Some 50,000 people were affected. NCARP and TAGS, administered by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), were federal government programs created to provide short-term assistance to those left without resources and futures by the depletion of the cod stocks.⁶¹ NCARP assisted some 26,569 people, over a two year period, most of them men. It appears that many more women than men were judged to be ineligible to meet the criteria for financial assistance. These men and women depended on northern stocks as licensed fishers or as fish plant workers who processed northern cod catches. Under both NCARP and TAGS benefits programs, women were most likely to receive the minimal benefit payment allowed. Rates for these benefits depended on previous earnings as both fishers and fish plant workers.

⁶¹Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 21.

Women faced particular challenges in the restructuring and retraining initiatives of the provincial and federal governments. The process of receiving benefits offered to fishers and plant workers under the NCARP program, which assisted almost 27,000 people in the province, of whom 36 percent were women, was a difficult and more complicated process for women. Only 28 percent of female fishers were approved for benefits. The rates of success were slightly higher for female plant workers. TAGS followed the NCARP program, beginning in 1994, serving an anticipated 30,000 people of whom 35.5 percent were women. Under both NCARP and TAGS programs, women received lower than average rates, due partially to the fact that these rates depend on previous fishery earnings and related UI benefits. Plant workers have lower than average earnings than fishers and female plant workers have lower wages, on average, than male plant workers.⁶²

For the TAGS program, people were eligible for funding for a limited period of time. There is a pattern of women being eliminated as eligible sooner than men. Again, this problem was created because of many factors - 1) women's lack of recognition as fishers in order for them to gain a license to establish a dependence on cod stocks, 2) women's low wages which again made them less eligible for greater compensation, and 3) women's lack of seniority and reliance on part-time and seasonal work in fish plants which put them at a greater risk than men in receiving allowed-for benefits. One of the greatest, often unspoken factors affecting women's benefits for maintaining a living after

⁶²Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 25.

the collapse of the cod stocks is the fact that women had frequent interruptions to their work history because of other, onshore responsibilities - raising children, caring for communities as volunteers, and so on.⁶³ Some women who had been fishing for decades were deemed ineligible for receiving benefits.

In terms of retraining, women faced barriers such as responsibility for their families and communities that meant they felt pressured not to travel away from home in outport NL for training opportunities offered in major towns. Many women experienced great anxiety at returning to school after so many years, fears often rooted in low self-esteem because of the low value placed on women's work and the stigma attached to being a plant worker in NL society.⁶⁴ Often, women were just not considered real partners in the dialogue on the restructuring of the fisheries in Atlantic Canada. The following lines from a New Brunswick fisheries leader drive this point home,

And then, there are some who think that women - women! - should sit at the decision-making table. Well, if this is the case, we might as well invite the Martians to have a seat as well. (Taken from Nova Scotia Women's FishNet Fact Sheet 1E)⁶⁵

Both provincial and federal governments claimed one of the reasons for the collapse of the cod stocks to be too many people chasing too few fish. They wanted to

⁶³Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 27-28.

⁶⁴Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 34.

⁶⁵FishNet is a grassroots network of groups of women involved in the fisheries of Atlantic Canada, highlighting women's concerns, visions and ideas for the future fisheries. This quote from a FishNet Nova Scotia source was taken from Linda Christiansen-Ruffman's "Atlantic Canadian Coastal Communities, A Feminist Critique," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme*, Vol.21/22(2002), 58.

reduce the number of people in the industry to solve what they considered to be the problem. Critics of the governmental response say that this approach is much too simplistic and names mismanagement on the part of government and industry in NL and Labrador as well as in other provinces as responsible.⁶⁶

(2) Impact of Programs for Retraining Outside the Fishery

Efforts were made to deal with people's anxieties about returning to school. Also retraining options outside the fishery were made available. A six-week orientation course called *Improving Our Odds* was created and offered in many outport communities. It was designed to encourage people to make the shift from fishery to non-fishery work. This course was met with mixed responses from women. Many felt it was an entire waste of time and felt that women's and men's voices and experiences were not sought out in the development or the implementation of the program. Judy puts it in this way,

Twenty years old I was, the first year I went to the Labrador and that's all I did all my life. To be honest with you, that's all I want at my age now. Where am I going to get another job to? What am I going to get?..⁶⁷

Other responses were more positive to the goals of the program.

In my head I quit the program a dozen times. It would have been easier to say I won't bother with this - to stay in a situation where there's so many changes and you don't know the outcome. But I'd stop and remember the kids and the life I

⁶⁶Christiansen-Ruffman, "Atlantic Canadian Coastal Communities, A Feminist Critique," 58.

⁶⁷*Women of the Fishery*, 47.

wanted for them. I didn't want them to grow up on welfare.⁶⁸

Others stressed the absurdity of training classrooms of women for the same jobs and for very low pay.

It seems there's more jobs for men that retrain than women. How many hairdressers can a community have? Women are getting retrained in low-paying jobs like home care workers. Women are being ignored and their concerns are not being addressed properly. (*Bride*)⁶⁹

The retraining and restructuring programs for a new approach for the fisheries created frustration, despair and isolation in many people's lives. Women were particularly affected by these changes for the reasons we have named above. We have identified the impact of restructuring programs on the women interviewed. Now, we will move to the impact of the moratorium and such changes on these women's communities.

(3) Women's Fears and Hopes for Their Communities

In her report, Susan Williams describes the women's responses to the overall impact of the cod moratorium in the following summary,

Many women described their communities as devastated. They see businesses closing down, and fewer opportunities for socializing. People have lost social networks based on daily work in the fishery. Women noted that it has been hard to get people together for community work and social events, because of a general mood of depression and retreat. Some have seen an increase in vandalism and burglaries...Another major concern expressed by the women is that families and

⁶⁸*Women of the Fishery*, 22.

⁶⁹Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 37-38.

young people are leaving their communities to find work.⁷⁰

Women in these interviews also named the importance of resisting the isolation they feel with one another and with government decision-making bodies. Women highlighted the importance of coming together to share their concerns, fears and hopes for their futures, for their families and for entire communities. Most of the women's responses see the importance of taking things into their own hands, making a decisive voice to say that their opinions, ideas and knowledge mattered and will matter to the future of their own lives and the well-being of the entire province.⁷¹

In her unpublished Master's thesis titled, *Images and Realities : Women's Experiences in a Newfoundland and Labrador Fishery Crisis*⁷², Nancy Robbins explores the presentation of the impact of the cod moratorium in media circles, with a view to a gender analysis and outlines some of the impact of the fishery closure on women's lives. Robbins notes many of the same concerns outlined above. She cites women's crucial role, though often unrecognized, in the fishery of the past, both as women who stayed onshore to mend nets, do bookkeeping, to raise families and care for communities and as women who fished the waters themselves. This role has been diminished since the fisheries crisis and subsequent closure. Robbins also highlights the real life issues facing many women since the closure such as worry about the future, financial insecurity, trying to raise

⁷⁰Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 43.

⁷¹Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 45.

⁷²Robbins, *Images and Realities: Women's Experiences In A Newfoundland and Labrador Fisheries Crisis*.

children without sufficient resources, marriage difficulties arising directly from the fisheries crisis, and eligibility and retraining problems specifically affecting women.⁷³

Along with the common concerns of these real life issues affecting women are concerns for the province as a whole, especially relating to its cultural identity. These fears relate to losing the identity of Nlers whose realities had been so linked to the fishery, fears about leaving NL in the hope of finding work elsewhere, and fears that the province was losing its cultural heritage, that the oral stories and traditions of the people would no longer be passed down to younger generations.⁷⁴

Robbins highlights the ambiguous reality for most women, of hoping for the future amidst the tragedy of losing their livelihoods, cultural ways and identities so wrapped up in the fishery. She describes their experiences in these words,

Women have been instrumental in the development and maintenance of their communities through volunteer work, paid work and maintaining family life. Women argue, however, that since the fishery crisis, and the beginning of the TAGS program, divisions have occurred in their communities and community support seems to be fading. Despite these obstacles, many still have a positive outlook for the future of their communities and suggested ways to develop the fishery of the future as well as ways to expand other sectors, such as tourism and the craft industry.⁷⁵

We have briefly considered the hopes and fears of women for their communities after the cod moratorium. It is evident that the real impact of these women's fears and

⁷³Robbins, *Images and Realities*, 94.

⁷⁴Robbins, *Images and Realities*, 104.

⁷⁵Robbins, *Images and Realities*, 102.

hopes will be seen in decades to come. These interviews were carried out in the years immediately following the moratorium. The long-term impact of the moratorium will be much more threatening to families, communities and the province as a whole. In their narratives, we see the presence of both death and resurrection, hopelessness and hope in the midst of changes that greatly affect their personal lives and those of entire communities. Their hope is found in their refusal to accept the unjust death of a cultural heritage and provincial and personal identity. This hope is resilient in 1) the choices made which continue the will to live and a commitment to struggle forward, 2) the small spaces where women find hope with one another, 3) the histories of women and others who have continued amidst defeat, and in 4) the possibilities of finding life within and outside of the NL fishery.

(4) Women Look to the Future Fishery

In this fourth section of the chapter on women in the NL fishery, I reflect on women's ways of moving toward the future, especially with regard to their place in the fishery of the future. I present a sketch of how women are finding ways to actively resist exclusion by getting involved in the decision-making processes. Women are transforming their experiences of suffering in the wake of the cod moratorium and the decade following its announcement.

These women have experienced suffering in their loss of livelihood, cultural identity and personal, social and community connections. They have also suffered the loss

of their connection to the sea and their dependence on the sea. What is emerging in these women's stories is that women are coming together to draw from a resource of resilience that lives within the personal and community lives of women in NL. This resilience is grounded in their ties with the sea and with one another in outport communities.

(a) Changes in the Fishery in relation to Women's Personal and Communal Well-being

Brenda Gzretic has considered the health of women in outport communities in relation to the closure of the provincial groundfish fishery, specifically concerning the impact of fisheries restructuring programs on women's health. She works from a feminist, post-structuralist approach, considering the meaning of women's narratives from a social, ecological perspective with a gender-based analysis.⁷⁶

Gzretic names, among many important points in her research, the functioning of a neo-liberal ideology in the governmental and business sectors of the province, especially with regard to fisheries management. She highlights the functioning of such a value system which excludes women from positions of power, valuing the work of men over women and describing productivity and growth through a male-biased approach.⁷⁷ This means that often the work for which women are responsible outside the fishery, while they also contribute to the fishery, is not factored in to consider women's participation in the fishing industry. We have already cited examples of these trends in women's

⁷⁶Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, ii.

⁷⁷Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 7.

ineligibility for various programs and financial assistance from government because of added responsibilities from other communal involvements and women's lack of recognition as licensed fishers and active participants in the fishery.

Gzretic makes this argument about the impact of the neo-liberal ideology not only in reference to this patriarchal world view which excludes women's participation in the fishery, but also with regard to the movement of the fishery toward the demands of the global market. She says, "In Newfoundland and Labrador this neo-liberal ideological thrust has resulted in increasing attachment to global markets while reducing local access to fishery resources and the size of the fishery workforce."⁷⁸ In other words, what is problematic for the ecological sustainability of the province is also problematic for the well-being of its people. The focus on an export-oriented fishery has had an impact on women's health. As people begin to move away from outport communities to seek out work in major urban centers within the province or elsewhere in Canada or the United States, populations decrease and social network funding begins to be taken away. Traditional social welfare networks, provided by government and by the developed infrastructure of particular outport communities, cease to exist.

Women in these communities came to depend on such networks for the functioning of their personal and community lives, drawing on these networks to deal with childcare, caring for elderly in the community and other realities of everyday life. With the removal of these services, women take on new responsibilities, on top of their

⁷⁸Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 6.

already demanding private and public work. These added responsibilities often result in poor health for women in the form of anxieties about families' futures, depression and other illnesses.⁷⁹ We see how the drive toward global markets directly affects women in the province in very negative ways.

(b) Connections between Social and Ecological Health in Fisheries in Small Communities

Gzretic also makes an important point about the dependence of fish harvesters on traditional knowledge in their work before the cod moratorium. The women who were interviewed spoke of this traditional knowledge and its importance to the ecological balance of the fishery. Gzretic summarizes this view in this way,

Before the moratorium and fisheries restructuring, fish harvesters would rely on traditional knowledge to dictate when they fished a particular species. There was a relatively smooth transition from one species to the next and the fish determined the time they would catch it, not people in organizations in St. John's or Ottawa. In the present fishery, such traditional knowledge and practices are undermined as markets, governments, and a multitude of organizations determine the timing of when fish should be caught, the quantity that will be caught, and the amount *they* will get for the catch.⁸⁰

From her work with women in the NL fishery, Gzretic identifies women's knowledge of the importance of an interdependent relationship between people and the water. Women want to harvest fish with a mind to sustainable development.

⁷⁹Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 26.

⁸⁰Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 119.

Sustainability is not the rhetoric of big business. Sustainability is a more complex reality which takes account of the ecological health of human and non-human communities.

Women are interested in the importance of conservation efforts to ensure that fish are protected in such ways as to provide a healthy balance for them, the non-human communities that depend on them and for human beings.⁸¹ Gzretic summarizes these women's knowledge of such integral survival and flourishing in this way,

Women's experiences as wives, mothers, and fishery workers living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador have taught them the interdependence of the health of fish stocks and the health of fishing families and rural communities.⁸²

Women are aware of their connection with the rest of the ecological reality for a healthy way of life. One woman even suggested that prayer for her has now become all about this important and delicate balance. She once prayed out of fear for her life. She now prays because "...the ocean has become a place where she feels closer to God, and for her, prayer is interconnected with location, good fishing practices and experience."⁸³

Gzretic also points out the mixed responses of women in the face of crisis in their families and communities. From her interviews, Gzretic sees the existence of resistance and complicity in women's language and identity. Women resist in small but important ways, even through the use of the term 'fisherwoman' as opposed to 'fisherman' or 'helper.' This resistance helps to make women strong in the face of the adversity they

⁸¹Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 168.

⁸²Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 165.

⁸³Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 196.

face. The use of 'fisherwoman', as Gzretic points out, indicates a resistance to dominant discourse and an engagement of non-dominant language.⁸⁴ Women's responses also participate in dominant, male-dominant forms of discourse in order for women to survive in the midst of such a male-dominated trade and culture.⁸⁵ This desire to fit in is normal in the time of crisis when survival and well-being of family is uppermost on women's minds.

(c) Women's Alternative Visions

The vision of these women, in their various communities working for change in very small ways, is to develop an alternative relationship between themselves, with the land and the sea. It shows in the resilience of these women's ways, in the face of their adaptation and the hope for the whole fishery.

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman's article, "Atlantic Canadian Coastal Communities, A Feminist Critique," highlights the role of globalization in the restructuring policies of government faced by thousands of Atlantic Canadian families since the moratoria of the 1990s. Christiansen-Ruffman considers the impact of restructuring programs on women in Atlantic Canada, specifically focusing on Nova Scotian women involved in the provincial fishery.

Christiansen-Ruffman shows how these large companies have made record profits

⁸⁴Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 83-84.

⁸⁵Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 85.

since the onset of the crisis. They are doing so by intensively fishing shrimp, crab and lobster in the same way they harvested the codfish a decade ago.⁸⁶ This harvest is nearly to extinction. She describes the negative impact of global restructuring in this way,

Whether the contemporary agenda of economic restructuring is called neo-conservative, neo-liberal, and/or neo-reform, it shares some characteristics in countries of both the south and north. It measures all worth and all values by economic "bottom line" and treats trade as the one and only priority. Growth in international trade is sought even at the expense of local populations. Policies designed to this end include : privatization of formerly public goods and services; deregulation of national economies, reduction of wages, decreases in job security, continued reliance on technology to solve environmental problems, tax policies favouring corporations; and a priority to commodification of common resources, intellectual property, and life itself.. This set of anti-citizen and anti-community policies is increasingly being propagated and legitimized by International Financial Institutions, and brokered by governments. Throughout the world, the resulting restructuring has undermined or eliminated policies designed for social development, be they food subsidies, public benefits for education, health or public information. Like structural adjustment programs of the South, the fisheries packages of Atlantic Canada have the largest negative impact on women and children.⁸⁷

Christiansen-Ruffman sees the present focus on economic needs apart from social, cultural and ecological needs as a problematic approach to beginning to solve the problems of the current crisis which includes all these facets of social analysis. She sees the need for women's voices to be heard, for a feminist approach to the issues involved which, instead of unilaterally focusing on economic realities that have to do with maximizing profit, would focus on the creation of social structures in communities.

⁸⁶Christiansen-Ruffman, "Atlantic Canadian Coastal Communities, A Feminist Critique," 56.

⁸⁷Christiansen-Ruffman, "Atlantic Canadian Coastal Communities, A Feminist Critique," 58.

Christiansen-Ruffman encourages governments to take women's ideas into consideration and to build a sustainable, ecologically sound approach. Future approaches must take into account the fact that people still need to make a living from the sea. But they also need to begin to see the sea and land, not as commodities but as partners in a relationship. It also means valuing women's work and exploring ways women contribute by offering opportunities for women's skill to be used in communities.⁸⁸ The growing specter of globalization is grounded in a liberalism which commodifies not only human beings but also the earth and the sea.

(5) Women's Resistance in the NL Context

I have no land, no valuable possessions. I will leave them the fish.

(Words from a Phillipina woman speaking about the impact her family and younger generations in her country, quoted by Jade Fraser in the videorecording *Rising From The Ashes : Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries*⁸⁹)

Bernadette from the Northeast Coast remarks,

Women must take a more active role and be prepared to influence the decisions that will be made about the fishery....If women aren't there, small communities may be left out. Women know that quality products can be produced on a small scale just as well as the products produced by large companies. All rural women need to be involved in this process, not just those directly affected by the closure. If people are separated, they tend to branch out in different directions and their effectiveness becomes lost. All women should come together as one group.

⁸⁸Christiansen-Ruffman, "Atlantic Canadian Coastal Communities, A Feminist Critique," 60.

⁸⁹*Rising From The Ashes : Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries.*

(Bernadette, Northeast Coast)’’⁹⁰

From the above accounts it has become clearer how women have transformed experiences of suffering into experiences of hope. Women are finding ways to speak out about their invisibility and exclusion and seeking ways to resist through asking what is needed for survival and flourishing for both human and non-human communities.

Small Steps : Women’s Resistance in Local Communities

In these narratives, women in the fishery are indicating that women’s voices need to be heard and a new way of thinking and acting needs to be envisioned for the present and future of the NL people its fishery.

At the local levels, women are asking what this new vision for the future might look like. I identify four of its characteristics.

1) Women are seeking ways to approach challenges within their communities and within the fishery not through an economically motivated approach but by focusing on a community-based endeavor. This means more control for people in the communities when it comes to the number of fish caught, how they are caught, and who catches them. It also means that women want to have more control over what is caught - how many species and how food is handled. This promotes a return to a more traditional knowledge of processing berries, fish, birds and game - providing more employment, more diversity

⁹⁰Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 61.

for animals and plants used for food, and more attention to the needs of the people who produce the food for eating.⁹¹ Not only does this provide a better option for employment for many people, but it also encourages ecological diversity in its use of food which is necessary for a renewable balance to be maintained.

2) Women are taking initiative to create space for hearing women's ideas. Women have begun to look at their communities from their own perspectives, considering what these communities need. Women seek out one another in these communities to talk about what is happening. Women, over the last decade, are becoming involved, and calling for the creation of a social infrastructure within their communities which draws on the gifts and skills of women who often are skilled in working with volunteer organizations as well as with jobs. These projects focusing on women's gifts would build on the relationships already developed in the communities and provide care for children, teenagers and older people.⁹²

3) Women are identifying the need to get together to share ideas, resources and visions for the future of their communities. Women need to have space and time to gather together to imagine what opportunities exist for the future of the fishery and of livelihood outside the fishery. Women are asking questions about the ways in which fisheries'

⁹¹Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 50.

⁹²Williams, *Our Lives Are At Stake*, 54.

organizations in NL and the rest of Atlantic Canada are deciding what is best for their communities. They critique those agencies which are making decisions without knowing the people, structure and possibilities within these individual communities. Women are calling for people from these communities to be part of decision-making processes affecting their lives.

4) Women want to save their rural communities, their economic livelihoods and their cultural identities. Women are taking initiative to save their communities through both staying in these communities and through leaving them for opportunities elsewhere. They want to build communities where their children and grandchildren will stay and live, creating outport communities with life, hope and a future. However, these women are not unrealistic when it comes to what this can look like. They are aware that this kind of social restructuring takes generations and that some people will have no choice but to leave. These women have an attitude of perseverance, mingled with fatalism and worry but constantly striving to make it another day. Their vision of hope for their communities and themselves is defined by feeling rooted in their connectedness with other women, men and the land and sea. They are imagining new ways for themselves to be involved in the fishery and to live in these outport communities which have been home for generations. Again, though, these women will not die to save their communities. They will work to make change and to preserve their well-being and the sustainability of their communities.

(6) Conclusion

Women of the NL fishery are not allowing this crisis to overcome them but they are mending their lives as they mend their nets, slowly, with care, with a view to how they might become whole again amidst the fragmented realities they face. They come to know an experience of redemptive resilience in the midst of the odds against their happiness. They are moving, as individuals and as communities, to embrace a vulnerability which signals to them the need to save their families and communities, to create hope in spite of the suffering they know.

In these women's stories, in their resistance to this trend in their daily lives, there is the presence of a spirit that cries a resounding "no" to isolation and embraces instead an interdependence rooted deeply in vulnerability. This vulnerability is birthed in these women's relatedness - in their solidarity with themselves as subjects, in their ongoing bond with other women as partners in hope, with their husbands, sons and daughters. This hope is grounded in the survival and thriving of their people and in their bonds with the ocean and land. The land and sea are, for them, places with whom they must learn to live in sustainable relationships. The land and sea are the ecological elements with which Nlers have been in relationship for centuries.

In the next chapter, I will highlight these women's experiences as modes of redemptive living in dialogue with the theological notion of redemption in the works of Edward Schillebeeckx, Ivone Gebara and Rosemary Radford Ruether.

Chapter 3 Redemption in the Works of Edward Schillebeeckx, Ivone Gebara and Rosemary Radford Ruether in Relation to the NL Context

(1) Introduction

In this chapter I will outline understandings of redemption in the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, Ivone Gebara and Rosemary Radford Ruether, especially in relation to developing a theology of redemption as resistance and resilience. In dialogue with their work I will construct an understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience in light of women's experiences in the NL fishery.

(2) Insights on Redemptive Hope from Schillebeeckx, Gebara and Ruether

For Schillebeeckx, the eschatological horizon of final salvation is a call to justice and solidarity in the present. The *eschaton* is a call to redemptive living here and now. Ultimately, the eschatological is a final horizon, as Schillebeeckx would say, of our hope in God. In this way, the eschatological in our theological reflection is a time for hope. The eschatological is also a call to awareness.

Schillebeeckx's reflections on eschatology are meaningful to our discussion of hope in the NL fishery and its wider implications. When we consider the elements of Schillebeeck's understanding of the interwoven connections between human salvation and eschatological salvation, we can speak of hope in a fuller dimension in NL, for women's lives and for the whole ecological community. Schillebeeckx speaks of the importance of human salvation in God's promise of final salvation as a horizon of hope.

For Ruether and Gebara, the ground of hope in this world is the place of the divine revelation in our encounter with the earth. This new relationship with the earth lies in the hope of metanoia, moving toward a new way of living and being with the earth and living this new relationship as fully real in our everyday lives. For Gebara and Ruether, there is the Mystery of life, this sacred web of life, as source of our hope and resistance toward injustice in this life. This Mystery beyond humanity and yet deep within humanity in relationship with the earth is at the heart of eschatological hope.

I interpret Gebara's understanding of interdependence and eschatological hope in terms of the image of God and an embrace of humans as creatures of God. God has created and is re-creating humanity in a new hope of consciousness with interdependence. It is through the embrace of this interdependence that we embrace ourselves as made in God's image. Schillebeeckx's and Gebara's viewpoints on eschatology are quite different. Schillebeeckx is rooted in a christological understanding of eschatology while Gebara moves away from this to an earth-centered eschatology. However, both see the importance of the meaningfulness of the eschatological as this Mystery of hope yet unknown to us, yet unrevealed in our everyday lives in its fullness. They also emphatically affirm the hope that we do find in the everyday as our ground of resisting the evil and furthering the good of everyday life.

According to Ruether, Christian redemptive hope that is rooted solely in an ultimate hope in a time and space beyond the present and unable to be experienced in history operates out of a view that places hope beyond the scope of earthly and historical

embodiment. The hope of an yet-to-be-realized future of the historical eschatology is akin to the hope of an eternal existence after death and the end of the earth. A new eschatological mode of dialogue places the earth as the center of our hope for a just and sustainable way of life. Such a Christian model of hope as conversion embraces hope for social and ecological healing in the present. Ruether and Gebara point to the need for an eschatology rooted in people's lived experiences with a view to developing an ethic of sustainability, mutuality and interdependence.

Convergences, Divergences between Schillebeeckx, Gebara and Ruether

Bringing together Schillebeeckx, Gebara and Ruether allows me to bring out the differences in their work, namely between Schillebeeckx's work and the work of Ruether and Gebara. Schillebeeckx draws out the dimensions of redemption in the Christian tradition - the importance of human participation in building up the hope of the human experience of redemption on earth. In the tradition of liberation theologies, Schillebeeckx encourages us to seek the encounter with one another which allows for the creation of conditions on earth in society which resist the evil of injustice and further the good of justice for all people. These are meaningful frameworks for a reconstruction of redemption in the NL context, re-visioning redemption as resistance and resilience. Lacking in Schillebeeckx's outline of redemptive hope is gender analysis, considering redemptive hope out of the experience of women, an experience often excluded. Schillebeeckx works with an understanding of redemption which sees God's redemptive

healing as ultimately victorious in people's experience of hope which conquers all fear and injustice. This framework for redemption is a Christ-centered, anthropocentric vision of redemption. I have considered gender in the ecofeminist context in Gebara's and Ruether's works on women's experiences in relation to redemption.

Through providing testimonies of poor women's experiences in Brazil, Gebara names the need to construct an understanding of salvation and evil which account for specific experiences of women. She claims that we cannot simply appeal to a universal understanding of salvation or evil. Instead, we must build our understandings of evil and salvation through being attentive to these specific realities of women and the earth.

Schillebeeckx contributes to this discussion the essential insight that, even in the midst of terrible suffering and tragedy, especially in the midst of these horrific realities, people experience a transformation of their suffering and find fragmentary hope. God moves us and transforms this suffering in an encounter of solidarity with one another. In the work of Gebara and Schillebeeckx together, I see the integration of the needs and desires of the human and non-human communities forms a wholeness which is not yet complete and is not entirely fragmented. Gebara speaks of relatedness as essential to a re-visioning of salvation out of the experiences of women and the earth. Relatedness and relationship are also essential to Schillebeeckx's work on redemption. They speak of the encounter with self, other and the divine or sacred. Schillebeeckx brings out the personal and eschatological dimensions of the redemptive hope of relationship through his speaking of the encounter with the self and with other human beings.

Gebara and Ruether point to the importance of these relationships but point also to our relationship with the earth and, as Schillebeeckx says, with the most excluded as the place of beginning our theological reflection. This is an important difference between the work of Schillebeeckx and the work of Ruether and Gebara. Schillebeeckx appeals to a universal understanding of redemption. For Gebara and Ruether, it is essential to begin with lived experience and to build an understanding of redemption within this lived experience and not outside of it. Though these are real differences and create different approaches to anthropology, God, redemption, evil and so on, it is what brings these thinkers together that is the focus for the reflections on redemption in the NL context. This will be the basis of the final chapter.

Both Schillebeeckx's and Gebara's ideas on evil and suffering in people's lived experiences contribute to my understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience. However, they understand the relationships between suffering, salvation and hope very differently. Gebara grounds her work in an understanding of redemption from an ecofeminist perspective, a phenomenological perspective that is different from Schillebeeckx and Ruether. In this work she moves away from a solely Christ-centered approach to redemption.

(3) Edward Schillebeeckx

Schillebeeckx's Building Blocks for a Theology of Redemption

In the first chapter I indicated already in brief what I consider to be Schillebeeckx's contribution to developing a theology of redemption as resistance. In the second chapter, I presented a broader back drop to his theology of redemption. The most significant aspect of my work involves Schillebeeckx's notion of a 'negative contrast' experience. Schillebeeckx develops a way of speaking about the experience of suffering as an impetus for the possibility of change through the experience of negative contrast.¹

God's Creating and Redeeming Action

Schillebeeckx never separates the work of God in creation and the work of God in redemption in Jesus Christ. It is a unified salvation history.² For Schillebeeckx, human liberation is a fragmentary but essential vision and experience of salvation from God. It is made manifest in God's creative act in the making of the universe. This creative act is, for Schillebeeckx, also a redemptive act in that God's will to end suffering comes out of the ground of all creation. For Schillebeeckx, the human hope for justice in the world is founded on God's turning toward humanity as Creator and Redeemer.³

In his relationship to God, Jesus reveals the deep relationship between God and

¹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818-820.

²Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 765.

³Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 765.

humanity. Jesus makes God known to us as one who acts in specific, concrete human conditions, in our history. For Schillebeeckx, there is redemption not because of the death of Jesus on the cross but despite this death. In his commitment to work against the suffering of people and in his faithfulness to God as God of relationship, Jesus lived his faith fully and died because of this absolute commitment to work toward a realization of liberation for all life on earth.⁴ For Schillebeeckx's, God's gift of grace becomes manifest in Jesus' commitment to overcome suffering, to resist evil and do the good. In our human relationship with ourselves, with one another and with the universe as God's creation, we are called to do the same.

In a sense, then, for Schillebeeckx, we become that grace for one another in the midst of the suffering which exists in the world and which will never be rationalized or completely eradicated by human beings. This element of the mystery of human suffering will be taken up with God's future saving and creative work in the *eschaton*, which is beyond the knowledge of the world. Suffering will always be part of the human reality. In its depth suffering is something which cannot be explained or understood or completely overcome by our human resources. Yet this yearning for liberation is part of our hope and is left with God's eschatological activity in the future. However, Schillebeeckx stresses the importance of facing injustices in the world and resisting injustice where possible. This form of resisting evil is carried out for Christians inspired by Jesus' life. Jesus

⁴Janet M.O'Meara, "Salvation: Living in Communion with God," *The Praxis of the Reign of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 114.

profoundly lived a communion with God coupled with a deep awareness of love for others and the need to do good and resist evil. Jesus was moved to act on behalf of others by his communion with the living God through Jesus' acts of reconciling and healing.

Schillebeeckx names this action on the part of Jesus as the affirmation of "suffering through and for others as an expression of the unconditional validity of a pattern of doing good and resisting evil and suffering."⁵ Christians are similarly called to resist human suffering in the name of the living God and in the spirit of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Schillebeeckx roots this human effort to resist evil in Jesus' commitment to God's will for humanity. "For the believer's interpretation, God is the source and inspiration of all good and at the same time the origin of resistance against all forms of evil."⁶ It is in Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection that Schillebeeckx sees the crucial link between God and humanity. In Jesus' death he accepted his own limitations and "became reconciled to his radical finitude."⁷ Now in his acceptance of death, he comes to know a new life and reveals to the world something about redemption. Further, in his death, he makes it clear that "...within the limits of our own history redemption can never be achieved by some heroic transcending of our own finitude, but only in a readiness to refuse, within our own limits, which can never be fulfilled in

⁵Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 794-95.

⁶Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 791.

⁷Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 793.

history, to accord evil the same rights as good.”⁸

Redemption, then, implies reconciliation with one’s experience of finitude, coupled with radical love⁹ and resistance against all forms of human suffering.

Human Salvation and Suffering

Schillebeeckx speaks of salvation or redemption in relation to the quest or search for wholeness, happiness, and integrity in human life. This hope for wholeness is brought out precisely in our human inability to create and make available the necessary conditions for wholeness, happiness and integrity. What moves us is precisely this knowledge that we are far from the salvation we strive to experience. Schillebeeckx describes this experience of human inability to experience salvation or redemption in this way,

Salvation is still ‘outstanding’, is apparently not at our disposal, and this openness towards salvation or its non-availability is itself already being felt as a moment of resistance, i.e. the attainment of one’s integrity and wholeness is not to be taken for granted, but it is to be achieved by means of overcoming counteracting forces and oppositions.¹⁰

Jesus’ commitment to solidarity in the world shows the validity of human efforts

⁸Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 793.

⁹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 793.

¹⁰Edward Schillebeeckx, “God, Society and Human Salvation,” *Faith and Society*, ed. Marc Caudron. (Gembloux, J.Duculot, 1978), 88.

and realization of justice on the earth. Salvation is a holistic vision for the universe, God's vision of hope which is beyond human possibility. God's redemptive power takes hold of us in our desires and actions of human solidarity. These human involvements are an integral part of God's vision, as made manifest in the life of Jesus.

Schillebeeckx describes the role of suffering in the action of redemption in this way,

Redemption includes contemplation and emancipatory action aimed at liberation and the furthering of human salvation. But suffering, as has been said, is not a factor from the history of the human before emancipation, nor is it a factor from before the time of God's redemptive action in Jesus. Redemptive and emancipatory courses of action also find expression in the conditions of suffering. That gives an inner tension to any understanding of redemption and any attempt at liberation which is concerned with emancipation.¹¹

The work of human beings to overcome suffering is redemptive in that it seeks to turn toward the other who is suffering and to end this suffering. For Schillebeeckx, the human project of emancipation is the human effort toward freedom for all humanity and for all with whom human beings are in relation.

Eschatology and Redemptive Hope

From the above it is clear how Schillebeeckx sees the interrelation of the human and the divine. As he says,

God's grace, that is, God's saving presence among us, is therefore not a special realm of inwardness, but the whole of reality in which we live and of which we ourselves are a part. If grace is removed from the world of creation, it is forced

¹¹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 817.

into the private and inner life of people...(Human freedom)...is a freedom which also has its outward corporeal sign, and only comes to itself in the encounter of truly free human beings, in institutions and structures which make freedom possible...modern believers can trace a forerunner of divine salvation in freedom which is realized in socio-political action.¹²

God wills that human beings overcome suffering.¹³ Schillebeeckx constantly emphasizes the importance of human involvement toward the end of suffering through the creation of structures and policies in our world which bring forward conditions under which the Kingdom of God is made known in our human history, where God's grace is communicated through a move toward human freedom. For him it is "the possibility of experiencing human salvation in the making."¹⁴

It is in the context of the historical conditions of human freedom that Schillebeeckx introduces the notion of eschatology in the fullness and ultimate horizon of the hope in redemption. Schillebeeckx points to this relationship to the ultimate horizon of hope as an ongoing interplay wherein the signs of the future salvation to come are made visible in our human structures. Schillebeeckx sees an earthly experience of salvation in those hopes which make for a more liveable humanity, a movement toward happiness and wholeness in our history. Total salvation for humanity is always eschatological for Schillebeeckx, meaning that its horizon is always the future beyond

¹²Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 812-13.

¹³Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 730.

¹⁴Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 813.

human actions toward justice. Our human efforts are always partial and transitory precisely because human suffering exists and will always exist in our human history.¹⁵ For Schillebeeckx, this is why the eschatological dimension of a religious or salvation history is important. It gives us a wider horizon of hope which is beyond the historical suffering of humanity and which opens up the possibility of knowing, though in fragmentary ways, an experience of redemption in our history.

Schillebeeckx points to the root word of salvation, in both the Germanic and Roman languages, as *salus*, relating to the integrity of human life.¹⁶ For Schillebeeckx, the eschatological is much more than a fatalistic concern with the 'last things' and has a strong ethical component. Schillebeeckx defines the '*eschata*' as the last things but sees these last things as the subject of our very lives on earth. For him, the eschatological embodies

...(E)verything that has to do with the ultimate, deepest, and therefore final meaning of human life...this includes not only what happens in the beyond, but also what concerns the final meaning of life and of the last days, the end of the age as a time of salvation...The context must always give the connotation meant, but the emphasis always lies on the aspect of what is definitive and decisive; what will only become manifest in the end and after death, but is already at issue in the present and is being decided in it.¹⁷

In Schillebeeckx's *Christ* eschatology is crucial to an understanding of redemption which is practical and earthly.

¹⁵Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 771-72.

¹⁶Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 746.

¹⁷Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 901.

Schillebeeckx names an eschatological promise of the future salvation for those who act in the ways of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' communion with God in the mystical and interpersonal aspects of his life and in the political, socially-oriented actions of healing and challenging systems of injustice, there is a present way of life. In these ways of resisting evil and doing good and in Jesus Christ's acceptance of his finite limits, Jesus showed humanity that these actions prefigure the ultimate salvation that is promised.¹⁸

Thus, we glimpse a partial view of the ultimate hope that awaits us beyond our human efforts. It is especially when we are met with the reality of failure that this ultimate horizon of eschatological hope in God's saving action becomes most immanent. In this moment of failure and hopelessness, "... the believer experiences that redemption is not within our power and that God nevertheless gives a future to all our actions towards liberation and reconciliation, a future which is greater than the volume of our history."¹⁹

Negative Contrast Experience

For Schillebeeckx, the reality of ultimate salvation becomes meaningful for humanity in the interplay of daily living between meaning and meaninglessness. The experience of suffering in situations of extreme hopelessness, suffering and disaster brings with it the unavoidable question of how we might attempt to overcome suffering. God's saving action in our human history brings an ultimate horizon of hope, wider than

¹⁸Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 802-04.

¹⁹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 838.

the horizon of human salvation here on earth. This hope is hope against hopelessness. God's saving action in our history is the experience of grace which promises something beyond suffering, something which can be known only through personal encounter with God and God's solidarity with human beings who suffer. Schillebeeckx points to Jesus' life, death and resurrection as signs of this grace operating in human history. Because Jesus Christ has overcome the ultimate suffering in accepting the limitations of death, he has revealed the limitations of death and offer humanity a way through suffering and death in order to work toward liberation for humanity.²⁰ The awareness of others' suffering brings to light the need to work toward social change, toward building structures of healing and the dismantling of systems of oppression, as Jesus did.

In this context Schillebeeckx introduces the concept of 'negative contrast experience.' Schillebeeckx describes this experience as follows,

As an experience of contrast, the experience of suffering is possible only on the basis of an implicit longing for happiness, and unjust suffering at least presupposes a vague awareness of the possible positive significance of human integrity. As an experience of contrast it indirectly implies an awareness of the positive call of the *humanum* and to the *humanum*. Understood in this way, action to overcome suffering is possible only through at least an implicit or submerged anticipation of a possible universal significance to come...the particular epistemological value of the experience of contrast in suffering is a knowledge which looks for the *future* and opens it up.²¹

For Schillebeeckx, an understanding of negative contrast is reflected in the life,

²⁰Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 801.

²¹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' life and message, coupled with his death and resurrection, he says, is based on his intimate and mystical relationship with God. The nature of God's divinity is revealed in Jesus' life, precisely in "a furthering of good and resistance against all forms of suffering."²² It is Jesus' intimate relationship with God that makes possible his commitment to work towards overcoming suffering. Jesus' experience of the nearness of God in his personal, mystical encounter with God laid the foundation for his life's commitment to participate in building an experience of human justice.²³

The concept of a lifestyle of resistance is implicit in how Schillebeeckx outlines this praxis of working towards human justice by overcoming suffering. Above, I sketched out Schillebeeckx's understanding of the role of Jesus in eschatological salvation revealed in a fragmentary manner in concrete, realized salvation. It is evident that Schillebeeckx sees a role for resistance in Jesus' life of healing, acting for the other and in his own "furthering good and resistance against all forms of suffering."

For Schillebeeckx, the encounter with God lays the foundation for the encounter of the suffering of others and the desire to go forward in action which will overcome suffering. In this way, Schillebeeckx puts forward two important constitutive elements of the negative contrast experience. These are the *contemplative* and the *active*. Schillebeeckx describes these elements of the negative contrast experience and the praxis

²²Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 796.

²³Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 795.

which flows from it as complementary. The contemplative as a coming to awareness of the suffering of others is complemented by the action to overcome that suffering. As he says, "Contemplation and action can only be connected through the criticism of the accumulated history of suffering and the ethical awareness that comes to birth in it."²⁴

The experience of contrast brings to view the wider horizon of hope which then births an awareness of the possibility of an action to overcome suffering. This contrast experience itself is an integration of both the contemplative and active dimensions of the human experience in the face of suffering. In the flow of both these dimensions of the human person, the experience of hope in the midst of hopelessness comes forward. Schillebeeckx understands the relationship between contemplation and action using an understanding of '*purpose*' and '*purposelessness*'²⁵ that is helpful for this discussion.

For in its passive experience, because of its negativity, it has an ethical resistance to this 'let be'; it has a critical epistemological force which appeals to a practice which opens up the future, an action which, moreover, is not subject to the acceptance of a monopoly of purposive technocracy (that is also a cause of suffering). Therefore the experience of contrast in suffering is the negative and dialectical awareness of a longing for and a question of meaning in the future: real freedom and real happiness to come. It is also a demand for reconciling, 'purpose-free' contemplation, as the anticipation (in faith) of universal meaning in order to connect the experience of contrast with new action which will overcome suffering and create the future.²⁶

²⁴Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

²⁵Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

²⁶Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 819.

Schillebeeckx's explanation of the contemplative and active dimensions of negative contrast experience requires some elaboration. In the active, or purposive mode of negative contrast experience, there is the path of action toward hope, toward the creation of a future which opens up out of the intended and embodied human action which moves forward to overcome human suffering. In the contemplative or purposeless mode of negative contrast experience, there is a sense of the given reality of hope which is beyond the human experience but which dwells in the human experience in the face of suffering and offers the promise of meaning which will be born in our human efforts, in the active dimension of human life. *In faith*, as Schillebeeckx says, the experience of how human action is made meaningful, is always set within the history of human suffering.

Kathleen McManus outlines Schillebeeckx's understanding of the role of suffering in the negative contrast experience as grounded in his understanding of *metanoia*.

It is the immediate, concrete experience of meaning at the heart of struggle that gives rise to the moral imperative. In many cases, both personal and political, this leads to resistance of evil and positive action for good. Sometimes these efforts bear fruit in visible transformation; sometimes they are thwarted by reality. In either case, the root of that moral imperative effects an authentic process of conversion. That inner dynamic of conversion becomes the key to our understanding of how suffering operates as a formative factor in Schillebeeckx's theology.²⁷

In his later work, Schillebeeckx develops the personal spirituality of *metanoia* into a praxis-oriented vision of redemption. In the experience of suffering, one comes to know

²⁷McManus, "Suffering in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx," 487-88.

a detachment necessary for self-abandonment to God. This metanoia involves turning inward and turning outward, developing a healthy detachment from self which allows us to be in relationship of solidarity with one another. He speaks of metanoia as “being freed from ourselves for the service of each other, freed so as to love.”²⁸ This commitment means a turning toward the other in a newly discovered relationship of solidarity. In this sense, Schillebeeckx is speaking of a kind of solidarity which has as its foundation a love for other human beings which is rooted in coming to know their suffering and in the effort to participate in the human effort to overcome suffering.

Schillebeeckx does not mean that we can overcome suffering completely. The horizon of this eschatological hope is left open for its fulfillment in salvation history in the future revelation of God. This act of solidarity is redemptive because it turns toward the other in love, love which is the gift of grace, to build a new way of structuring our lives to attempt to bring an experience of justice into our daily experiences. In Schillebeeckx’s work, there is present the emergence of an understanding that suffering, through the desire to move through and beyond suffering, makes clear to us the possibility of living authentically, as created for community in relationships of embodied grace. It is our response to suffering which leads to the possibility of discovering this authenticity at the heart of humanity.²⁹

The process of overcoming suffering is also a process of resistance. It is resistance

²⁸McManus, “Suffering in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx,” 489.

²⁹McManus, “Suffering in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx,” 490-91.

in the sense of doing the good and resisting the evil. It is in resisting suffering, the experience of hopelessness and loss, that one discovers the deeper root of hope within. For Schillebeeckx, this process involves both the self and others. In the effort to overcome the suffering of another, there is a bridge that is built between us as humans. So, in this effort to overcome suffering, we discover the relationships that exist between us. As quoted above, Schillebeeckx claims,

For precisely as a mis-experience, this experience implies in its negativity an ethical resistance to passive resignation. It has a critical epistemological power which appeals to a praxis which opens up the future...The contrast experience is thus the negative and dialectical coming to awareness and an asking for a coming meaning, and coming, real freedom and happiness.³⁰

Here, Schillebeeckx is speaking of a deeper, more ultimate reality of the positive which comes to be known through the experience of meaninglessness. It is the very act of resistance to meaninglessness which moves a person to cry out, to question, to acknowledge one's own suffering and the suffering of others. This refusal to accept the negative as the last word of human experiences reveals a "surplus" in life, pointing as it does to the positive as an irrevocable part of human experience.

Schillebeeckx refers to this epistemological power of suffering as practical and critical, a knowledge that "...the experience of suffering forms a bridge towards possible action which might remove both suffering and its causes ...it is a critical epistemological force which leads to new action, which anticipates a better future and seeks to put it into

³⁰Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

practice.”³¹ The experience of trying to overcome suffering and to work toward a greater vision of what is possible are two important elements in Schillebeeckx’s understanding of the relationship between the experience of suffering and the experience of human salvation.

Now, I will consider Gebara’s contribution to an understanding of redemption in the NL context.

(4) Ivone Gebara:

Everyday Salvation and Women’s Lives in Gebara’s Work

Hope in the Everyday: Women’s Lives and Salvation

I have briefly introduced Gebara already in Chapter 1 in the context of methodology. Here, I expand on the contribution of her theology toward an understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience.

Gebara operates from her involvement with women’s experiences of evil and women’s experiences of salvation as interrelated in the lives of women in Brasil. Her phenomenological approach begins with women’s lived experiences and the meaning of suffering, evil and salvation in these women’s lives. These are poor, Brazilian women who live with poverty, pain and isolation each day.

In order to speak about women’s experiences of salvation, Gebara begins with women’s experiences of, and participation in, the systems of social and economic evil in

³¹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

their lives. For Gebara, phenomenology looks toward the lived experiences of people to shed light on how we understand suffering, evil and salvation. She understands a feminist phenomenology in this way,

A phenomenology must rely on the data of concrete existence, on things that appear in the field of our experience...The phenomenology of women's evil is an epistemological attempt to grasp and understand the specifics of evil for women. It introduces new elements. We need to be influenced by the testimonies of women and to enter into the interpretations they make of them.³²

Gebara gives accounts of women's experiences of and responsibility for evils in their lived experience. In order to speak about hope in the context of women's lives, then, Gebara begins with suffering and its causes. She makes a fundamentally important point in relation to the beginning of finding hope for women in their suffering.

Women's acknowledgment of their difficult condition can help us reach the place where their rescue may occur. The place of evil, of unhappiness, of often incomprehensible suffering carries within it a call to salvation or some provisional path to freedom.³³

Gebara makes several good points here for my discussion of women's experiences. She points to the fact that women's experiences are different among one another and that we must remember this when we carry out a feminist analysis relating to women's experiences of evil and salvation. We can neither romanticize nor demonize women's lived realities and who they are. Secondly, Gebara makes the point that we must

³²Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*. Translated by Ann Patrick Ware. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002), 14.

³³Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 16.

begin with women's experience of suffering so that we might move toward women's experience of salvation. Fundamentally Gebara's insight is close to Schillebeeckx's insight in relation to the experience of negative contrast and the experience of suffering. This insight is that it is through moving through the lived experience of suffering that we begin to have the ability to speak about hope within the particular context of that suffering. For Gebara, the element of gender is crucial if we are to understand the suffering that women experience and also the hope that might be found within the process of identifying and moving through these experiences of suffering toward, in each difficult time, some life-sustaining hope.

Gebara claims that the realities of women are a weaving together of sadness and hope, pain and joy. For Gebara, this process of coming to know realities of life means that neither the very desperate nor the very hopeful emerge victorious. This is a theological statement about hope and redemption. For Gebara, there is no ultimate hope, no ultimate horizon of meaning in these women's lives apparent in their lived realities. This is where she differs from Schillebeeckx. Throughout the text, this seems to be the theological claim Gebara is making concerning the redemptive hope alive in women's lives - that these co-mingled realities of evil and salvation co-exist and this is what these women know. This is a co-incidence of evil and salvation. Yet, hope finds a way to emerge in situations where women suffer terribly.

There is present, in Gebara's words, something more than a theological insight about the co-mingled realities of hope and hopelessness. It is another knowledge, coming

out of Brazilian women's lived experience as Gebara sees it. This other knowledge of women's lived experience is that there is always this call to hope, to salvation, to wholeness in the midst of the struggle. Indeed, this statement makes the claim that there *is* hope ultimately, a persistent hope that is a promise in the midst of each difficulty, in the midst of each struggle to continue to hope. There is in these women's stories no ultimate hope promising an end to all suffering. However, there is a hope that, according to Gebara, surfaces each day, each moment in relation to the particular suffering of women. Gebara is saying that the path to freedom, very akin to Schillebeeckx's understanding of a fragmentary redemption, comes to know them where they are, in their struggles to meet the evils they experience. "Salvation is what helps us live in the present moment, even when it feeds a dream of greater happiness."³⁴ There is in this moment of facing the encounter with evil, with injustice, in the very will to survive and to hope the presence of this path to freedom.

...it seems to me that salvation is not primarily an abstract and universal idea that encompasses the whole world or only life after death...The not yet is completely bound up with the now...this is not to set up the immediate or everyday as an absolute, to deny undertakings of great personal or social importance, or to deny the perspective of a world beyond, but to link today more concretely with tomorrow, the here with the hereafter. We are not using faith to bet on the future without trying to taste in the present a certain possibility of what one hopes for in the future.³⁵

This is an important insight about suffering in the face of evil. For Gebara, the

³⁴Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 121.

³⁵Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 127.

possibility of what will come in the future, of any horizon of hope that is known in real life, needs to be grounded in lived experience. The hope that is longed for in the future, in the distant horizon, becomes real in the moments of resurrection experienced in the everyday witness of women. This salvation is a creative, sustaining, and redemptive hope.

In practice we must begin again every day the search for salvation just as every day we begin again the actions of eating and drinking. It is a dynamic movement in the innermost part of our lives. This step involves taking another view of the theology of salvation, to see there a redemption in the here and now, a redemption that takes flesh now, even if for the moment this salvation is contained within the limits of the body, our heart, and our daily routine. It is everywhere, even in suffering and groans of sorrow. It is everywhere, present under different forms, inviting us to go beyond the evil and despondency that torments us.³⁶

Gebara names women's experience of evil as the evil that impacts women in Brazilian society. These are poor women who face the struggle of life daily. These struggles are connected to the social injustices that women face on an ongoing basis. In her phenomenological approach, Gebara presents testimonies of these women and from these women's experiences she draws out categories of these experiences of evil or oppression. From their stories, she also draws out experiences of salvation and women's hope in the everyday. She names these injustices and evils as women's lack of ownership, women's lack of power, women's lack of worth, and women's lack of education.³⁷

Gebara borrows from the testimonies of women to show their daily lived experience with the reality of evil and yet also their daily lived experience of salvation, of

³⁶Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 123.

³⁷Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 17-41.

a small hope in the midst of huge obstacles and the unjust realities of the everyday. Through her work on evil and gender, Gebara identifies the reality that women face. Because they are women, they are excluded, their voices unheard by patriarchal society in Brazil. For most women, justice means a fight for power over their lives, power not allowed them by society. This struggle is also present in society's lack of recognition for women. For many women, the powerlessness of life is often overwhelming, whether it is powerlessness in watching a child die or powerlessness in not having access to the basic food a woman needs to put food on her table.

Gebara presents an understanding of '*salvations*' in light of the experiences of these women whose struggle is in the everyday. These women find hope in the midst of the experience of suffering. Schillebeeckx's understanding of negative contrast experience points to finding redemptive, healing hope and a fragmentary redemption in the midst of the human experience of suffering, in the experiences of hope created by resisting the evil and furthering the good. For Schillebeeckx, hope is found in people's encounter with God which is known through the encounter with others in relationships of solidarity. Redemptive hope, then, comes in and through these relationships resilient through faith in something more than ourselves but this something more dwells within us when we work toward liberation here on earth, in our resistance to those structures and realities which oppress people and try to annihilate hope for all people.

Rethinking Who We Are as Human Beings: A Feminist and Earth-Centered Approach to

Redemption/Salvation

For Gebara, our understanding of epistemology, or how we know ourselves and our relationships in the world, is essential to how we understand the experience of suffering and also crucial to our understanding of salvation. Gebara's understanding of suffering challenges the traditional Christian interpretation of suffering, especially in relation to how we understand evil and salvation. Suffering is a reality for poor women, experienced and known in their everyday lives. Gebara's ecofeminist approach embraces the lived experiences of women in order to speak about a new understanding of ourselves as human beings, a new understanding of evil and salvation and a new perspective on how we might look toward our lives as people interdependent with the ecosystem and the whole of the universe. Gebara points to the need for an ecofeminist epistemology. Traditional Christian epistemologies in Western culture are patriarchal in their exclusivity, essentialism, and androcentrism.³⁸

Christianity is rooted in the philosophical Platonic and Aristotelian systems of thought. These systems have greatly influenced Christianity. In her development of gender in relation to epistemology, Gebara highlights the need to critique the categories of dominant, patriarchal epistemology in the Western world, especially where theology has shaped these categories to take into its world view a hierarchy of dualisms. Gebara speaks of dualism in terms of gender and how Western thinking has excluded women's

³⁸Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*. Translated by David Molineaux. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 29-48.

voices.

Dualism manifests itself in the form of opposition, affirming the negativity or the lesser value of one pole relative to the other. Such dualism is not epistemological but ethical. A clear-cut division between good and evil, as well as narrow, precise judgment about what is good, has sharpened this dualism. The feminine side has always been considered dark, inferior, less gifted, or closer to the material world. The masculine side has been judged superior, bright, and closer to the spiritual, more suitable for representing God.³⁹

These dualisms - male/female, divine/human, heavenly/earthly, life/death, have promoted an inferiority of women and the earth, as inferior and to be dominated by the ruling of men in power. Characteristic of such a dualistic approach is the separation between the ideal and the real. Rather than beginning from the reality of life of people and of the earth, Gebara says, this essentialist approach to epistemology begins with the ideal of the human person which is understood in a universalized male and absolutist way. Even God is spoken of in male absolutist terms and this language excludes many in the world.⁴⁰ With this patriarchal approach to epistemology, knowing is a solely rational process which happens to us. This patriarchal system is exclusive and uninformed precisely because it fails to take into account the experiences of women.

Feminist epistemologies embrace difference as a theological tool. Gender is one component of an understanding of who we are as human beings. For women, this component of our human lives has been treated with contempt. It is necessary for women, especially in religious traditions, to reclaim the meaning of this tool in the theological

³⁹Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 73.

⁴⁰Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 34-39.

context. For theology it is important to know how women understand salvation from a gendered perspective and women's experiences. It must learn how we can speak of who we are in relation to the whole of the ecological world. From an ecofeminist perspective this alone can lead an understanding of redemptive hope in Christianity. Christian exploration of redemption must take into account women's experiences and our relation to the earth. Hope is fundamentally rooted in an understanding of who we are in this interdependence of all life.

As a hermeneutical tool, gender allows us to question an exclusively male-centered, universalist approach to theological reflection. Ecofeminist epistemology, then, seeks to present alternatives to this exclusive view of systematic understandings of evil and salvation. Ecofeminist epistemology argues that our knowing as human beings is rooted in who we are in relation to all of life, in our own contexts and in the context of all that is, the mystery of life. Gebara refers to the need to set forward a vision of something else, a utopia embracing gender as a category of our theological reflection, one of many, which will shape how we theorize and how we live.⁴¹ Such a utopia is precisely a vision of salvation, an understanding of who we are in relationships and how those relationships take shape in our theological language and belief.

Gender, for Gebara, is not only the biological factors which determine sex but also the cultural, social and political realities for women and for men in societies which impact how we live. As a social construct, gender is a way of being in the world and a

⁴¹Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 70-71.

way of being shaped. Gender invites deeper reflection on the ways in which theological discourse and belief is shaped by who we are as women and men.⁴² In a very real way, gender is the key to our understanding of ourselves as relational beings whose existence is dependent on others, human and nonhuman, in our communities. Therefore, an understanding of gender will help in an understanding of the importance of relatedness as part of the gift and mystery of the universe.

Relatedness and the Hope for Earth Healing

Gebara outlines an understanding of possibility for transformation in relation to a new relationship with the whole of the cosmos. She says,

The thing to do, then, is to relate subjectivity to objectivity, individuality to collectivity, transcendence to immanence, ...plants to humanity, and animals to humanity, based on a perspective that is all-encompassing and interwoven. This perspective allows us to broaden our understanding of human life, and especially of human suffering. The existential drama of the individual human being can no longer be blown out of proportion, as if it were an isolated situation...To be aware that our tragic existential situation of tribulation, violence, and destruction, as well as of joy, tenderness, and hope, is lived out in an intimate relationship with the whole of our Cosmic Body opens us gradually to a new understanding of our human condition...We need to seek a new understanding of our personal existence within the larger self that is the Sacred Body of the cosmos.⁴³

Ecofeminist understanding of epistemology is embodied in the ways in which we know, expressed deeply in our relationships with the earth. Gebara presents an understanding of

⁴²Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 62-63.

⁴³Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 53.

the impact of ecofeminist epistemology on how we live as human beings in relationship to the web of life.

In her theological reflections Gebara defines relatedness as that “...interdependence which exists between and among all things.”⁴⁴ The kind of knowing of which Gebara speaks is a knowing which threads all humanity with all life and sees us as parts of the relatedness that is itself constitutive of the universe.⁴⁵ Such an understanding of relatedness calls for a new understanding of consciousness itself.

It does not end with myself as a rational person. In fact, rationalism is only one part of the human being. We are emotional, psychic, intuitive and so on. Knowing relatedness means seeking the unity of all parts of ourselves as human beings, not only the rational. Embracing this kind of relatedness means embracing a new anthropology, seeing ourselves as literally and consciously connected with other human beings and other life. This relatedness also means that good and evil define one another and create one another in our lives. There is no ultimate good or ultimate evil. There is the interplay of both good and evil in our lives which often we create.

Thus, our understanding of suffering needs to embrace this ambiguous mixture of good and evil which is always present within our lives and within the fabric of life itself. Gebara identifies evil as that imbalance in the universe which is balanced by good. Suffering here is still a reality to be overcome and evil is to be challenged, but this

⁴⁴Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 133.

⁴⁵Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 83-93.

challenge is found in the everyday realities of our lives and evil is overcome in the small moments of goodness which create for us a horizon of hope. Here, redemption can be spoken of in terms of seeking a balance between good and evil which reflects the balance in the universe.⁴⁶ Unjust death is still to be challenged and resisted. Gebara speaks of the reality of violence, death and pain that is a normal part of our everyday existence and which is also met by love, life and joy. In seeking a redemptive hope, we must include these realities which shape a balance that is also the balance of God's creation itself.

The development of such a consciousness of relatedness in human beings requires a change in how we understand ourselves now in relationship to all other life, including the life systems on which we depend in our local communities.

Relatedness opens the way for an interdependent justice, an ecojustice, that is, justice that includes the ecosystem. Relatedness sets forth a search for balance in daily life as well as in the institutions we establish.⁴⁷

Gebara's understanding of salvation incorporates a vision of interdependence in the universe. This interdependence is rooted in the integration of the needs of people and the whole ecological reality including the lives of the trees, fish, people, the sea and the earth.

Interdependence means accepting the basic fact that any life situation, behavior, or even belief is always the fruit of all interactions that make up our lives, our histories, and our wider earthly and cosmic realities. Our interdependence and relatedness do not stop with other human beings: They encompass nature, the powers of the earth and of the cosmos itself.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 143-144.

⁴⁷Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 143.

⁴⁸Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 52.

Gebara sees emerging new ways of how we perceive ourselves in the universe and how we relate with all life in the cosmos. Interdependence means that everything we do affects everything else and that all life is interrelated and interdependent because of the sacred web of life that exists in the universe.

In our Christian tradition, we have seen humanity as superior to other life, but this interdependent approach seeks to redefine our relationships with all life - seeing ourselves as one aspect of a dynamic and interdependent web of life in which no one is more sacred than another. We come to realize that we, as human beings, have a responsibility to live out this ethic of interdependence. We need to take on a leadership role but we must do this in relation to the needs of all species, exploring the role of each species in the sacred balance of the universe.

As Gebara says, this ethic of interdependent living challenges our systems of oppression and systems of thought that have contributed to the ecological crises around the world. This new way of thinking is similar to Schillebeeckx's understanding of an experience of metanoia, turning toward the other, being freed from ourselves for the service of the other, freed so as to love. This new approach can begin with the way we interpret the particular challenges of our own ecological context in the world and how we perceive our relationships with others. These others are the other life of God's creation. This creative web of interdependence is the gift of the Mystery, God as the source of the energy that creates our relatedness. Gebara says,

This sacred interdependence would, for example, require a radical modification of the transnational market economies, which fail to respect regional cultures and almost always abuse both the land and the populations that inhabit it.⁴⁹

Coming to an awareness and creating and living an ethic of interdependence means a change of heart. I understand this change of heart to begin with a re-visioning of redemption as resistance and resilience. I have named many aspects of understanding redemption as resistance and resilience.

One aspect of a new understanding of redemption in the context of this ecological community is that our knowing will never be full and complete as human beings as all of creation, all living beings and living systems, are integral parts of how we can know the fullness of redemption, the fullness of healing and relatedness. We know that such fullness is known in the moment and exists, on some level, in the wider horizon of hope for our world on the local and global levels.

The resistance which we show to those forces which cause suffering and unjust death, death of individuals and death of communities, would break down our relationship with other human beings and with the ecological communities of our lives is one step forward in living a redemptive ethic of resistance. There is in the graced unfolding of the complexity of human life and nonhuman life, in the sacred web of God's infinite and yet fragile universe, a heritage of resilience which belongs to all life as members of this web. We must inquire into the suffering experienced by other human beings in the world to

⁴⁹Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 54.

know how healing might happen by building structures of justice, through resistance to structures of dehumanization.

Eschatology: Salvation and the Historic Beyond

For Gebara, traditional eschatology held that salvation is offered to us in an afterlife that is free from the corruption, sin and death of this world, associated with our bodies, our being human and the fall from an original paradise.⁵⁰ Gebara speaks of eschatology, from an ecofeminist perspective, as the horizon of promise that comes to us out of the experience of Jesus' life and our response to it in the moments of cross and resurrection in our lives. For Gebara, rethinking eschatology means rethinking the meaning of what is ultimately significant for us and for our survival and well-being in relationship and what orients us toward the future. Thinking eschatologically means coming to know our interdependence and living in such a way as to honour that ultimate interdependence that is the promise of salvation. Gebara describes this eschatology as "commingled with the earth...this human and larger-than-human eschatology."⁵¹

Relatedness as interdependence of all life is an essential aspect of Gebara's ecofeminist approach to the construction of a new way of speaking about eschatology.

In a very real way, Gebara's ecofeminist understanding of eschatology is rooted in

⁵⁰Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 131.

⁵¹Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 131.

Mystery, a Mystery that enfolds and defines our human and nonhuman lives. There is wonderful Mystery for that which is beyond human possibilities and which is in the hands of the divine because it is something for which we hope and we cannot possibly understand. The promise of this ultimate hope for renewal of the earth, especially in the midst of crisis, is an act of faith in something beyond the human power to effect change and take steps toward sustainable living for the earth and justice for its people. Implicit in this sense of the Mystery which guides life is a “not-knowing” in women’s lives,⁵² as Gebara sees it, but which is grounded by a deep trust that there is hope for us and the sign of this hope is manifest in the building of relationship between all life partners. For Gebara, God is that ultimate Mystery who dwells in us and in whom we dwell, “Mystery in all and beyond all.”⁵³

The eschatological mystery of this relatedness and this encounter with God in redemptive living is engaged not in an afterlife with God in the victory over death, as in classical traditions, but rather is found in the encounter with God in solidarity with people and in living our human lives in solidarity with all life, reinterpreting who we are in light of the relatedness that invites us to a share in the Mystery of life itself.

Gebara does not see salvation as only part of the reality we know now. As she sees it, we need to challenge systems of salvation which claim universal salvation.

The universalization of salvation, by the models and language imposed, proves to be a trap today for the daily life of the poor for indigenous

⁵²Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 132.

⁵³Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 180.

peoples, for minority groups in every culture, and particularly for women's search for autonomy and dignity. I want to speak from outside the trans-historic beyond in order to affirm the historic beyond as the first possibility for us who are historic beings. The historic beyond is the movement for the hope of happiness for this body, this body that I am, this body rooted in a culture and in time. The beyond is the going past this moment to another and still another. The beyond is not necessarily after my death, even if this beyond includes my personal good-bye to present history.⁵⁴

Part of this vision of salvation transforms our view of mortality. As we embrace death as part of life and not something from which we must try to escape or something to be feared, we begin to create a possibility of something more in this life, the taste of what is possible when we truly live to create relationships of justice. The limitedness of our existence is affirmed as good, as redemptive in its participation in the cycle of life. We become committed to justice here so that we might know the actualized potential of what is possible in the future. Gebara's understanding of a *historic beyond* weaves the salvation of our current history with what is beyond this history we know and yet part of who we are. In this way, the present and the future salvations are one, unified, committed to a life of simple resistance, relationships of solidarity which upset unjust systems and call toward a path of freedom.

This vision of redemptive hope, embodied in an interwoven interdependence between the present and future, is Gebara's embrace of the limitedness of who we are in the mystery of life. For Gebara, the embrace of this limitedness is a celebration of who we are. As I see it, it is from here that we can live out an ethic of resistance and resilience -

⁵⁴Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 129.

resistance to systems which reject the power and potential of the everyday and the promise it holds and resilience in the relationships of solidarity and the experience of redemption in the midst of suffering which make possible for us this power to resist, to live simply and in this way to challenge injustice in our lived realities.

The Cross, Jesus Christ and God in a New Salvific Role in Women's Lives

With this feminist, contextual epistemology in mind, Gebara also outlines a new understanding of the cross in relation to women's lives.

Understanding deliverance within a feminist theological reflection begins by noting its signs in daily life, in what befalls us unexpectedly. In actual fact, salvation begins in the experience of what we call the cross or the daily way of the cross. There lies the site of multiple resurrections. And this place of cross and resurrection is where one discovers relatedness as necessary for all life, especially all human life.⁵⁵

For Gebara, it is important to understand the cross not as a universal, abstract symbol of suffering but as the concrete symbol of the suffering of people in a particular context and in the suffering of the earth. The cross points not only to Jesus' suffering but to women's suffering and the suffering of many around the world. The cross is not the ultimate symbol of victory but is a reminder of the visceral reality of suffering in women's everyday lives. The hope in this reinterpretation of the cross includes a reinterpretation of redemption as resisting those understandings of the cross that fail to take into account women's sufferings and the suffering of the earth.

⁵⁵Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 109.

Gebara speaks of the crosses and resurrections which women know in everyday life which are revelatory for their lives. Indeed, Jesus' cross is meaningful because the cross itself, as a symbol of resistance to injustice, is a call to restored life. This mixture of good and evil in the symbol of the cross itself is meaningful in women's lives as they face the everyday realities of good and evil. The cross, ultimately, is a lasting symbol of hope precisely because of the community that gathers to say "no" to violence and unjust systems.⁵⁶ The cross also points to the hope of the resurrection in the midst of hopelessness, hope is known in the everyday moments of resurrection in women's lives, the lives of all people who suffer and in the interdependence of all in the ecological context.

These insights from Gebara also influence new understandings of redemption in relation to an experience of God, Jesus Christ and eschatology. I will give an analysis of Gebara's work on redemption and relate it to a construction of redemption in response to women's words in the NL fishery.

Redemption as Interdependent Hope: Resistance and Resilience in Relation to God, Jesus and the Earth

In her understanding of redemptive hope in light of women's experiences and interdependent living, Gebara points to the possibility of a new understanding of relationship with God, Jesus and the Earth. A contextual understanding of women's

⁵⁶Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 115.

experiences highlights new insights for understandings of our religious symbols and imaginations. We need new ways of understanding redemption.

For Gebara, Jesus and God are interrelated but redefined from traditional notions in relation to redemption. She understands God not as persons precisely or separated beings or persons but God as the matrix of interdependence itself, the very source and end of all the universe. She speaks of Jesus as someone who lived out this interdependence and ethic of just living as a human being with a particularly unique link to God in this interdependence.

Ivone Gebara speaks of the esse-diversity of God to invite an understanding of life as a vital mystery of interdependence.

To speak of the esse-diversity of God means to speak first of all of life in its extraordinary richness, but a life that unfolds in the complexity of a vital mystery. This mystery is not outside us, but we are in it and there we exist and evolve. Likewise, this mystery lives in us and beyond us...The esse-diversity of God is a metaphor based on the relatedness of everything else: all things live in God and God lives in everything. In this sense, God is that reality that penetrates, crosses, and vivifies every other reality...This approach invites us to move beyond the philosophical refinements customary in theology to find again the experiences of the life of Jesus and our own experiences as places where love takes flesh.⁵⁷

Gebara sees this expression as a metaphor: all things live in God and God lives in everything. In this understanding of the nature of God it is also necessary to redefine who Jesus is. Such an approach sees Jesus as an example of someone who lived the embodiment of God's esse-diversity, a radical, interdependent relationality with the earth

⁵⁷Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 172-73.

and all life. Jesus is a unique embodiment of this interdependence between us and all creation because he came to embody the fullness of this relationship in a unique way in his life, death and resurrection. Gebara sees that Jesus invites us to consider not only his life as the embodiment of redemptive love known in interdependent relationship but also to consider our own lives as redemptive, as we embody relational living with the earth and one another in justice. Gebara invites us to move away from our narrow understanding of Jesus Christ as definitive redemption. Jesus' story is central to our story and the story of the earth. He shows us in a radical way how we, too, can embody a redemptive hope through rebuilding our relationships with one another for justice and through what is really a conversion to the earth, toward our identity, in what Gebara calls the esse-diversity of God, as interdependent beings. The earth becomes the place of salvation. Gebara suggests a more holistic, pluralistic redemption which still holds Jesus as unique in the story but also considers other dimensions of this earth story of redemption.

We are trying to emerge from the centrality of certain personages, an undue importance that concentrates all responsibility on them, in order that all may share responsibility for the future and in order that all may share the struggle for salvation of all..And in this salvation with many faces, individuals, women and men, have the special responsibility to be concerned with the suffering and the salvation of one and all...⁵⁸

Redemption, then, in relationship to this God as esse-diversity, this matrix of energy of the universe, comes to be redefined as new relationship which embodies

⁵⁸Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 173-74.

interdependent living. We come to know and acknowledge the place of the earth in our redemptive hopes, experiencing a conversion which sees the link between the importance of justice for people and the salvation of the earth as central to our own identity as Christians.

This model of relatedness between God and the earth redefines who we are as creatures of the earth. We belong to the earth, as does every other living being. God is the source and end of the universe. God's relatedness with the earth is also God's relatedness with us. As we come to know more our identity as a people of God's creation, through interdependent living, we come to know God as source and end of all life and to know all life as interrelated with our own. Jesus, as brother, is the embodiment of this new interdependent way of life.

Re-visioning Redemption: Jesus' Story and Our Own in the Story of the Earth

For Christians, who Jesus is changes in the sense that we understand Jesus as Savior not in a metaphysical way but in his actions as a human being, in his unique and fundamental relationship with people and the earth as God's place of redemption. Gebara speaks about a new, ecofeminist understanding of Jesus in relation to salvation.

He is the Savior inasmuch as he is the symbol of values that are best able to change our lives, to lead us to goodness and justice. He is the Savior inasmuch as he is a living example with which we identify, in order to conceive of our own lives as salvific. It is the process of salvation he represents that can be assumed by women and men whose hearts are filled

with mercy and solidarity.⁵⁹

Jesus points to a new relationship with creation, a tearing down of the structures of domination over the earth and a building up of a new model of relatedness which seeks to be in relationship in ways that create justice in the everyday.

In her work on women's experiences, Gebara has outlined an understanding of salvation in relation to a particular context and attentive to women's hopes and fears. She also has provided insight in relation to an understanding of redemption in the context of hope in interdependent living. I will now turn to consider the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether in relation to these two ideas and to outline a vision of what is possible with relation to an earth-centered, socially-engaged ecological redemption. Ruether, along with Schillebeeckx and Gebara, will also contribute to an understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience in the final chapter with attention to christological and ecological dimensions.

(5) Rosemary Radford Ruether:

Social Transformation and Earth-Centered Redemption

Though Ruether does not have a systematically constructed theology of redemption, the concept of redemption as social transformation and wholeness with

⁵⁹Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 186.

people and earth is present in her major works.⁶⁰ Here I will not attempt to give a full theology of redemption in Ruether's work. I have chosen to draw only from the themes that help clarify the situation of the NL women affected by the fishery collapse. I will make use of her work from *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward A Feminist Theology* and *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*.⁶¹ These texts are most pertinent to my development of an understanding of redemption in the context of women's experiences and ecology. My interest lies in Ruether's reflections on an ecofeminist understanding of redemption, especially in relation to resistance and resilience. Her way of writing about redemption is interwoven with her work on christology and ecofeminism. As such, redemption is a non-systematic construction and not its own subject of writing for her.

Nevertheless, it is evident in Ruether's writing that redemption, as one of the major themes and realities in Christianity, needs to be embodied in an earth-centered understanding of Christianity and re-visioned with the tools of feminist theologies. I will draw on her re-visioning of redemption in christology and ecofeminism. Fundamentally, Ruether defines redemption in dialogue with liberation for people, specifically for women, and for the earth.

⁶⁰Redemption is a theme found in most of Ruether's books and articles writings, including *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward A Feminist Theology*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*, (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1998), and in many edited works.

⁶¹Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward A Feminist Theology*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983) and Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992).

A Brief History of Redemption

Ruether's work in feminist theologies brings forward three specific important insights for contemporary understandings of redemption in the Christian tradition in relation to the global ecological crisis. These three dimensions are part of a framework to revision redemption in the light of women's experiences and ecology. They are: 1) equality between women and men as participants in redemption 2) women's contextual experiences, in dialogue with Christianity, as the norm for feminist theological construction of redemption and 3) the ecological crisis as the central reality of our theological reflection on redemption.

As a historian Ruether traces the development of understandings of redemption from the second century as increasingly dualistic, patriarchal and hierarchical within the formation and leadership of the church. She sees that by the second century, a previously egalitarian view of redemption for women and men was replaced with an "...*other-worldly*" view which "...*re-enforced gender hierarchy in church and society*" which dominated in the leadership of the early church.⁶² Much of what we know of a hierarchical and patriarchal interpretation of redemption is rooted in Aristotle's understanding of women's inferiority "not simply the result of divine law, but...in their biological defectiveness." This already widespread view of redemption was cemented by Augustine's view that "women would be spiritually equal in heaven according to their

⁶²Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*. (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 12.

merits, but would get there only by accepting their subordination here on earth, both as wives and as celibates.’⁶³

Ruether acknowledges, too, how we have had within Christianity voices which promoted an egalitarian view of redemption for women and men. This was a radical challenge to theologies of the day which had a limited, androcentric interpretation of redemption. However, these voices were dominated and diminished by the leadership of the church which presented a disembodied, patriarchal, androcentric view of redemption. It is evident here that redemption was viewed historically in the church as hierarchical, individualistic and other-worldly, for the most part.

Moving to the dialogues of the late twentieth century on women and redemption, Ruether cites the need to acknowledge new ways of reconstructing understandings of redemption in the light of women’s lived experiences. She says this of current dialogues around a feminist view of redemption:

Feminist theologians around the world are contextualizing the feminist understanding of original and renewed equality to struggle for a redemptive transformation of their societies. Here it is assumed that redemption means overcoming patriarchal subordination of women in all its forms and creating societies and cultures of just and loving mutuality between men and women across classes and races.⁶⁴

Current Christian feminist theological dialogues critique the traditional

⁶³Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 12.

⁶⁴Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 14.

understanding of a Platonic interpretation which has shaped an understanding of redemption as otherworldly, patriarchal and individualistic.⁶⁵ An understanding of redemption that is meaningful to women's lives must take their experiences into account.

Ruether says of current Christian dialogues on redemption,

Contemporary feminist understanding of redemption follows a modern cultural shift from individualistic and otherworldly to social and this worldly hope. This shift is itself a recovery of the social, historical understanding of redemption of the biblical tradition...The social historical approach is rooted in a positive understanding of God's continuing relation to creation. Redemption is about reclaiming an original goodness as image of God that is still available as our true selves...⁶⁶

Ruether makes it evident that many new understandings of redemption are emerging through the lived experiences of women. This new vision of redemption is feminist, I argue, in its move toward social transformation and its groundedness in women's experiences.

Finally, Ruether outlines the earth as the central focus and beginning point of feminist theological reflection. This relationship with the earth is the key to revisioning what redemption is in the context of our lives as a species, as women and men, as people who belong to an interdependent web of life.

Redemption puts us back in touch with the full biophilic relationality of humans with our bodies, with one another and with the earth and rebuilds social relations that can incarnate love and justice. Thus redemption is about the transformation of self and society into good, life-giving relations, rather than escape from the body and the world into eternal life.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 63.

⁶⁶Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 63-64.

⁶⁷Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 64.

Ruether speaks of this return to the earth through the use of her ecofeminist methodology.

Ecofeminism, or ecological feminism, examines the interconnection between the domination of women and the domination of nature. It aims at strategies and worldviews to liberate or heal these interconnected dominations through a better understanding of their etiology and enforcement.⁶⁸

Ecofeminist dialogues develop new ways of speaking about a theological anthropology - constructed on the human relationship and interrelationship to the earth.

In the Christian context, we can revision what our redemptive hope is out of this new consciousness of the earth and our new relationship as a people of the earth. Out of this new understanding of who we are in relationship to the earth, we develop a new understanding of God and Jesus in this web of interdependence. Jesus is not the one who calls us to suffering, as in classical theology. The cross is not the symbol of suffering to be endured, especially by women. She argues that feminist theological reconstructions of redemption need to embrace a new understanding of who Jesus was and is for us today.

This new vision dismantles the masculinist Christology of classical theology which holds that women do not image Christ and that women cannot image God because of Jesus as defined as male. This new vision dismantles a view of Jesus as escaping death through the resurrection. As such, a new, ecofeminist vision of Jesus as centrally alive in

⁶⁸Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecofeminism: The Challenge to Theology", *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 97.

the embodied redemption of the earth embraces his limits in death and returns to the earth. Instead of an obsessive focus on Jesus' death and resurrection as saving event, we learn to understand Jesus' teaching and life. This Jesus is "the Jesus who overturns patriarchal religious and social hierarchy, who preaches good news to the poor, liberation of the captive...The Jesus who takes the side of the poor, who celebrates life with the marginalized, is key to the feminist paradigm of redemptive process..."⁶⁹ "Redemption happens through resistance to the sway of evil, and in the experiences of conversion and healing by which communities of well-being are created."⁷⁰

Thus, for Ruether, redemption is understood in the context of a conversion to the earth which also means a turn towards one another, embracing a new way of living. This way of living is toward a redemptive, sustainable future that celebrates biodiversity, seeks out social justice and challenges the unjust structures of our day.

Interconnections of the Domination of Women with the Domination of Nature

Ruether speaks of ecofeminism in terms of its two constitutive parts, that is ecology and feminism. Ecology is the study of natural biological communities and how these communities interact in healthy contexts and in disruption imposed upon them in destructive ways from humanity. Deep ecology considers these destructive patterns of

⁶⁹Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 67-68.

⁷⁰Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*, 104-105.

human beings in relationship with nature and examines the causes of these destructive social and symbolic patterns, especially in the Western context. Feminism examines the cultural roots of the domination of women. Ecofeminism is grounded in these fundamental insights and brings them together in a new way.

Ecofeminism brings together these two explorations of ecology and feminism, in their full, or deep forms, and explores how male domination of women and domination of nature are interconnected, both in cultural ideology and in social structures.⁷¹

As an ecofeminist theologian, Ruether claims that the causes of the oppression of women and the causes of the oppression of the earth are interlinked. Ruether traces patriarchal domination of women and the domination of nature back to the beginnings of civilization with the division of male and female roles in which men in power controlled the roles of women and established these roles as inferior: reproductive rights, child nurture and domestic labour.⁷² Women become associated only with these tasks. Through success in hunting and warfare, men become lawmakers, ritualists, and cultural definers of society. Women become socialized to this control by men who establish a division of superior (male) and inferior (female) roles in society. Through control over women's bodies, men established dominance over women and the processes of life and death.⁷³ This establishment of control over women's bodies was at the same time an establishment

⁷¹Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 2.

⁷²Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 72.

⁷³Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 74.

of control over nature as the material processes of death and life cycles, both of women and of nature, become associated with an inferior aspect of culture. These processes led to a male perception of the female as a threat whereby males sought to flee this threat of the realm of the body and nature because it represented limits and finitude rather than dominance. Ruether argues that this view came into prominence with the advent of dualism introduced in Greek thought and its subsequent influence on Christianity. In the Platonic understanding of creation and humanity, the *Demiurgos* is the creative force behind the universe and shapes this universe in a hierarchical fashion. The soul is created in the human (male) being as the controlling force over the passions of the body.⁷⁴ Ruether points to the elements of the Platonic creation story which have been synthesized into the Christian creation story. Mainly, Ruether draws attention to the creation of dualism which creates a patriarchal, hierarchical governance of the human person and the world, placing women and the earth at the lowest levels of these orders. She links Plato's story with the development of belief around salvation.

In Greek philosophy women are symbolized as analogous to the lower realm of matter or body, to be ruled by or shunned by transcendent mind...The direction of salvation follows the trajectory of alienation of mind from its own physical support system, objectified as "body" and "matter."⁷⁵

These cultural systems of dominance over women and nature have strongly

⁷⁴Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 23.

⁷⁵Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 78-79.

influenced the views of the Christian understandings of redemption. Women could share in the redemptive experience but only through the negation of their identities as sexual beings and mothers, only through them becoming the male spirit.⁷⁶ The desire to escape the finitude and limits of the natural world and to control women's bodies and life processes created an ethic of dominance in beliefs about salvation. In Christian theology this led often to presenting the soul as separate from and superior to the trappings of the body. In this way, Christianity affirmed a sharp division between the nonhuman world as inferior and the human (male) world as superior.⁷⁷ Ruether maintains, therefore, that Christian eschatology has focused too strongly on the immortality of the soul and on redemption as otherworldly, male-orientated, and andropocentric.

Interdependence as Hope for Healing

Movement toward a new understanding of redemption as rooted in this world, in touch with women's contextual experiences and the ecological crisis begins with the development of an earth-centered understanding of redemption itself. In order to embrace this earth-centered salvation ethic, humanity must embrace the interdependence that exists between all living beings.

I have noted from Ruether's writing on the dualism of Western thought and rationalism, a focus on transcendence and escape from material realities and the natural

⁷⁶Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 80.

⁷⁷Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 29-30.

world, meaning a rejection of our own finitude and limitations within the web of life. She maintains that an understanding of redemption must embrace an ethic of interdependence which challenges us to re-discover our connectedness with life.

In the Christian tradition, influenced by Hebrew and Greek stories of creation, there is an understanding of redemptive hope that is outside the natural world and the contexts of our own lives. It places the human above the rest of the natural world, making the superior beings (male) to dominate the world. Ruether argues that, in order to reconnect with the natural world in an experience of redemptive hope in the context of ecological and social healing, it is necessary to create a new consciousness which embraces new ways of interacting with the divine, with humanity and with nonhuman life, with all that lives and makes up part of the local and cosmic ecosystems of life. This new consciousness must embrace not only the rational dimension of human existence, but also the psychic, emotional, intuitive and other yet to be discovered aspects which humans share with all life. It is through such a rediscovery of the various dimensions of the human being that it becomes possible to convert our thinking and acting to a way of life that is sustainable, flourishing and respectful of an interdependent balance that lives between all living beings.

Ruether speaks of consciousness as that most complex and inward and outward form of energy organized in a complex and intense way in the human being.⁷⁸ In her words, one must embrace a “*biomorphic*” by engaging *biophilic* living. Ruether speaks of

⁷⁸Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 86.

the importance of recognizing human nature as part of the living, natural world whose ecological balance is required for its flourishing and whose ecological devastation is also its destruction. For Ruether, this new way of being conscious in the world and embracing redemptive hope in ecological and social healing is nothing less than an experience of conversion.

Converting our minds to the earth means understanding the more diffuse and relational logic of natural harmony. We learn to fit human ecology into its relation to nonhuman ecology in a way that maximizes the welfare of the whole rather than undermining and subverting (polluting) the life system.⁷⁹

This conversion means being earth-centered. This embrace of the earth as redemptive hope is not only an embrace of creatures and the natural world but also of human beings as part of that world.⁸⁰

Ruether believes that it is especially important for women to build upon this possibility of a new conversion to a relational consciousness. This consciousness rejects the neo-liberal rationalism that promotes the domination of women and of the earth. Such a new consciousness calls women to reintegrate the rational-thinking self with the relational self. Ruether sees this process as essential to an understanding of redemptive hope for women. She says,

⁷⁹Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 91.

⁸⁰Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 91.

...(T)he recovery of holistic psychic capacities and egalitarian access to social roles point us toward that lost full human potential that we may call “redeemed humanity.” Redeemed humanity, reconnected with the imago dei, means not only recovering aspects of our full psychic potential that have been repressed by gender stereotypes, it also means transforming the way these capacities have been made to function socially. We need to recover our capacity for relationality, for hearing, receiving, and being with and for others, but in a way that is no longer a tool of manipulation or of self-abnegation.⁸¹

The hope for redeemed humanity is ultimately part of the hope for the redeemed universe, in the ways in which humans live this new relational consciousness in an interdependent web of relations.

A Socially-Engaged Christian Eschatology and Redemptive Hope

Ultimately, Ruether’s eschatology is related to a religious and cultural vision of hope in society. Though much in eschatological thought has focused on how eschatological hope relates to a future existence, beyond death, eschatology is also fundamentally concerned with our lives in the here and now as our actions and choices relate to the future of wholeness. Ruether places Christian views on eschatology in the context of historical visions of hope in the religious traditions that have had most influence on Christianity. These are, for her, the Hebrew, Greek and Babylonian traditions. For Ruether, Christianity sees the “eschatological” only in relation to the possibility of human transcendence of mortality through the afterlife.⁸²

⁸¹Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 113.

⁸²Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 240.

It is useful to briefly outline Ruether's views of these traditions and to consider the influence they are said to have on the eschatological view of hope in Christianity. This is important as it creates a basis to allow me to speak about a contextual vision of eschatological hope in the context of NL women's experiences and the ecological crisis.

Ruether places the Hebrew religious tradition in the category of historical hope. God's work in history is located in historical defeats of injustice and in the signs of divine blessing made manifest in historical ways. The hope for the advent of renewed life, peace and justice is known in the context of an historical struggle of a future promise of the resurrection of the dead and the hope for an end to present suffering.⁸³ Ultimate hope is reserved for an end of time, the coming of a millenium where justice reigns or in a hope beyond our historical experience. This Jewish notion of justice in the end times influences early Christianity, especially evident in the Book of Revelation with an apocalyptic eschatology characterized by a millenium judgment of the wicked and the promise of salvation for the righteous. The eternal earth is central in this vision of hope and is recreated with heaven. Christianity later takes on a more personal eschatology, influenced less by Jewish notions of the millennial hope and more by the Platonic eschatology of the soul which is disembodied and finds its true home and ultimate hope in Heaven, away from the finitude of the earth and its life and death processes. Women represent the finitude of natural processes and must become virgins or transformed spiritually into males to share in redemption at the end of life. Ruether views this

⁸³Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 244.

eschatological and earth-fleeing spirituality as the current eschatology of Christianity.

Eschatology has been severed from historical hope. The drama of the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the eternal Kingdom of Heaven beyond the end of history are still retained in orthodox theory. But Christian hope focusses on the personal eschatology of the soul, which passes places of punishment, purgation, or glory immediately after death in a realm transcendent to this present finite world.⁸⁴

Ruether offers critique of these personal and historical eschatological views.

Whether it is in the future promise of end of suffering in a disembodied afterlife or in a hope for a revolutionary overthrow of unjust structures at some unknown time, these views are "...based on a linear view of history as a single universal project leading to a final salvific end point."⁸⁵ Eschatology that is rooted solely in an ultimate hope in a time and space beyond the present and unable to be experienced in history operates out of a view that places hope beyond the scope of earthly and historical embodiment. The hope of an unrealized future of the historical eschatology is akin to the hope of an eternal existence after death and the end of the earth. Instead, Ruether suggests a model of hope, as I have already noted, based on conversion. A new eschatological mode of dialogue would place the earth as the center of our hope for a just and sustainable way of life. Such a model of hope as conversion would embrace hope for social and ecological healing in the present and for the future. A particular model of eschatological hope can be considered out of the experiences of women with the earth as center such as in the context of the NL fishery crisis. I will speak to this possibility in the next chapter. For Ruether, an

⁸⁴Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 245.

⁸⁵Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 252.

acceptance of a truly historical vision of hope is conversion to one another and to the earth.⁸⁶

Jesus as Model of Eschatological Hope on Earth

Any new eschatological model of hope must also embrace a new vision of who Jesus is in history. It requires a new christology, a new understanding of who Jesus Christ is as *part of* the whole reality of redemption. Ruether speaks of Jesus' vision of hope as rooted in the present and moving toward the future, a vision of hope embodied in the Kingdom of God known today on earth in human efforts to be reconciled with other people and with all life.⁸⁷ For Ruether,

Jesus restores the sense of God's prophetic and redemptive activity taking place in the present-future, through people's present experiences and the new possibilities disclosed through those experiences. To encapsulate Jesus himself as God's "last word" and "once-for-all" disclosure of God, located in a remote past *and* institutionalized in a cast of Christian teachers, is to repudiate the spirit of Jesus and to recapitulate the position against which he himself protests."⁸⁸

Jesus stands as the anti-messiah, the one who challenges the system of victimization of those who are poor and excluded. In this way, Ruether presents Jesus as a model of relationality with all life in his resistance to the oppression of the poor and in his resilience in the encounter with God in this resistance against injustice. Jesus himself, his life and actions, embody redemption as social transformation. For Ruether, Jesus Christ is not the sole word on redemption, though his witness of resistance against injustice and

⁸⁶Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 256.

⁸⁷Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 120.

⁸⁸Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 122.

embodiment of a life rooted in this world, represent uniquely a vision of redemption as social transformation.

In her work, Ruether presents a model of hope in her understanding of the ways in which human beings can move toward a new way of living in relation to the nonhuman world. For Ruether, the understanding of God, the cosmos, and salvation in history needs to take on a more contextualized, historical understanding. Ruether advocates for an understanding of redemption which promotes a dialectic relationship between consciousness and conversion. Redemption then is an alternative vision of social change and hope for the present and future which we know not only in the future but also in the present. In this way, redemption holds out a horizon of what is larger than ourselves. It is this fundamental relationality between all living creatures and all life which is at the heart of a redemptive hope and experience. In order to move toward the building of a life that is based on such relationality, there needs to be an experience of *metanoia* or conversion.

For Ruether, this means the need to promote social changes that will respect and offer life-giving redemptive hope for the social and ecological worlds of our daily lives. Redemption, then, in light of Ruether's insights on this interdependent relationality, becomes a process and experience larger than in the way in which we live interdependently. In truth, this redemptive experience is known not only by the human community but by all living communities in the building up of communities of well-being, survival and flourishing.

These theologians' ideas on redemption and suffering, and the dialogue with

women's experiences in the NL fishery, will shape what I develop as an understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience.

(6) Conclusion

In the third chapter, I have outlined concepts of redemption in the works of Schillebeeckx, Gebara and Ruether as a basis for a construction of redemption as resistance and resilience in relation to women's lives and ecology in the NL fishery. In the final chapter, I will sketch out a contextual understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience. I will develop this theological understanding of redemption in relation to the NL context, especially from ecological and christological perspectives and point toward what theological questions remain for further inquiry.

Chapter 4 Redemption as Resistance and Resilience in the NL Fishery

Introduction

In this chapter I present characteristics of a contextual understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience and apply them to women's experiences in the NL fishery. I offer a construction of redemption as resistance and resilience in light of insights drawn from the work in Chapter 3 with theologians and integrate these insights within the NL context in relation to women's stories and ecological connections. These insights are in four major categories: (1) redemption as resilience in women's stories brought out through the 'negative contrast' experience, (2) redemption as resistance and resilience in the context of excluded women finding a voice and (3) redemption as resilience in light of women's experiences with the land and sea. I develop the first category through application and integration with insights from Schillebeeckx's work. For the work on the second and third categories I draw from insights applied and integrated with the work of Gebara and Ruether. These conclusions will allow me then to present constructions toward a fourth category for this work as (4) an understanding of Christology in relation to the NL context.

(1) Redemption as Resistance and Resilience: The Transformation of Suffering

I have defined *resistance* as that theological reality which challenges those systems of oppression and injustice which undermine the wellness of human and nonhuman life. I define *resilience* to be that grounding force in an understanding of God as interdependence in relation to creation which buoys our ability to be resistant, to

challenge forces which threaten the future of life, whether it be human or nonhuman.

Resistance is ineffective and undirected if it is not in relationship with this experience of resilience. The experience of *resilience* provides its renewable energy for the sake of the human work toward the future (so often resulting in failure, as Schillebeeckx points out, for human beings who further the good and resist the evil, as Jesus lived his life).

Resilience provides this sense of meaning which drives the desire of resistance and grounds it. The experience of resilience is the experience of hope which is greater than anything which threatens its existence.

There remains a human hope in the midst of the experience of hopelessness. It opens up new possibilities. This hope in the midst of hopelessness, this glimpse of a wider horizon of hope, arises in the experience of suffering. Schillebeeckx spoke of it as an experience of negative contrast. Resilience gives the orientation of what is possible for the future which 'opens up' through the experience of suffering. At the heart of this relationship between resistance and resilience is the history of human suffering and the desire to overcome suffering through establishing human structures which further good and resist evil in our society.

'Negative Contrast' and Transformation of Suffering in Women's Lives

As I outlined in Chapter 3, Schillebeeckx's theory of negative contrast implies a Christian lifestyle of resistance grounded in a Christian vision of resilience. This resilience is also the why of resistance itself. The Christian experience of resilience, like

Schillebeeckx's contemplative dimension of negative contrast, is the given reality of hope, beyond and in human experience and living, awakening the will to overcome suffering and creates the future.

As human beings begin to become aware of the suffering of other human beings and all life in God's creation, we become aware of an experience of resilience, the encounter with God that is grace. As we come to truly encounter a threat to the well-being of people, animals, plants and local and global ecosystems, we come in touch with a kind of depth structure of an experience of suffering that calls us toward the other.

Schillebeeckx speaks of this movement toward resistant hope as a movement toward '*ethical resistance*.'¹ The character of this ethical resistance is considered precisely in the awareness of something which needs to change, a present experience which signals a threat to the possibility of happiness and wholeness. Schillebeeckx brings out the personal and social dimensions of redemption in relation to resilience as the movement toward the end of suffering, a movement which happens in a response to hopelessness and yet a hope for something more, even within that hopelessness. He points to the human encounter with one another as the embodiment of redemptive hope, as made known in Jesus. In the relationships we build in the cultivation of a just reality for all people, we come to know a fragmentary redemptive experience.

¹Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

I see in NL women's words and thoughts the presence of the possibility of the moral imperative of which Schillebeeckx speaks. What do I mean by this statement? I mean that there is present in women's words the desire to move toward a future that is not yet fulfilled but which is hoped for. This hope is the hope for an ability to live within the fishery, for some, and the ability to live outside the fishery, for others.

Within women's responses to the realities of the collapse and closure of the groundfish fishery in the early 1990s, there are glimpses of awe, fear and respect for the ocean on which these women depend. These events within the fishery and their impacts on women and their communities have brought forth new realizations. These insights are important in a vision for the future.

The deep connections between these women and the ocean they depend on for livelihoods reflect an intimacy, a deep resonance with the strength and ability of the ocean to give life and to take life. In the words of these women we learn that the moratorium brought an awareness that the ocean is finite. Indeed, the ocean is finite and the livelihoods of women and men in these communities are very connected to this finitude. In these women's insights about their situations, there is a realization that we need to develop new relationships. In connection with Schillebeeckx's understanding of conversion toward the other, in the midst of hopelessness, women in this situation realize that they are in need of new ways of being, as people who depend on the ocean, in relationship with the water and all life in it.

Their insights, in the midst of hopelessness, are important for local and global

action in relationship to the earth. Theologically, we come to know in their words the expression of a lament and a hope within that lament, yet to be expressed but which is the promise of a possibility. This is the hope of resilience, a willingness to hope in the midst of much uncertainty. There is also resilience in awareness brought forth through their words, through the desire they have to move forward and to find new ways of life in the midst of hopelessness.

This hope is an ultimate hope, the hope that seeks to bring the reader also into the world of the texts of these women, to be involved in the invitation to take action toward something more in the midst of despair. According to a report from the journal *Science*,² the world's fish species will collapse within the next fifty years. The loss of bio diversity within the oceans is pushed to its limits. The loss of individual species within the web of ocean life is very damaging to the whole of ecological systems.

In women's words we see reflected this crisis. They echo the worst of the situation. With these women's words and the words of people directly involved with the fisheries crisis, we come face to face with the dire realities. This is a redemptive moment in its call to action. The NL fisheries crisis and the worldwide fisheries crisis signal the need to reawaken our own fear, intimacy and awe with the oceans. This will require concrete actions on our part. Theologically, the need is emergent to rediscover the ocean as God's creation and our part in it. Redemption comes in the reawakening to be transformed by the experiences we know.

²Erik Stokstad, "Global Loss of Biodiversity Harming Ocean Bounty," *Science* 3, November 3, 2006, 745.

The stories of women and the witness of their collective lives are an embodiment of Schillebeeckx's notion of the anticipation of a better future which leads to new action. Their desire for something more than what they see now is a sign of the 'not yet' of redemption. There is emergent in these women's words a possibility of a future engagement of hope that leads to action, to work through an experience of suffering and to create hope by maintaining the search for something more. In their decisions to begin to let go of the relationship they have had with the water, these women realize the need to develop new understandings of who they are in relationship to themselves, their communities and their land and sea. This is the beginning of a redemptive process of transforming their suffering and being transformed by their situations. We see glimpses of possibilities in their stories, decisions to take action rather than remain passive. These are small moments of hope in the everyday.

In these women's lives there is the existence of an ethic of solidarity between women. This ethic comes to fruition in small ways in their efforts to build better lives for themselves and their communities. This is the 'already' of redemptive resilience happening in their lives. This is not happening perhaps for all women but is very present in most of the reports of the NL women's words and actions. This turning toward one another is evident in their choices to vision a possible future through talking with other women. For those who opt to stay within the fishery, hope is in looking toward sustainable practices for themselves in relationship to their ecological community.

There is present in this context of the fisheries collapse and closure, through

women's words, a hope stronger than the individual and collective lives of these women. This resilient hope is a hope that invites them to the construction of a new way of living. Their searching for ways to live out hope is a living out of redemptive hope as an act of resistance. It is resistance to the powers and structures that signal total destruction and voice no hope. This seed of resistance is born out of their search for alternatives. Their resistance, individually, is in their dialogue with other women and men in communities, to challenge the dominant voices in the fishery context that exclude women's voices. These women show their commitment to resistance that is redemptive in their commitment to retrain for work outside the fishery and in their tenacity to stay involved in a fishery for the future and to work toward more socially and ecologically sustainable ways of life. This action of resistance sets the possibility for change and transformation. This resistance is fragmentary and intermittent, but it is present. It is a resistance which seeks to challenge suffering and overcome its causes.

It is important also to name the difficulties that women face and their hopelessness. Some women did not become involved in the move toward change and transformation at the community level. Instead of turning toward others for dialogue some women turned inward, in a desire to protect themselves.

Here, it is important to consider how, for some women, this experience signals more despair than redemptive hope. For some, even this sign of hope was absent. This challenges Schillebeeckx's claim to a universal force which seeks to put a better future into practice. Some women simply do not feel they have the tools or the structures to do

so, nor do they feel they have what it takes to participate in the building of future possibilities. But even despair reveals the voice of hope, a lament for something lost, a voice that yearns for something more.

Perhaps the seed of resistant hope is present and ready to take root in all experiences of hopelessness, as Schillebeeckx claims, but this hope needs to be nourished. It seems, through women's words, that those who find hope find it in bonds between themselves and other women and with the ecological community. Those who find hope do not identify major changes but they see change in small, deliberate ways to find a new future for themselves and their communities.

These women name their experiences as both hope and hopelessness, suffering and transformation, at once. Redemption appears in these paradoxical realities. Redemptive hope as resistance is embodied in their refusal to let go of hope, hope in the everyday persistence to continue living and finding new ways to survive and be well.

These elements of resilience in the encounter of God with one another and resistance in the act of challenging suffering are present in these women's lives as active modes of redemption. This is a starting point for theological reflection on the experience of transformation toward hope in the midst of an experience of hopelessness.

Through the devastation of the moratorium and in their efforts to make new lives for themselves, NL women who are fishers and fishplant workers have gained the insight that their survival and well-being is inextricably linked with the survival and well-being of the fishery. This ecological community includes but is not limited to them. These

women have gained this insight through the experience of suffering and in their small but real efforts to work toward new ways of thinking and living in the wake of the cod moratorium and its devastating impact on their social and ecological communities. For these women, this redemptive hope is born out of a resistance to community breakdown and resistance to the expansion toward maximization of wealth. They have planted a seed with the possibility of cultivating an ethic of resistance in their actions. This seed of resistance is small. This is evident through the gathering of women from NL and Labrador with women from other countries to speak about the impact of globalization and the future of the fishery in local and global facets.

This hope for these women is born in subtle ways, the most promising of which lives in their decision to live within the struggle. This decision to live within the struggle is a resistance to exclusion and voicelessness. It is an affirmation of their place in their local and in the global communities and an affirmation of their power to hope. The resistance I speak of here is in these women's refusal to be forgotten. Their resistance comes out of their identities as women surviving and hoping in the midst of conflict and is born out of their experience of suffering and finding a way through to help create hope in their individual and community lives. I also consider the difficulties women face in staying grounded in this hope. Some women find it difficult to even name their despair. There is for these women a hopelessness that seems to overpower. However, when we look at their stories together, we find hope for something beyond nothingness. There is an affirmation of possibility and a search, a yearning for promise, that itself is redemptive.

In women's decisions to stay within their communities, despite the struggles of community life, individual pressures and family difficulties caused by the fishery changes and the closure of the fishery, there is a resilience of spirit. Most of these women opt to stay within their communities and to participate in the efforts to involve women in discussions on changes and new visions for the fishery. In doing so they witness to the possibility of hope within the experience of hopelessness. They strive to find new ways to come forward, within the struggle of everyday life, to commit to finding reasons to continue to live a new way of life in NL. By staying in the province women are making a commitment to a link between themselves and a way of life. The bonds they have with the ocean, with the land, with their families and the generations of NLers are all part of this redemptive hope.

In their words there is also present the desire to ask questions, to get to the bottom of what is happening with fisheries' restructuring programs, with their eligibility for funding, with the possibility of what happens within their communities. Their words witness their willingness to get involved. By their very involvement and tenacity they are challenging the history of women's exclusion within the fishery. By participating in these interviews and by letting their ideas, laments, fears and hopes be heard they are building toward a new future where women's voices matter also within the public face of the fishery. Their words are a challenge to the dominant voices of government and big business that seek to control the fishery without input from local communities. As we had seen in the chapter two, many women see the importance of getting involved, even

though they do not know how, for positive change. Through their commitments to take courses to ready themselves for a future without involvement of the fishery women show much redemptive hope. For many all they have known is the fishery. Yet, they are willing to do what needs to be done, to stay within their communities and within the province, in order to make possible a future for themselves and their families, for their communities and generations of NLers.

In the NL fishery and in the NL women's lives, there are present both these experiences of redemption, immanent and transcendent. These dimensions of redemption will be helpful in an understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience. NL women, in their words about hope and hopelessness, express the possibilities of their lives. In their commitment to continue and to trust in the everyday gifts of life to help them along the way, these women come to know immanent experiences of redemption. Their struggle is resistance against forces of exclusivity and unjust death of a way of life, of communities, of a culture. There is also in this NL context a dimension of redemption which is transcendent. In this way, redemption is glimpsed but not known, hoped for but not experienced in the everyday, reached for but not grasped. This is the horizon of hope built within the Mystery of life.

When we consider this transcendent dimension of redemptive living in the NL ecological context, we can see more deeply an experience of redemption that is resilient. Beyond the near destruction of the codfish, beyond the devastation of communities, beyond the crises that families and towns still face, there is a reality of the Mystery that

brings hope. This Mystery is the interdependence we share with all life. Our interdependence with the universe brings a clearer picture. We are redeemed not only with our own efforts for justice, not only with our own transformations. In this sense, we are called to an experience of letting go of control, rediscovering a faith in the universe that will be our resilience. This giving over comes in discovery of our true mutuality with all life. Until we have discovered this possibility of interdependence, we will not move forward in our real efforts to create structures of justice in NL or in other contexts where people and ecosystems are in crises.

The rise of a new consciousness within the world in response to the ecological crises can be considered with respect to the NL fishery. There is need for a new way of understanding the right relationship called for through the covenantal relationship between people, the land, the sea, and our natural world. To follow Ruether, we can see how the Israelites understood their right relationship by seeing the land as a gift, a promised land which was the hope of a people engaged with their ecological community for their very survival.³ The loss of their relationship with the land is connected to their disconnection with God.

Lament as Transformation of the Self

To be in touch with a new consciousness which embraces such a vision of mutuality with the earth, we will need to lament the losses we have known and the

³Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 211.

suffering experienced by people and the earth in this experience of loss in the NL fishery. Lament is present in women's words, in their crying out against a system which does not include them and against the loss of a fishery which was not only their livelihood but also their personal, social, and cultural identity. These women, as with all NLers have lost a part of their ecological identities. The importance of place in theological reflection cannot be overstated. Women's words echo the lament of NLers, the losses within the communities of infrastructures which have kept communities alive and the loss of their connection with the sea, through their personal and familial life upon it. Their lament is the beginning of grief, a stage in the process of coming to engage a new consciousness like that of which Ruether speaks. It is also the letting go of what they once knew. Here the application of Schillebeeckx's insights on negative contrast and the learning that can come from transformation of suffering are important. Specifically, the act of lament in women's words and actions speaks to their decision to let go of a way of life. This movement signals the beginning of the process of being able to start again, to renew themselves and be renewed by a new relationship with community and ecology in the midst of the fishery crisis.

The act of lamenting is a theological act. Lamentation acknowledges the suffering we have experienced to be real. This lament declares the losses that have happened and allows room for people to cry for themselves and their ecological communities. Entering into a lament brings us close to the fishery, grieving for the loss and moving toward a place where people can find a new way of being in relationship with the ecosystems of

their local, provincial, and global ecosystems. Lament reveals a theological honesty, a way of crying out to God in the way of Job.

In speaking about lament in the Psalms, Walter Brueggemann emphasizes the importance of speaking about negative lived experiences as an act of bold faith, insisting that the world must be experienced as it is, and not in some pretended, overly optimistic way. His insights about the psalms are meaningful in the context of the closure of the fishery and women's words about it. Psalms of disorientation address a God who is not immutable, rather God who listens to all that is the condition of human life and moves to transform pain and death into new life.

The transformation concerns not only God. Life is also transformed. Now life is understood to be a pilgrimage or process through the darkness that belongs to humanness. While none would choose to be there, such seasons of life are not always experiences of failure for which guilt is to be assigned, but may be a placement for life for which the human person or community is not responsible and therefore not blamed. The presupposition and affirmation of these psalms is that precisely in such deathly places as presented in these psalms new life is given by God. We do not understand how that could be so or even why it is so. But we regularly learn and discern that there - more than anywhere else - newness that is not of our own making breaks upon us.⁴

By bringing to speech these experiences of disorientation, the women are bringing forward the insight that it is important to embrace the negative, to understand and to accept it in their lives, before transformation is possible, before moving on to imagining a new way through. In this way women's speech is also challenging the dominant voices in

⁴Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1984), 52.

society that do not acknowledge the visceral realities of hurt and exclusion on the part of many. As such the speech of women's lament itself is a form of resistance against the dominant voices that deny the reality of these women's lives and the state of the fishery, denying the real stories of the impacts of collapse of the fishery and fisheries' restructuring programs, the real cost when communities are not involved in decisions that impact them in real ways. There is for these women a resilience in their willingness to embrace the negativity and to face reality, harsh as it is, so that life can continue and they can express the depth of their struggle.

The lament of women's words is a call to reawakening to be in touch with the fishery in a way that allows us to acknowledge the suffering of the earth as also our own suffering. This understanding of the interdependence of life within the fishery will call us toward a moral imperative.

In the midst of this crisis in the NL fishery, through women's words there is a sudden awareness of the limits human beings have exceeded in relation to ecological well-being. The next step is to discover how human beings can live within the limits. This is an ethical imperative that emerges out of the awareness of the limits reached. To introduce an ethic of living that engages balance, sustainability and preservation of the fishery for generations to come involves social and ecological factors. Women's voices in this thesis have echoed the need for new ways of living. It is perhaps only when humanity is met with death, destruction and the decimation of species and ways of life, that we can learn new ways. This new ethic must rediscover NLers within this context of a

dysfunctional relationship with the ecological system. It also points to the need to rediscover our humanity in the context of a world crisis in fisheries and with peoples dependent upon the fisheries for life.

In recognizing the suffering of fishers and fish plant workers and their families as well as fish, the ocean and other species, there is an acknowledgement that there is needed a new way of being in relationship. Concretely, in the NL fishery, this solidarity with the natural world will move Canadians to create socially and ecologically sustainable structures within the fishery and outside of the fishery.

In these ways, the experience of lament is redemptive in its anticipation of a call to a new consciousness, a call to honesty about the state of things in this ecological crisis of the fishery. This is the beginning of a new consciousness, the realization of the suffering of the earth, the fishery, and the movement toward deepening our psychic awareness of connection with the ecological community. This new consciousness breaks through the dominant voices which say that all is fine. Coming to an awareness of the reality of the ecological crisis in the fishery, through the lament, is an invitation to begin again, to question what has been said and to give speech to an awareness that we are not in right relationship with one another and with the fishery and the ocean. Lament functions as a prophetic call to harsh awareness and expression which can motivate people toward the direction of a change that needs to come.

(2) Resilience in the Voice of the Excluded:

Redemptive Hope in Women's Lives

The resilience present in women's lives and alive in their words is a resilience of the spirit, the spirit that reflects their refusal to be dominated and subdued in their individual and community lives. As women who have experienced much suffering and connect their suffering with ecological devastation, they understand the need to change the way we live so that we can be a more sustainable people. Their words witness a resilience of the spirit, the spirit that is larger than who they are that gives them the possibility of something beyond the suffering they know. Their experience as Nlers over years of hard work and endurance in the fishery also witnesses to this hope in the midst of what seems like an impossibly hopeless situation.

I spoke of the experience of redemption as resistance and resilience in living between the 'already' and the 'not yet.' For me, comments from Margaret, Evan, Linda and others in Chapter 2 embody well this element of the 'not yet' so vivid in women's narratives and lives. For me, these embody the eschatological, this dialectic between the 'already' and the 'not yet' that is the now. Redemption as resistance is that 'already' of justice engaging with the challenges of what lies before us, yet to do, as human beings in an interdependent world. The 'already' of our experience as redeemed in the Christian story of the world, God's creative and redeeming love, meets the 'not yet' of our fragmentation and lack of vision toward wholeness within our own contexts of living.

I have named the two dimensions of a contextual vision of redemption as

resistance and resilience in women's lives. The eschatological embodies this transitional space between the 'already' and the 'not yet' present in these women's lives. These divergences are one in women's lives, part of the same experience of daily life. Gebara speaks of ambiguity in women's lives as that existence of both hope and hopelessness, cross and resurrection in the same moment of struggle and fragmented hope.

Cross and Resurrection in Women's Everyday Lives

In women's experiences in the fishery crisis, there is present a resilience in the midst of suffering. This is a theological insight precisely because it deals with an experience of hope in the midst of hopelessness, a hope which somehow transcends the everyday reality of this moment of struggle. This hope lives within it bringing one toward something more, a resilience which these women find within themselves and beyond themselves in their situations of despair. In these women's lives in NL, as with women's lives in Brazil, there is an experience of everyday life as a mixture of realities of isolation, powerlessness and lack of choice as well as the realities of community-building, coming together to question and to challenge the authority of government and business over their lives and their communities. Their lives experiences tell them that there is no hope from outside themselves that will ultimately bring hope.

There is, too, no hopelessness outside themselves which will defeat them. There is the reality of the everyday - kids to raise, friends who move away for work, jobs that are impossible to find, women being left out of decisions to be made. There are also the

dreams that women have for themselves. Some women choose to return to pursue educational opportunities. The closure of the fishery and their path to hope included remembering dreams they once had and may now be able to accomplish. In this sense, resistance and resilience come out of women's lived realities of evil and redemption.

In women's words about the fishery crisis and their own lives within it, it is true that women's experiences capture both the hope and the hopelessness in the small moments of what Gebara calls cross and resurrection. However, I see, in the way Gebara does, that there is a point at which the hope becomes the primary experiences which encourages women to continue even in the midst of despair. Gebara speaks of a provisional path to freedom that gives women hope to continue the resistance of everyday life. These realities of hope and hopelessness are an experience of co-incidence in women's lives.

Gebara's notion of resistance here is a concrete, everyday connection to life as a struggle. Despite the struggle they hold fast to the possibility of life in situations where they are overwhelmed with the sights of death. In the context of the NL fishery crisis, in the women's words there lives an anxious and fragmentary experience of hope but it is this experience of hope which survives and thrives in the midst of what seems to be impossibilities in life. The hope which women's words embody is a resistant hope in this sense. It is a resistance that is everyday. This resistance is a decision to go on and to challenge and become involved to ask questions about the character of the despair they face. There is a resilience in their solidarity with one another, in the struggle of resistance

to feed their families, be communities and find alternative ways of life and even to stay within the fishery though it looks hopeless.

The call to freedom, in the midst of women's experiences in the NL fishery, in the midst of suffering and a bleak present and future for themselves and their communities, is a call to participate in a resistance that is yet ongoing in the midst of suffering and great tragedy. This quiet call is the promise of something more. It is a call for women to be involved and to resist simply by continuing to live and to survive though every obstacle be against them and every injustice threatening a way of life and personal happiness.

In the witness of personal words and collective experiences of women's lives in the wake of the fishery collapse and closure, it is evident that there is release from the struggle of life to experience a break in the hopelessness. Out of the lives of women in Brazil and in light of women's experiences in the NL fishery crisis, it is possible to consider how this moment of hope within hopelessness traces the development of a contextual, feminist understanding of redemptive hope for women that is rooted in women's everyday lives. There is an anticipation of what hope might look like, perhaps not a lived hope in this moment but a hope longed for in the next moment. This is true, I claim, for women's words about their lives and the fishery crisis. Women live between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of this redemptive hope. Their resistance is the will to survive the hopelessness and to find resilience in the small moments of resurrection amidst struggle.

Salvation as a Path to Freedom

For many NL fishers and fishworkers each path is, as Gebara has called it, *a call to salvation or provisional path to freedom*. Some women also name women's involvement in the fishery of the past as a part of what encourages them. This memory of women's involvement in the past fishery is itself a form of resistance. It is redemptive in that women find in this recounting of their history within the fishery a connection with women that reassures women of their belonging to this way of life and gives a reason to continue to be involved in decision-making that affects them directly and their communities. Their resistance, then, is connected with the memories of their mothers, grandmothers, and generations of women who resisted in former days by their very presence in the fishery. This memory of women as a strong force in the fishery of the past is a lifeline to women's involvement in the current fishery crisis. In this way, gender is a category here in the preservation of the memories of women of the past fishery and the hope for women's involvement in the future fishery. The memory of women from the past challenging the systems which sought to exclude them is one part of the impetus for women to get involved, stay involved and make a place for women in today's fishery.

Redemption as Transformation in Communities

Women could take an active role in raising their voices to consider what a sustainable community life in outport NL might look like from their perspective. Here, their wisdom comes from their roles as mothers, fishers, community builders and as a group of women. Challenging local and governmental policies and restructuring programs toward women's involvement and community ownership is redemptive in its resistance to methods that threaten not only the fabric of the fishery but also the fabric of the life of small outport communities. These methods that remove ownership from local people and outports in favour of corporate bodies and cities are also the methods that have pushed a fishery out of the hands of the local people and into the hands of transnationals, using trawler and dragger vessels which destroy the ecological balance in the water, as I noted in chapter 2. Thus, the well-being of the people and the ecological balance of life are inseparable in these small communities.

This choice to take back their communities is evident in the responses of women to the moratorium and in their desire to build up their communities. This choice also respects the need for people who want to leave the communities, but also for may to stay in these small communities. We know that urban centers are overpopulated because of the lack of attention to small communities and the failure to build economic and community networks. Ecological awareness tells us that biodiversity involves diversifying how we live off the land and the sea, especially in the NL context where cod was hunted almost to extinction. It also tells us that people need to stay connected to their environment and that

people *are* indeed their environment when they make their living integrally linked with it.

In this context, resistance means creating an alternative way of life, taking from the past the heritage of women and their contributions and moving toward a new future vision within these communities. This will include the voices of women and the solidarity of people living together toward the creation of sustainable ways of living. The women in the stories I have shared are at the very beginning stage of such a vision. The hope is in women's coming together in the future to raise their voices and critique the visions of others that do not contribute to a sustainable vision of things to come.

At the heart of these women's insights to redefine themselves and to build a new future fishery and a new community centered on new possibilities there is resilience. Resilience is alive in these women's belief that there is a new way possible. In this vision of hope for the future involving a renewal of relationship between NLers and their ecological world, there is a rediscovery of redemptive hope. This redemptive hope is real and renewable hope that brings promise from a rediscovery of their heritage with the sea toward a new future, one articulated not only in terms of the needs of the women or those of the communities but also in terms of the needs of the water and all that lives within it. Indeed, this desire of women to come to know themselves again in relationship with the people in their communities is an experience of resurrection in the everyday. This resurrection and experience of grace is lived amidst the experience of hopelessness.

Evident in these women's stories, collectively, is a refusal to be excluded from a future which is yet uncertain. Yet, they moved forward into tomorrow, despairing,

mourning, and yet determined to stand to face what will come. There is present something transformative about their hope which is voiced as despair and as determination.

(3) Redemption as Resistance and Resilience:

Women's Relationship with the Land and Sea

The bonds these women share with the land and the water reflect their connectedness with geographic and cosmic spaces as meaningful for theological reflection. Women's connection with the ecological settings of their lives demonstrate a resilient spirit, a connection that is in itself a hopeful spark. The places themselves where women have fished for decades keep them hopeful for the future. The naming of their communities as home, not just in a physical sense but in a geographical way, involves seeing themselves as part of the interconnectedness of ecology in this province.

Women's Connections with the Land and Sea

From these women's stories in the NL fishery, it is apparent that women in the fishery have a deep bond with the earth through their bond not only with families and communities but also with the water and the fish. In fact for these women they are inseparable. This is evident in their commitment to the future and in their brokenness and lament for what has been lost. These women understand the interdependence of themselves and their communities with the water as fishers and as fish plant workers and

living in families and communities totally dependent upon the fishery. They understand the need to set limits and to respect the balances needed to maintain a fishery that can feed people locally and provide work for women and men in communities. Indeed, before the advancement in technologies in the fishery and the ensuing export-orientation in the fishery, this happened in communities and communities and fishery lived well with one another. Women understand, as echoed in their words, the importance of respecting this interdependence. They understand that their suffering and their movement toward hope is resilient only with the water and the fish.

Many women also name the involvement of their own children in the fishery of the future. They do not know what hope for the fishery will look like and what shape the fishery will take, but women do know that their children's involvement signals the hope for the fishery and people's continued involvement. This keeps alive a cultural hope and identity of living and surviving through their connection with the water and the ecosystem. This also is a form of resilience, to live within the hope of what is possible through the ancestor and descendants of their individual lives.

The NL fishery crisis, through the experiences of women involved in the fishery and in relation to Gebara's insights, sheds new light on an understanding of redemptive hope and our understandings of relationship with God, Jesus and the earth as God's creation. These insights come from the work of Gebara and also from the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether. I will present an understanding of these insights of redemption, God and Jesus later in this chapter.

The dominant voices of government and community restructuring programs are seen as all-powerful forces by some of the women. Some women think that any gathering of women to question these dominant voices is futile. These fears and the subsequent failure to act or to hope for something more than suffering is also reflected in these women's stories. The resounding "yes" they speak with their spirit of resilience to this "no" in their situations is not a denial of the truth but an awareness of a deeper truth that they will survive and be able to find what they need to make it toward another future.

Redemption as an Ecological Vision of Community Resilience

Movement toward a redemptive experience in this world begins with an earth-centered understanding of redemption itself. Ruether sees a turn toward the earth as our real hope in these times of crises. In order to embrace this earth-centered salvation ethic, humanity must embrace the interdependence that exists among all living beings. This new consciousness must embrace not only the rational dimension of our human existence, but also the psychic, emotional, intuitive and other yet to be discovered aspects of our selves.

I have outlined how Ruether is consistent in her argument that overcoming patriarchal structures is a crucial part of the redemptive experience for women. She has outlined that one dimension of this process involves women's rediscovery of their own agency as selves as individual women and as a group of women in the same situation.

NL women also are moving toward beginning to think of themselves as subjects in their own right, able to be involved in their communities and with a unique

contribution to make. This means having their voices heard in decisions made by municipal, provincial and federal governments, in relation to life within the fishery, especially in terms of adjustments to programs and funding for those involved with the fishery. It also means that women need to be heard in more public arenas, becoming more visibly a part of the decisions that are made regarding what training outside and inside the fishery will be provided and how women will be able to access that training. This process will involve asking why women are so often deemed ineligible for programs because of part-time status. It also means providing services such as day care for women who want to work but are not able to do so under current requirements.

Hearing women's voices means challenging women to become more implicated and specifically to challenge structures that exclude women from direct involvement in decision-making. This also means becoming involved in changing policies that ignore the input of people in local communities in the province. Helpful also would be the urging of steps to promote dialogue among all levels of government, fishers and fish plant workers and business organizations involved with the fishery. Much of the frustration of women's words demonstrate their awareness of exclusion from the decisions made in the fishery and about their communities, leaving them feeling powerless and isolated. Women need to forge new alliances and structures to be heard and become active in their own decision-making processes. These decisions need to take women's and local communities' ideas into account before making the decisions, to truly engage in dialogues that seek sustainable living for the people and the fishery.

Part of the process of moving away from the dualism of the Christian thought around redemption is placing an earthly redemption firmly in the context of human economic, political, social and ecological living. Ruether makes it clear that our survival and flourishing as a humanity depends on building up our own communities - in our work and play, in our moments of celebration and resistance our redemption as hope in the generations after us and rooted in the generations before us. Ruether speaks of hope for healing in the context of building up our local and global communities, by constructing community-based groups living an ethic of "*celebration and resistance*."

Resistance must take on a whole new interplay between the other and the self. It needs to promote women as capable, active agents of change and transformation. The context of the NL women's experiences is a setting for the articulation of the structure of the dualisms of which Ruether has written with respect to Christianity and redemption. This setting of women's hope in the midst of crisis allows us also to move towards seeing women as capable and active in the transformation of their own suffering and the suffering of their communities. This will not happen quickly or without a shift to a new consciousness of interdependence as I have outlined in Ruether's understanding of redemption. Resistance, then, in a redemptive mode, means women's embrace of their own potential and encouragement of the involvement of other women. There are signs of this resistance in the women's words, of women redefining themselves and naming themselves as capable and encouraging other women. There is also a long way to go to see this potential resistance alive in community settings.

Ruether's ecofeminist understanding of life as interdependently and intimately related challenges our Christian understanding that humanity is somehow the pinnacle of an evolutionary process. Such an approach of relatedness means that the Creator, the Mystery that creates and sustains life, who redeems through restoration of this fundamental relationship, calls humanity to a more interdependent way of thinking and way of living for the sake of the earth. The ecological crisis is global and is embedded in each of the local ecological communities so our response, through seeking an ethic of interdependent, sustainable living, needs to happen within the global reality through our local communities.

Women's narratives, as a collective story of working fisher women's experiences in the NL fishery, stand as a witness to the possibility of a new solidarity that is deeply rooted in who we are as people of God. Schillebeeckx speaks of this solidarity between people. Gebara and Ruether speak of an interdependent solidarity with all life. In the case of the NL fishery, the event of the depletion of the fishery has forced the creation of a new consciousness to protect the species of the water that, under the present practices, can no longer renew themselves for the future.

Women's voices, as a testament to sadness, longing and searching for something more, signal the need for change. One of the changes needed is the cultivation of a social and ecological consciousness that celebrates the psychic connections between human beings and other creatures in the world. NL women's stories are fragmented. Cultivating the psychic connections of our humanity will indeed bring us to a new sense of

conversion, to a place in our fisheries where we understand the importance of sustainable ecosystems. Women's loss and fragmentation is a call to all involved in the fishery to move toward creating alternative visions to globalized fisheries. In reading these women's words there is a challenge to us to become involved in our own local communities. To become involved in the fishery crisis means a call for changes at the local, federal and international levels. This new consciousness must begin with an awareness of what is actually happening with the fishery in NL, what is happening with women's lives and what women are willing to act upon in this time of crisis.

As human beings and as Christians this new consciousness beckons us toward concrete action to support communities like the NL outports so affected by the fishery closure, to support the whole ecological community. It is apparent, through the women's voices and the NL fishery context, that our redemptive hopes as human beings are bound together with fish, water, and all life flourishing, despite other realities, on the earth.

In rediscovering fisherwomens' intimacy with the sea in their daily efforts to make a living, there is a rediscovery of the mutuality between people, the fish and the water. The fact that Vera longs for this time again in her life is a recognition of the deep connection between people and the land and sea. It is this deep connection with the sea, with the ecological knowledge gained from a daily encounter with fish, with water and with the human community in the area, that rests at the heart of a profound respect for need for balance for the purpose of sustainable living.

In her sociological research with women's lives, Brenda Gzretic speaks of this

fundamental insight of women about the interdependence of the fishery and the lives of their communities. Schillebeeckx speaks of the importance of the contemplative and active aspects of our human experience of redemption.⁵ The encounter with God is made known to humanity through the encounter with people and the earth, through our local communities. I want to expand Schillebeeckx's understanding of this expression of God's creative and redemptive love in the encounter with solidarity between people to include an expression of solidarity on the part of humanity to the whole ecological world. This requires, as Gebara indicates, a radical modification of how we live in our world, especially in our regional ways of life.

Resistance itself is the process of standing against injustice and standing for relationships of solidarity with people and the earth. Resistance provides a source, a wellspring on which the resilience of the Spirit finds foundation, the experience of abundance out of this experience of hope often in the midst of adversity and hopelessness.

Before the moratorium and fisheries restructuring, fish harvesters would rely on traditional knowledge to dictate when they fished a particular species. There was a relatively smooth transition from one species to the next and the fish determined the time they would catch it, not people in organizations in St. John's or Ottawa. In the present fishery, such traditional knowledge and practices are undermined as markets, governments, and a multitude of organizations determine the timing of when fish should be caught, the quantity that will be caught, and the amount they will get for the catch.⁶

Also, rebuilding the strength of these communities in small ways happens with seeing

⁵Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 818.

⁶Gzretic, *Between Life and Death*, 119.

that the fishery, for many women and men, is not the way of the future. Traditionally, in rural NL, the fishery was one part of a subsistence life but there were other ways that ensured diversification. Developing alternative work and diversifying the economy is a way for women to become more involved and to contribute to rebuilding a way of life. Women have held together a strong connection with their lives and the sea.

Steps in Community-Building toward a new Future

Women fishworkers and fishers in small NL communities are aware of the importance of the bond between people and the sea and the importance of maintaining an important balance that is threatened by the current technologies. I identify five steps in community development in rural communities.

The first step in building community awareness in this context involves the recognition of women in the fishery and in building communities that can sustain these people and the whole ecological systems. Recognizing women's roles and encouraging women's involvement in the fishery and in community means the beginning of a resistance against the fading away of small communities and destruction of the environment. Women are the backbone of communities with their varied involvements. Listening to women's voices in the worldwide fisheries and in small communities dependent on the fishery will enable communities to move forward toward creating sustainable alternatives for the future of their ecosystems and their environments.

A second important step involves giving back management of the environment and communities to local people and developing fishery and other community activities primarily to meet the demands of these small communities. This is not an effort to support the end of an export fishery but it is an effort to see the globalized market controlled and managed by small-scale community structures and markets. These local community groups and individuals would allow for the existence of export fisheries but would have as priority small, community-based fisheries and activities outside the fishery that will meet the needs of the community. Again, these alternatives should connect with people's skills and participate in building a healthy, sustainable ecosystem.

A third important step in the building of communities is the process of education and awareness-building for people in small communities, within the fishery and in other areas of economic development. In Chile, India and the Philippines, fishworkers' organizations have formed. Their purpose is to defend the rights of people to manage their own communities' fisheries and community activities that promote livelihood and sustainability. This knowledge-building and rediscovery of heritage is part of this process of reeducation and community awareness-building.

A fourth step in the building of healthy sustainable communities is rediscovering and bringing forward people's traditional knowledge of the fishery and ability to manage ecosystems. This is true in NL fishery and in fisheries in other countries.

To the extent that fishworkers' organizations are effective in collective action, efforts should be made to develop their awareness and their skills with a view to enabling them to manage the fisheries. This requires that the state recognizes fully

the role of the fishworkers in the fisheries management and entrusts to their organizations the rights and responsibilities to achieve this objective...Equally important in this context is the need to revive and reinstate the encyclopaedic knowledge, which many of these communities possess about the aquatic system. This cultural knowledge should serve as an important basic for devising ways and means of controlling and reorienting fishing effort and rejuvenating fishery resources.⁷

A fifth step will undertake a thorough examination of fishing practices and community structures together, understanding that these realities are one in the same for many NLers. This can also be applied in communities around the world. Specifically, the contributions of women as community-builders and as fishers and fish plant workers will be essential to a new vision of what is possible and what is needed within these social and ecological communities. Particularly this will mean the active lobbying of global partners with the provincial fishery to give NLers a say in the future.

These five important steps are part of the important process of building up of small communities. These processes can contribute to the building of a global ethic of resilience in community-building. In the Christian context of the community as place of vitality, solidarity and growth, resistance is most alive in the building of relationship between people and between people and the earth. This solidarity can be encouraged between people in the same small communities facing the same issues. It can also be encouraged between women who desire to have their voices heard.

⁷International Collective of Fish Workers, "Global Fisheries Trends and the Future of Fishworkers," 4. Available at www.icsf.net.

(4) Christological Facets of Redemption as Resistance and Resilience

These women's experiences in the context of the NL fisheries crisis of the 1990s signals the need for exploring of new symbols and ways of expression for contemporary theological reflection. I have shown redemption as resilience and resistance comes through in women's experiences. I think also, out of this mode of expression around redemption, comes a new way of understanding who Jesus Christ is and who God is in light of women's experiences and the story of the crisis and NL fishery collapse.

I want to be careful to say that I do not say that these women speak as Christians. There is no Christian language written in the reports of these interviews. Through theological reflection on redemptive hope within their experiences, there is within these insights the emergence of intimations of an understanding of particular ways to speak about an experience of Christ and God within their experience of overwhelming hopelessness and death. Such an understanding of how we might speak about Jesus Christ within this particular experience of redemptive hope in these women's words and how this links with an understanding of God is important to the work of this thesis.

Theological reflection seeks to identify ways in which we might speak about an experience of hope through an encounter with God in the world. For Christianity, understanding who God and who Jesus are within this set of coordinates of our lives is necessary for a Christian theology of redemption.

This understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience within women's experiences during the fisheries crisis and beyond requires us to focus on certain aspects

of christology and of an understanding of God. These shed light on some more universal realities about the experience of redemptive hope. I begin with christology.

Schillebeeckx stresses the importance of facing injustices in the human world and resisting injustice where possible. For Christians this form of resisting evil is found in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus profoundly lived a communion with God coupled that found its expression in his love for others and the need to do good and resist evil. Jesus was moved to act on behalf of others by his communion with the living God. Schillebeeckx names Jesus' action of healing and reconciling as "suffering through and for others as an expression of the unconditional validity of a pattern of doing good and resisting evil and suffering."⁸

In other words, Schillebeeckx sees this protest to unjust and avoidable human suffering lived through an ethic of resistance, embodied in Jesus' life. An eschatological horizon of hope which lives dialectically between the 'already' and the 'not yet' theologically.

Following on insights from chapter 3 and the development of redemption in relation to an understanding of Jesus, what then would christology look like in relation to women's words in light of the fishery crisis?

I name seven criteria of an emergent christology in this NL fishery context.

1) An understanding of a 'christic' experience in the context of women's experiences in the fishery and the fishery crisis can be understood as the desire to hope for something

⁸Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 794-95.

more within the experience of hopelessness. In this sense the christic is present in women's words and in their involvement within the fishery, to continue to speak a word of hope as continuing with daily life despite an experience of death - socially, culturally, communally and ecologically. There is in their words the commitment to continue to work toward something more, even though many times they do not know how this will look or how they will be involved in change.

2) Such a Christology also applies to the experience of women in the collapse of the fisheries. Jesus Christ in this context is not only one who challenges the structures of oppression, isolation and death, but also gives an assurance or hope that these structures are not the final word. A christology in relation to women's words and the fisheries crisis and hope for sustainable living involves a movement toward a new consciousness within Canada, a consciousness which embodies the resistance of Jesus as uniquely one who challenged structures of unjust death and isolation within communities.

3) The fisheries crisis is a concrete event that manifests something new. It implies a new experience of the earth, made explicit in our local communities, both in the earth's bounty as well as in the limits of this bounty. The fisheries crisis calls for a new relationship with the person of Jesus and our Christian response within the emergence of a new ecological consciousness. The fisheries crisis is a microcosmic example of what is happening within the oceans and ecosystems of the world. The current crisis with the destruction of species

like the codfish calls us to new ways to understand what redemption means and the role Jesus plays within this new place of crisis and possibility within our world. The Christ story must make sense within the story of all creation. As we come to understand this earth story in new ways, especially within crisis points such as the NL fishery and women's experiences, we must begin to understand the significance of Jesus in new and different ways. The Christian community needs to explore a new call to faith in Christ in the context of social change, resistance and solidarity for those in crisis, all elements of the Christian baptismal vocation.

4) Christology or an understanding of Jesus in this context means being attentive to the categories of gender, geography, ecology, culture and community. These are all important in the understanding of a christology that supports the words of women and acknowledges the ecological crisis, the social crisis and their interdependence and the possibilities still present within this experience.

5) The experience of crisis within the NL fishery context, women's words and the ecological reality of the fishery call for an awareness of the importance of a contemporary christology which reinterprets symbols for Christianity. Such a theological approach must make room for revelation within our times attentive to our lived experiences. Theological reflection on the NL context with the fishery crisis is a case in point. It invites theological reflection on similar themes and opens the door to new ways of expressing and imagining

the Christian symbolism and imagery in relation to social and ecological issues in Canada and in the world.

6) The person and story of Jesus Christ communicates an embodied resurrection. The communities and people of the NL outports so affected by the collapse of the fishery also need a real, embodied hope, an embodied hope of possibility that promises growth and renewal through resistance and resilience. Jesus' resurrection prefigured in many ways throughout his life, in the healing stories, the miracle stories, the stories of resurrection, through resistance to exclusion, isolation and injustice in his time, through the persistence of those he met to find healing in their everyday lives. Jesus lived resurrection through the injustices, illness, want, exclusion and premature death he experienced. These NL women signal resurrection through their dedication to life and their commitment to stay involved with the fishery, through their willingness to ask questions about the status quo, and through their commitment to family and community. These are small moments of resurrection lived through encounter with others and within themselves, as it was in Jesus' teaching and life. Redemption, in the Christian context, can include the words and stories of women who find resurrections amidst many deaths as symbols of redemptive hope, echoing the life of Jesus as embodied resurrection. These NL women's words in times of crisis and their work toward maintaining and cultivating hope also embody resurrection moments.

At the same time, these women's words are a reminder for those who become

aware of the fisheries crisis and other social and ecological crises happening today in Canada. The memory of this crisis and other crises with fishing, farming, land rights, and other issues allows others to fight for a sustainable existence and to become aware of the power of resilience and resistance that is embodied in the human spirit and in all life. For Christians this possibility and hope is grounded in the person of Jesus.

Women's words in the midst of a fishery crisis impact the reader to be invited to become aware, resistant and resilient in response to the realities of social and ecological challenges in Canada. These women's voices are voices of the marginalised and, thus, signal, in our social and theological dialogues, the inclusion of a new history of women's experiences and their struggle for hope. Reflection on these NL women's voices can invite dialogue and action in communities affected by social and ecological collapse, within NL and in other places. Communities can promote a gender-based awareness of the social inequities and injustices. An ecofeminist christology in this context takes into account the possibility of how theological reflection on these women's words can invite participation in a new raising of consciousness. Again, this dimension of Jesus' work was crucial to his experience of living resurrection in everyday life.

7) Christology: the interaction of the particular and the universal

How can this particular situation of NL women say something to the universal claim of redemption? In this NL context, then, and in relation to a christological view, we can see a relationship between the universal and the particular elements of redemption.

Reflection on NL women's words in this specific context of the fisheries collapse and crisis invites us to understand the broader connections between this situation and others where women struggle with similar challenges within their local situations. In this way, we can see that redemption is understood specifically, with attention to women's own cultural, social, economic, geographic and ecological circumstances. In other words these insights can be considered within the contexts of others who experience a similar crisis and explore their own possibilities in the midst of social and economic collapse within their personal lives and communities.

Feminists often challenge the notion that there can be an understanding of redemption that is universal in any sense. Such an argument claims that any claim to the universal as a part of theory undervalues the experiences of a particular people in a particular experience and creates a false claim, an appeal to a grand narrative that does not and cannot exist. How, then, can an understanding of redemption both be attentive to the importance of context-specific, particular understandings of redemption and also take into account the very real sense of the universal hope that is an important and valid dimension of redemption and the whole story of the earth?

The universal and particular dimensions of redemption are interdependent. Without a story which gives meaning there is no place where we can begin to see connections within the universal story. The universal claim to redemption is that there is a hope for wholeness. This hope for wholeness is communicated through our particular experience. The relationship between the universal and the particular is a dialectic. If you

will, the experience of resilience is grounded in the universal which then allows us to act with resistance and challenge injustice within our own specific contexts. It is not as if one existed before the other. The two are in dialogue constantly within our experiences.

Within theological reflection on redemption, the universal sense is necessary in order to have a beginning ground. Even the particulars we interpret as a universal in some ways.

There is a sense of the whole, a sense of unity in relation to redemption, for Christians grounded in the story of Jesus Christ and God's gracious act of salvation. Jesus' story invites us to see how the particulars - in all their differences - allow for other ways to then diverge and differentiate, to understand the ways in which redemption needs to be reinterpreted, rediscovered, redeemed. Redemption is the place of intersection between the universal hope of redemption as resilience that grounds and challenges Christians, and the particular application of redemption that encourages and provokes a particular lifestyle of resistance to dominant voices within a particular set of coordinates out of which we live.

Jesus' embrace of his finitude happened continuously through his life, ministry, death and resurrection as the embodiment of the wholeness of resurrection in his whole life. Here is where I look toward a new understanding of Jesus' experience of death. This can relate to a new understanding of death and the life cycle, especially relating to a christology to relate to women's words and the crisis in the NL fishery. Jesus did not have victory over death. He accepted death and transformed it and was transformed by it.

Though it was a violent and unjust death, it was transformed through his life and

precisely this everyday resistance which he lived. The resurrection, I would argue, is not the embodiment of a victory over death. It is rather the glorious embodiment of Jesus' lived life and a transformation that death brings, a transformation into new life. This memory is communicated, for Christians, through the memory of Jesus who embraced his finitude and death, though violent, through the natural cycles of life. The experience of the resurrection points back to the dangerous memory of this life lived in resistance to any isolation, lived in resistance against suffering, lived in solidarity with all life. Redemption, then, involves reconciliation with one's own finitude, coupled with radical love and resistance against all forms of human suffering.

Jesus' life is meaningful for NL fisher women's words as an affirmation firstly of their hope against hope and secondly of their refusal to let the death they encounter have the last word. Their lives, as women who resist and who find resilience in the everyday, are meaningful as we consider the meaning of Jesus' life and person.

Like Jesus, women in their lives and the whole ecological community with whom women's lives are intertwined, experience death. There is no escape from death. It is an unjust death, a death born of the unjust systems of the day. However, there is in the transformation of suffering that is born out of this encounter with death the possibility of new life. Jesus' resistance to unjust structures which led to his death is embodied in the ways women in NL respond to their exclusion in the fishery and the ongoing ecocide by making their voices heard and taking an active part in an experience of redemptive living.

Women will continue to participate in naming their own realities, as Jesus did,

from their perspective, the perspective of the excluded, the denied, those most devastated through loss of their identities. These are the people in the scriptures whom Jesus calls to be part of a new life, even to a new way of understanding our role in redemption. The women of these stories respond to that call to live the hope for redemption even in the midst of loss and despair. He calls those most broken and most abandoned. In these women's words of hope and despair, there is a cry for something more, a desire to say "yes" in the midst of death and exclusion. This is the story of who Jesus was in his life, death and resurrection and who Jesus is.

These women want a vision of promise that embraces their ecological communities, that allows them to come back to the intimate connections they held, as did their families for generations, with the fish and the waters. In the small ways of their moving forward to reestablish their connections with the sea and to not lose their interdependence with the sea, these women are living a bodily resurrection as Jesus did. This bodily resurrection is embodied with the earth. Hope is known in a real and visible way through an ability and a will to find new meaning in new ways of being involved in the fishery or by leaving the fishery to retrain in other areas. In this way, these women live a bodily resurrection in the everyday. There is hope in their individual and collective voices.

God's Call to Interdependence as Hope

Conversion is experienced, according to Schillebeeckx, in the action of being

freed for one another, freed so as to love. It is evident in Schillebeeckx's understanding of conversion and soteriology that God's redemptive presence in the universe comes to meet people in their everyday, contextual realities.

In this understanding of God's active awakening of our lives we understand that God's presence and creation in the universe represents a hope before all human hope, before hope that begins with human action of solidarity. It is necessary to acknowledge and speak about the promise of God's redemptive action beyond human efforts to make justice in the world. God's very essence, bound up with the universe as a whole creation, is created out of God's love and God's goodness. This interdependence as part of the universe represents a hope before and beyond all human endeavors.

God's Image as Being-in-Relationship

We can consider who God is and who we are out of this relationship with God through various lenses. In the context of the NL fishery, I speak of a contextual understanding of God as being-in-relationship and relate this understanding to redemption as resistance and resilience.

If we understand God as being-in-relationship with the universe, then we begin to understand that our relationship with God calls us into relationship with all that God represents and all that God creates. On the local level, we come to know God and to know God's redeeming love through the cultivation of being-in-relationship with our local communities. These communities include people, fish, water, trees and all life that

is part of our local ecosystems. The insights of my research with narratives of women's lives in this thesis brings forward the knowledge that women in the fishery are living a model of intimations of this being-in-relationship as reflective of who God is among us. They live this being-in-relationship through their connections with the sea and their understanding of its importance in their lives, their dependence upon it and the importance of keeping alive the communities of which they are a part.

God is Being-in-relationship in the NL context as an experience of the 'already' and the 'not yet' of our experiences of redemption as resistance and resilience. With this understanding of God as being-in-relationship in NL emerges resilience. God invites us to rediscover ourselves in relationship as God is. The ultimate expression of our lives as people of God is the living out of this reflection of who God is, rediscovering this being-in-relationship through community connections, through cultivating our interdependence with the fishery and other local NL ecosystems and through fostering intimacy between ourselves as human beings and other life so that we understand this God as being-in-relationship who frees us for one another.

With the knowledge of women's insights and insights about the fishery in NL we come to understand God as being-in-relationship through the awareness of the everyday as sacred and our lives as human beings as interdependent with fish, water, air, people and all life. We come to understand, as the women do, our own limits and the impact that we have on this being-in-relationship that is the essence of our lives as created by God. The failure to reflect this image of God impacts all relations with life. In the stories of

women, in their knowledge, perseverance and intimacy with life we are being called to create something new, to participate with God in our local communities in a new way of being, to authentic living as the people of God through our identity as being-in-relationship. All life in the universe reflects this reality of God's presence as being-in-relationship.

This new identity, invited by God since the beginning of time and beyond our human knowing, illuminates an everlasting resilience as the ground of who we are. In the context of injustices that women face in the fishery and in the context of the devastation of overfishing in the fishery itself, then we are called to be in solidarity with the water, the fish, the land as suffering, called to be in solidarity with women who suffer from the impact of the closure of the fishery on their communities. Theology says that creation is the self as relational. This is the 'already' of what we are called into through our relationship with God and the world, a praxis-oriented redemptive vision of hope through involvement with local and global community realities.

The 'not yet' of this identity of being-in-relationship is only available in the fragments of renewed life amidst hopelessness. It is evident in the NL women's narratives which I have brought forward that redemption remains something unreachable, ungraspable, unimaginable even within the confines of human and earthly suffering. The 'not yet' of this reflection of God's presence as being-in-relationship is everywhere in their sadness and lack of future vision. As I have said I think there are intimations of this being-in-relationship present in the words of NL fisher women and fishplant workers.

With a new attention to how women live in the fishery context and the health of the fishery itself we can move toward a living out of a new interdependence between people, the land, the fish and the water in the NL context.

This redemptive ethic of resistance can foster solidarity with women in the NL fishery and others whose voices are often buried beneath the dominant voice. With their voices heard, though this is a small beginning, women are experiencing redemption as this resilience of being-in-relationship, even when the stories are filled with suffering and sadness they are also telling of possibility and promise through bonds between women, connections with ecology and perseverance to continue and make a path of hope, provisional and fragmentary though it is, for themselves and their communities. God as being-in-relationship invites us to delve deeper into our interdependence and to understand it as the ultimate symbol of hope for our lives.

*The seed of the kingdom of God already germinates and ripens here and now on earth.*⁹

Despite the ongoing suffering in the world, Schillebeeckx says, there are present and available to us in our history fragments of *eschatological joy*.¹⁰ What is this eschatological joy in the context of women's lives and ecology in the NL fishery? This question is not easy to answer.

⁹Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 132.

¹⁰Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 834.

Eschatological joy in the context of women's words and ecology in the NL fishery is embodied in the hope yet to be fulfilled, when people rediscover the long history of connectedness with the natural world. There is joy in the resilience of the water, the ways in which life finds a way, especially when it is through the involvement of humanity in ways that build up rather than tear down. Eschatological joy, as Schillebeeckx understands it, is related to the present, an anticipation in the here and now of a hope yet to be known fully. This is our learning from the experiences of women in the NL fishery and the story of the earth as told in the fish, the waters, the ocean and the people. There is in their narratives and their lives an anticipation. There is in the waters, the ocean, and the these NL women an anticipation of a tomorrow which will be better, where they will be stronger, where communities and ecosystems are well. This is a vision of eschatological joy for the future.

It is apparent, through the context of women's lives in the NL fishery, that eschatology relates explicitly not only to the end times of the entire universe but to those definitive times of our lives where we are shaped and reshaped from experiences of crisis and change, especially in the context of social and ecological disaster. This is why the conversation on the eschatological is relevant to my understanding of redemption in relation to ecology and to women's experiences in the fishery.

Redemption flourishes with the taking of concrete actions to support what we hope for in our world, to shape the projects of community-building and ecological sustainability that will be our salvation. Women's narratives, in dialogue with

theologians' insights, teach us about the promise of such redemptive hope within the NL fishery.

Much is left to be discovered and written about the lives of women in the fishery and the ecology in NL in relation to a vision of redemption. It is my hope that women's perseverance, their hope in the everyday and their relationships of solidarity will provide a witness to a fullness of redemption yet to come. This redemptive encounter lies within our grasp, echoing God's hope for us and for our happiness as discovered in interdependent living and concrete work toward the creation of a sustainable future.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have sketched out a tentative contextual theological language for redemption as resistance and resilience in the NL fishery. I have emphasized social and ecological realities brought forth in the midst of a fisheries crisis. The purpose of this thesis has been to identify resources for a way of speaking and acting toward a redemptive hope embodied in a space of dialogue between theologians and women's voices.

Contents of the Thesis

In the first chapter of this work, I presented an outline of the NL fisheries context in which women's narratives are set. I made it evident that there is a social and ecological crisis due to the collapse and closure of the groundfish fishery and, specifically, the cod fishery. I also provided some of the reasons scientists and others consider for the failure of what was once a stable and renewable fishery. This evidence made clear the need for consideration of how women, in particular, have been an important part of the fishery for centuries but are often unrecognized in their public and private roles, within the fishery directly as participants and within the infrastructures of community roles relating to the fishery. I outlined the specific impact of globalization in the life of the fishery, especially relating to social and ecological questions. In this effort, I provided evidence for the steady decline of the fishery and the powerlessness of people in the wake of an ever more globalized fishery in NL. This background outlines the specific context in which women take on their roles and the situation to which women must respond in the fishery.

In the second chapter of the work I introduced the data of women's narratives in response to the closure of the fishery, especially in light of social and ecological questions affecting them and their communities. I began with an introduction to an understanding of redemption as transformation. From this I considered how the women in their own words reflected on a fisheries crisis and the direct impact it had on them. In this phase of the work, I drew from sociological and healthcare research to consider these women's narratives as a source for theological reflection. I demonstrated that the structural

adjustment programs and retraining options provided by government was without input by women and often presented barriers to women in gendered ways. Women responded to this reality with despair that revealed their hope for something more within their everyday lives.

I found in the collective analysis of their narratives a sense of futility, frustration and hopelessness in the moment of such a crisis. However, stronger and more persistent than this despair is hope in their words and visions. This promise of tomorrow is redemptive in that women continue to face the challenges of everyday life, to do the work that needs to be done and to hope for the possibility of strong communities, new possibilities within the fishery and outside of the fishery and through connections with women who want to build a new tomorrow by getting involved. Women have ideas for what is possible but need to be invited to be part of building a sustainable hope for the future. I showed how women's narratives are ripe for theological reflection and how redemption is an appropriate language for this theological inquiry.

In the third chapter of this work I brought forward insights from theologians Edward Schillebeeckx, Ivone Gebara and Rosemary Radford Ruether with regard to a socially-engaged understanding of redemption. Through the development of particular aspects of these theologians' understandings of redemptive hope, I made connections with the possibility of an emergent hope within the NL fisheries context, especially in relation to women's narratives and ecological questions.

I then considered a socially-engaged redemption that I saw emerging through a

dialogue between women's narratives and theologians' insights on redemption. I presented intimations of a contextual construction of redemption as resistance and resilience in the NL fishery, to be developed in the fourth chapter. I began to show how the dialogue between these three theologians and women's narratives in the NL fishery point to the need for a new understanding of redemptive hope, a contextual understanding in light of women's experiences and ecology. This work made evident the need to build a contextual vision of redemption drawn from the women's insights, in their involvement with their communities, and their concern for the ecological wholeness within the fishery.

In Chapter four, through a dialogue with these three theologians and women's narratives I constructed a contextual understanding of redemption as resistance and resilience, bringing forward God's interdependence with the universe as a source for redemptive living and considering Jesus as living an embodied resilience and resistance in touch with an ethic of interdependence with all life. This work in chapter four demonstrated the imminent and transcendent aspects of redemptive living as alive in the hope for a sustainable future within the context of NL women and ecology.

I presented redemption as resistance and resilience in relation to the transformation of suffering, the inclusion of women's voices, ecology and christology. The resilience of God's grace, as interdependent with the universe, with our local ecosystems, with humanity, is abundant in our willingness to take up an ethic of resistance. This means (1) cultivating a spirituality of resistance in our everyday actions, (2) responding in a redemptive way to globalization and its impact on people and the

earth and (3) calling for attention to the importance of sustaining and helping community and ecological well-being life to flourish in the midst of crisis.

We are called, as human beings, made in the image of God as Being-in-relationship, to explore our interdependence with the earth through an ethic of solidarity with our local communities. We live this redemptive ethic of redemption as resistance and resilience when we (1) resist destruction toward the earth and people and (2) build up resources for community and ecological well-being and (3) listen to women's voices in their local contexts. Redemption invites us toward redemptive living in our social and ecological times of transition and crisis through a prophetic word, through the reawakening of a memory of who we are in relationship with God, Jesus and the earth.

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