

*Tactics and technology: cultural resistance at the
Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp*

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abstract

My dissertation examines women's unique techniques and cultures of communication at the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in Newbury, England between 1982-1985. Often referred to by participants as one of the "last movements before the internet," I look at Greenham as a site through which to think about how activists' communication and cultural practices in the 1980s shaped activist uses of the worldwide web and other new media technologies central to contemporary struggles. I argue that social movement media such as videos, newsletters, postcards, songs and songbooks both create movement culture at the time of their production, and carry movement ideas and their infrastructures into the future. A story told orally, a songbook, a manifesto, a recorded interview, a picture of a mass demonstration, all circulate across time and space. Through this movement, ideas and artifacts are transformed and incorporated as different people encounter and make meaning out of these cultural texts in different ways.

Ma dissertation considère les méthodes uniques de communication de femmes activistes lors du Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp de Newbury, Angleterre, de 1982 à 1985. Greenham, que les participantes ont souvent appelé la première phase des derniers mouvements avant Internet, est un site permettant de penser la communication et les pratiques culturelles aux fins militantes des années 1980, dans un contexte d'usages activistes du Web et autres technologies nouveaux médias cruciales aux débats contemporains. J'affirme que les médias de mouvement social comme la vidéo, le bulletin d'information, les cartes postales, les chansons et les recueils de chansons créent une culture de mouvement au moment de leur production, et amènent ensuite les idées de ces mouvements et de leur infrastructure dans le futur. Une histoire racontée, un recueil de chansons, un manifeste, une entrevue enregistrée, une photo d'une manifestation circulent tous dans le temps et l'espace. À l'aide de cette mobilité, les idées et les artéfacts se transforment et s'incorporent au fur et à mesure que les gens découvrent et donnent différents sens à ces textes culturels.

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introduction

Studying Greenham

"[Greenham] became a 24 hours a day women's centre, or perhaps a 365 days a year women's conference, bringing in older and very young women from all over the country and, increasingly, some working class and Black women—and curious semi-lesbian culture, as the 'ordinary' mums, and grandmums and daughters, fell in love with each other."

-Ruth Wallsgrove, Feminist Writer & Occasional Greenham Camper

"The word 'Greenham' came to be understood not as the common near Newbury, nor even as the USAF base for Cruise, but as the women's peace camp."

-Sasha Roseneil, Greenham Camper & Researcher

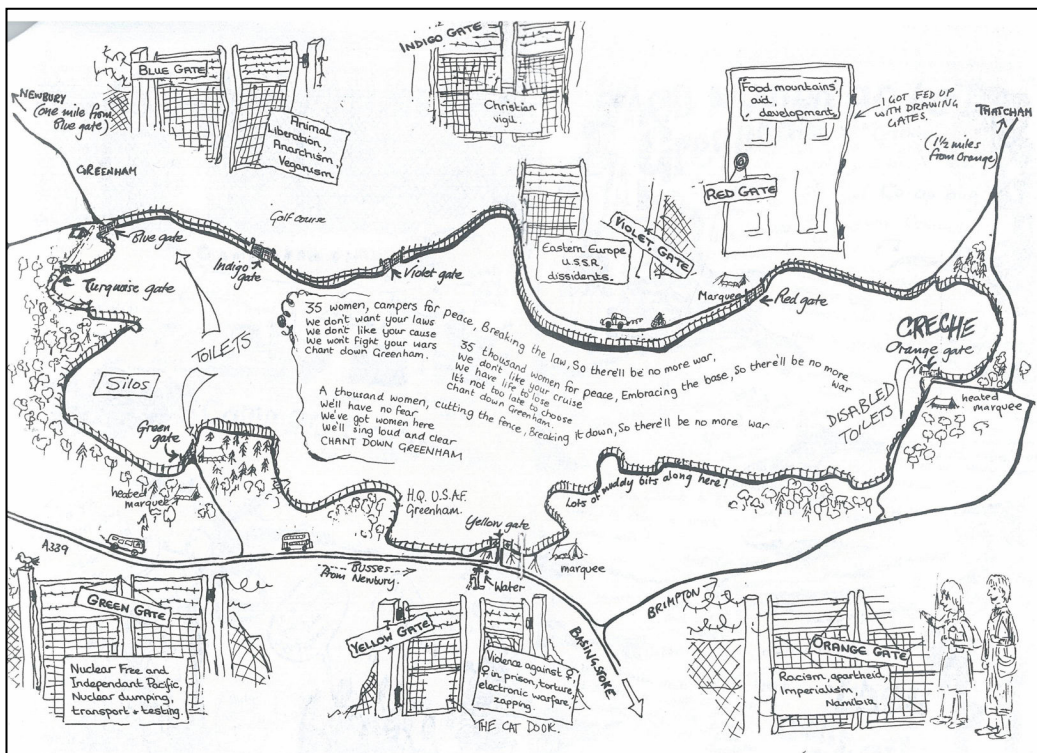


Figure 1_Map of Greenham

The story of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp always begins the same: On September 5, 1981 a group of women ended their march from Cardiff, Wales outside the Greenham Common United States Air Force base in Newbury, England in protest of the 1979 NATO decision allowing US nuclear cruise missiles to be housed at military bases in Europe. Greenham Common was to be the first base to receive missiles, with over 100 warheads scheduled to arrive. The group of around 35 marchers, mostly women, demanded a televised debate with the Ministry of Defense over the decision to site cruise missiles in England. The women's request was not granted, so they refused to leave. As supporters and supplies came in, an encampment soon emerged. In 1982 the camp became women-only and adopted the name 'Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.' By the end of the year protest events at the camp drew thousands of women and international media coverage. Whereas in 1980 surveys found that 41% of people in Britain did not know that nuclear weapons were even stored in their country, by 1983 only 6% of people had not heard of Greenham and did not know of the missiles stationed there (cited in Roseneil 1995, 169).

Participation in the peace camp swelled in 1983 and 1984. At times there were hundreds of women camping at Greenham, with thousands more supporters and visitors. Headlines screamed: 'Camp that will not go away'; 'Greenham numbers swell to 1,000'; '475 held in Cruise fury.'¹ During these peak years of the protest camp Greenham was flooded with reporters producing sensationalized stories of camp life and camp inhabitants. The camp was often described as dirty, unsanitary, messy or even unfit for living. Woman protesters were generally either

¹ *Times*, May 2, 1983; *Guardian* July 9, 1983.

heralded as selfless mothers fighting for peace, or more often (especially by the tabloid press), as man-hating lesbians flaunting their sexuality, acting aggressively and sucking dole money from the State.² The unconventionality of life at a protest camp—and particularly a women’s-only protest camp with a large lesbian population—brought stereotypes and normative ideas about domesticity, femininity and heterosexuality to the fore. Confronted with stories and images of women politically organizing and living separate from men produced fear and anxiety, common in responses to feminist separatism, yet never before engaged on this scale in the United Kingdom. Even supportive peace groups like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament wavered on the issue with some members publicly denouncing the women-only policy.

Greenham, as a place-based protest, was separated both geographically and ideologically from other spaces. Women were geographically separated from their other homes and communities. They were separated from the urban epicenters of England’s political activity. And they were separated from men. Each of these separations powerfully shaped the Greenham protests, providing a particular, material context for women’s activisms. The site of the camp itself served as the main arena for the creation and development of new practices. As Sasha Roseneil writes, “Whilst the symbolic community of Greenham stretched far beyond the camp, encompassing thousands of women in the Greenham network, the camp had a materiality as a community based in the spatial proximity of its members” (1995, 75). Once there were enough women living at and coming to Greenham, the base was divided into numerous camps set up

² I will discuss this at length in the chapter one. See also Cresswell (1995) and Young (1999).

outside the access gates to the military base. Each gate camp—named after a color of the rainbow—had a unique personality. Greenham became a space for political, cultural and sexual experimentation. As Roseneil argues, the absence of an ethical framework imposed upon the peace camps from the outside meant that “women at Greenham had to invent their own set of values to guide their actions” (2000, 114). Autonomy and personal responsibility emerged as two of the “common values” developed at Greenham. While women took responsibility for their own actions and beliefs, they also valued “reflexivity and openness to change” (118). Visitors that came to Greenham for events were encouraged to come up with their own actions, contribute to those already under works and generally help out to keep the camp running. Those living at the camp and those in the support networks organizing logistics sought to break down divisions between organizers and participants. Operational tasks such as cooking, cleaning or digging a ‘shit pit’ were taken on by volunteers.

Through living, working and protesting women developed their own styles, languages and symbols of protest. They created a discursive space that celebrated, contested and re-imagined women’s roles and relationships. From life-sized snakes to revived suffragette histories to bolt cutters for taking down the perimeter fence code named ‘black cardigans,’ Greenham protesters culled together Goddess mythologies, feminist spirituality and direct action protest cultures. These creatures, symbols, stories and codes were scattered across the camp’s newsletters, promotional material and demonstration banners. They traveled by word of mouth around the base, through telephone trees connecting support groups and, at times, via the mainstream press. Greenham women’s re-

imagining of everyday and protest activities also involved engagements and interventions with the technologies of the military base around which their peace encampment was established. From wrapping the perimeter fence in brightly colored wool, to snipping bits of wire for constructing cooking grills, to taking down over three miles of fencing while dressed as witches for the Halloween 1983 action, Greenham's encounters with the technologies of the base were accompanied by analyses of property ownership, the exploitation of resources, and the practice of non-violence. In her controversial and highly influential "Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway situated Greenham protesters as "displaced and so unnatural women ...who read cyborg webs of power so very well" (1991, 153). Haraway was interested in Greenham as a peace camp on an industrial-military site from which the cyborgian feminist figures she imagined were being born. Greenham's rich musical life also formed a significant part of this creative resistance. Singing became integrated as both a protest tactic and daily ritual. Women sang in blockades, police vans, courtrooms, prison cells, around campfires and walks around the nine-mile long perimeter fence that encircled the base. A plethora of original, re-written and parody protest songs emerged alongside adopted (and at times adapted) women's music anthems by Peggy Seager, Naomi Littlebear Martinez and Judy Small. Some women also practiced keening, a deep, long moaning sound used traditionally in Ireland for mourning the dead. Keening created an affective resonance, garnering the attention and often emotion of others without the use of words, images or symbols.

These creative, often sensory-based, direct action tactics and strategies of protest have led historians, rhetoricians, sociologists, media scholars, and even

geographers to document and analyze the Greenham protests. At the same time, anti-nuclear, anti-war, feminist and more recently, alter-globalization activists, mark Greenham as a crucial point in the histories of struggle they inherit (and construct). Greenham is commonly seen as turning point, a crystallization of diverse strands of British politics coming together in the space of the camp and the expanse of its network. Often referred to by participants as part of the “last movement before the internet” Greenham provides a site through which to think about how activists’ communication and cultural practices in the 1980s shaped activist uses of the internet and other new media technologies that have become central to contemporary struggles. In addition, Greenham women’s communication practices show how the rituals, conversations and creative production involved in collective living are often the very means through which movements become sustainable. As one *City Limits* reporter posed the question in the December 16-23, 1983 edition, “Will protests ever be the same again after Greenham Common?”

In a telling reply, Iris Marion Young recently argued in an article on our current security state that by the early 1990s the creative civil disobedience of Greenham Common and the broader women’s peace movement had been “all but forgotten” (Young 2003, 1). Young argues that the women’s peace movement’s gendered analyses linking male domination and militarism have faded from feminist forums, while organized violence, discourses of state security and protectionism have taken on new and often frightening forms (1). Young calls on feminist scholars to return to questions of gender and sexuality in relation to the post-9/11 emergence of the security state. Likewise, the anti-nuclear activists, like

Greenham women, that informed Donna Haraway's conception of the feminist cyborg, are largely forgotten. As cyberfeminism became a recognizable subfield of study, scholars have concerned themselves with pressing questions around the proliferation of artificial reproduction technologies and the spread of the internet as a primary mode of social communication and information gathering.³ These important concerns came to overshadow scholars' interests in feminist anti-nuclear activism, considered far more relevant in the early 1980s.

Yet, while women's anti-nuclear activism of the early 1980s may be "all but forgotten" from historical and social movement narratives of both militarism and anti-militarism, echoes of 'Greenham' remain—in expected and unexpected places. For example, Greenham has been mentioned by reporters covering nonviolent actions, has come up in protocols for policing demonstrations and has been invoked in parliamentary debates over what constitutes terrorism. Popular culture references to Greenham can also be found in places ranging from the reality television show *Big Brother*, to the critically acclaimed film *This is England*. To mark the 25th anniversary of Greenham's beginning, the *Guardian* newspaper held a multi-media exhibition and sponsored the creation of an interactive website documenting the peace camp. Much of the material for this exhibition and website was culled from the *Guardian's* own vast archive of Greenham coverage. Within current anti-nuclear and environmental movements, Greenham serves as a reference point for direct action, non-violent civil disobedience and creative protest. For example, Greenham was referenced in the

³ See for example, major collections including Mary Flanagan and Austin Booth, eds. (2002) and Susan Hawthorne and Renate Klein (1999).

public invitation to participate in *Faslane 365*, a year long demonstration against British nuclear submarines and in the promotional material for the 2007 Camp for Climate Action—both protests that received national and international press coverage. As Greenham emerges in this range of contexts and spaces, it functions simultaneously as an intimate memory, a social movement legacy, and part of a broader public imaginary.

Just as Young argued that the voices of 1980s women protesters echoed critiques of militarism from the early 20th century, her reference to Greenham's humorous and heroic activism speaks toward the function of cultural memory—of how memory passes through culture even when it is left out of the history books. In their discussion of the role that cultural memory plays in historical formations, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith distinguish “archives of cultural memory” from “traditional archives of history.” While like traditional history archives, archives of cultural memory include stories, images and documents of the past; they also contain ‘acts of transfer’ or what James Young has termed ‘received history’ (cited in Hirsch and Smith 2002, 9). In Hirsch and Smith's words, these archives of cultural memory “include the addressee or cowitness as well as the witness. An act of telling and listening, performing and watching” (9). Cultural memory, they argue, is the product of individual and collective experiences “articulated through technologies and media that shape even as they transmit memory” (5). In terms of Greenham, an archive of cultural memory consists of both the passed along (and always mediated) experiences of participants, as well as the cultural artifacts participants created and circulated. As traditional archives often erase or ‘forget’ histories of the oppressed and struggles of resistance, a

recuperation of both the agents and objects of cultural transfer can intervene in “hegemonic cultural memory” (11).

My dissertation participates in this practice of a feminist recuperation of cultural memory by focusing on Greenham as a ‘movement culture.’ Here I mobilize T.V. Reed’s conception of movement cultures as subcultural spaces, as discursive sites for the production of cultural objects, and as resistance movements whose ideas, values, objects, roles and relationships leave lasting impressions on the broader culture (2005, xvi). Like Reed, I work alongside Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison’s understanding of movement cultures, synthesizing social movement studies and cultural studies approaches to formulate an analysis of Greenham Common that refuses to separate ‘culture’ from ‘politics’ (1998, 7). More than instrumental tools, rituals or resources for mobilization, I argue that Greenham women’s cultural artifacts and communication practices were the very means by which their politics garnered shape and meaning. To do so, I proceed by employing an approach I have termed ‘activist historiography.’ This approach has three primary characteristics.

First, it is necessarily interdisciplinary. Scholarship on social movements is carried out in a variety of different disciplines, each with a unique perspective on particular aspects of social movement culture. Research on Greenham includes analyses of Greenham as a geographic space (Creswell 1996), a space of embodied feminist rhetoric (Laware 2004) and postmodern symbolism (Roseneil 1999), as well as a site of the emergence of queer feminisms (Roseneil 2000). There are analyses that situate Greenham in the histories of women’s anti-militarism activism (Liddington 1989), that discuss the legal implications of

women's civil disobedience (Barker 1992), and that investigate press coverage of the Greenham protests (Couldry 1999, Young 1990). Each of these modes of investigation offer insight on the ideas, symbols and values that constitute a movement culture.

Second, activist historiography involves locating, utilizing and constructing archives of subjugated knowledge. My study of Greenham involved extensive archival research conducted over a three year period in England. Materials gathered include programs from mass demonstrations, songbooks, journal entries, camp newsletters, press releases, radio interviews, letters to the editor and publicity pamphlets. In addition to primary materials produced by Greenham protesters, the dissertation draws from secondary texts that contain writing by and about Greenham women including magazine articles, newspaper articles, and documents from related organizations and events. These materials are stored primarily at three archival collections in England, The Women's Library, Feminist Archive South and The British Library. At times I supplement this archival research with information garnered from correspondences with Greenham participants. These materials form my own archive of Greenham, documenting both a historical movement and a cultural memory. Its contents are made up of traditional and non-traditional material artifacts.

Third, activist historiography situates protesters' ideas and artifacts both in the context of their time of production and in the context of contemporary social movement cultures. At the time of production, a movement culture is shaped by elements of popular culture and mass media, as well as by State policies, subcultures and other movement cultures. As T.V. Reed argues, movement

cultures are generally formed from “existing cultural structures” to support a new movement’s “goals, ideas, and strategies” (2005, 14). Likewise, Eyerman and Jamison write that social movements are “emergent spaces which are carved out of existent contexts” (1998, 21). In terms of analyzing materials, then, an activist historiography calls for an examination of how social movement media such as videos, newsletters, postcards, songs and songbooks both create movement culture at the time of their production, and carry movement ideas and their infrastructures into the future. A story told orally, a songbook, a manifesto, a recorded interview, a picture of a mass demonstration, all circulate across time and space. Through this movement, ideas and artifacts are transformed and incorporated as different people encounter and make meaning out of these cultural texts in different ways.⁴

Over the past ten years the significance of autonomous media, creative direct action and diversity of tactics approaches has been a prominent focus of study. Greenham offers a site through to think about how activists’ communication and cultural practices in the 1980s shaped activist uses of the internet and other new media technologies that have become central to contemporary struggles. Greenham’s web-like communication infrastructures, affective bonds between protesters, and activist uses of scarce resources all pre-date the rise of ‘new media.’ As such, I examine these women’s activist communication and cultural practices to tell a story of how Greenham set the stage for current forms of activist practice. This involves, in part, a consideration

⁴ See De Certeau (1984) on readings as a creative practice. Rebecca Solnit (2005) offers a provocative analysis of how social movement cultural texts move across time and place, changing as they travel.

how affect, feelings, emotions and ideas move, traveling into new social movements.

Studying Affect

Studies of movement cultures attempt to bridge conceptions of collective behaviour and resource mobilization drawn from the field of social movement studies with notions of affect and emotion derived from cultural theorists. Eyerman and Jamison, working within the field of sociology, formulated the term cognitive practice as an alternative to the prevalent notion of ‘framing’ (1998, 22). In contrast to what they saw as these somewhat static notions of cultural inception characteristic of ‘framing,’ Eyerman and Jamison’s term cognitive praxis refers to “the active creation of knowledge or consciousness” done by social movements (22). It prioritizes the ways in which social movement culture “is neither internal nor external, individual nor collective, but rather an active process of recombination” (22). While I support this view of social movement culture, the term ‘cognitive praxis’ carries with it a (latent) distinction between ‘the cognitive’ and ‘the emotional’ that places more value and focus on the former.

I would suggest that it is the emotional or emotive dimensions of social movement cultures that are actually at stake in any analysis of how political ideas are generated, shaped and transmitted. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Greenham women’s protests was their refusal to separate culture from politics, to embrace reason at the expense of emotion. As Sasha Roseneil has argued, “It was a principle of Greenham that the realm of the ‘non-rational’ ... should be

accorded significance as a source of adequate knowledge in decision-making and in daily life” (1995, 69).

Introducing the concept of “intelligent feelings,” Greenham camper and writer Anne Seller suggests that the nuclear problem is not the result of “faulty arguments” but of people’s “failure to feel” (31). She wrote:

I want to say felt reality is the reality that matters, is our most reliable epistemological device for determining what there really is and what it is really like. But I also want to avoid the reason/emotion split. Perhaps if we had intelligent feelings, or sensitive intelligence, we would not experience that internal war. Example: “reason” tells me that the fate of the world lies in the hands of some immensely powerful men who are unable to break out of the structures that they work and think in. Therefore, it tells me, whether we have two years or twenty, our own lifetimes or the lifetime of the world, there is nothing we can do, so we should forget about it. Emotion, faced with this circumstance, gives us fearsome nightmares, a sense that there is no point in anything anymore. Intelligent feeling? ... a generalized depression becomes a focused anger, and that, sometimes, shows us what to do (1985, 27).

Here Seller proposes that it is neither simply “reason” which legitimates nuclear proliferation nor “emotion” that denies its necessity. However we can and do often ‘feel’ that something is wrong with the rationalization for nuclear proliferation. This knowledge based on lived experience provides an alternative

epistemology and an impetus to act. It is from our “intelligent feelings” that we garner energy to intervene into the ideological and material (or material-ideological) nuclear system.

While a great deal of feminist work has been done on the roles emotions play in feminists’ politics, Social Movement Studies has made few offerings on the subject. Moreover, researchers in the field rarely position their analyses in relation to feminism. Concepts such as “reframing” emotions (Snow and Benford 1988 cited in Flam) and generating “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1982 cited in Flam) do provide insight as to how social movements generate affect. Describing how these concepts function in the movement context, Helena Flam writes that “self-defeating feelings” are suppressed and in their place “new, assertive emotions” are proposed (2005, 24). However, studies such as Flam’s that engage these concepts often hold onto a reason/emotion dichotomy that subordinates feelings to cognition. Eyerman and Jamison themselves point toward this tendency to ignore emotion, arguing that movement culture “is cognitive, but it also draws on more emotive aspects of human consciousness” (1998, 23).

While it is not Eyerman and Jamison’s intention to sideline the emotional, the term ‘cognitive’ in itself excludes the emotional. As such, I prefer a concept that incorporates (or refuses to separate) the cognitive and the emotional, such as Seller’s concept of ‘intelligent feelings.’ Seller’s concept focuses on the function of affect and emotion in group interactions. She suggests that it is through the process of learning to communicate your feelings, share them with others, and collectively reflect on them, that knowledge about the world is produced. She writes:

We owe it to each other ... not just to explore our feelings, to make each other comfortable, but also because our responses are responses *to* things in the world. In paying them heed, we pay heed to a way of finding out what the world is like and how to change it (1985, 31).

For Seller, the production of knowledge is inextricably linked to collectivity. The discovery of, and participation in, community processes provides “the opportunity to educate our feeling” (31). Such emotional conversions could be read as an application of feeling rules or a reframing of emotion. However, what is at stake in these women’s articulations is not only the kind or type of emotion one experiences. Rather, it is the act of feeling itself.⁵

Learning to feel and learning how to feel with others, was at the heart of Greenham women’s politics. And, as many social movement researchers have recently argued, feeling may lay at the heart of protest communities more broadly. James Jasper argues that, “Emotions do not merely accompany our deepest desires and satisfactions, they constitute them, permeating our ideas, identities, and interests. They are ... the ‘glue’ of solidarity—and what mobilizes conflict.” (1998, 399). Yet researchers, Jasper claims, “Trot out emotions only to study Nazis, moral panics, and other movements they dislike” (420-421). Jasper argues that social scientists, particularly those that are sympathetic to social justice

⁵ Sasha Roseneil discusses the role of affect at Greenham, posing a similar objection to social movement theorizations that put forward the rational choice framework of resource mobilization theory (1995, 59). While Roseneil adopts the notion of cognitive praxis, her work is deeply attuned to and concerned with affect, emotion and intuition. She thus draws out from the concepts of cognitive praxis and collective identity formation their potential to incorporate the so-called ‘non-rational’ elements of politics. I want to push a bit further on this, refusing a divide between the ‘emotional’ and the ‘rational’ (69).

causes, veer away from the emotional dynamics of radical politics as they “assume that their rationality is somehow at stake” (429-421). While this isn’t quite how I would depict the problem, there are far more insightful studies on emotion in the Christian Right than any other group, among them is Linda Kintz’s insightful study of emotion and politics in Right-wing America. Kintz uses the concept of resonance to discuss how political passion is intensified when people are linked together “by feelings aroused and organized to saturate the most public, even global, issues” (1997, 6). For Kintz, an examination of the non-rational, affective dimension of collective identity formation should be placed at the centre of our studies of political communities, which are never comprised of homogenous groups (4-5). This kind of examination can reveal some of the ways in which emotion functions to collectivize people across difference.

Working with another population, Lawrence Grossberg introduces his notion of affect in studies of rock music fans. He develops the concept of ‘mattering maps’ that are formed from our affective alliances toward particular activities, practices and identities (1991, 59). While not articulated directly in relation to social movements, the concept of mattering maps can be employed in studies of diverse subcultures—including social movement cultures. Sara Ahmed also offers a discussion of collectivity within an investigation of emotion. Like others working on emotion, much of Ahmed’s work focuses on the circulation of emotion in the production of racism and fear. Ahmed looks at how emotions get oriented toward objects and ideas. She examines the ways in which objects and ideas can become saturated with affects. As they circulate they gain new meanings and forge new relationships.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Ahmed offers one of the few theoretical analyses of emotions in feminist community formation. She explores feminists' feelings of belonging and not belonging. While she is speaking broadly of feminism and is writing about feminism in the 21st century, her discussion helps to conceptualize the kinds of emotional cultures and transmissions that I am interested in examining. Her analysis of feminist community formation makes two important points that shape my study of Greenham women's communication practices. For this reason, I look at length at her discussion of feminist community. She writes:

Through the work of listening to others, of hearing the force of their pain and the energy of their anger, of learning to be surprised by all that one feels oneself to be against; through all of this, a 'we' is formed and an attachment is made ... Here, you might say, one moves towards others, others who are attached to feminism, as a movement away from that which we are against. ... In the forming and deforming of attachments: in the writing, conversations, the doing, the work, feminism moves, and is moved ... More than anything, it is in the alignment of the 'we' and the 'I', the feminist subject with the feminist collective, an alignment which is imperfect and hence generative, that a new grammar of social existence may yet be possible (2004, 188-189).

First, Ahmed argues that collective formations emerge out of "the writing, conversations, the doing, the work" (188). Ahmed argues that such dialogical practices both generate and sever people's attachments to each other, as well as to

the ideas (and ideals) of the feminist communities they are attached to. As women at Greenham were nearly always around other women, a variety of conversations would take place in a single day. Conversation topics could range from discussing the last action, to debating waged labor, to deciding who would make the tea. Through these interactions, especially as they occurred repeatedly over time, women fostered diverse relationships. There were shared jokes and stories, along with persistent disagreements. Conversations shaped women's feelings towards each other, as well as towards ideas, activities and objects. As Greenham women spent much of their time actively doing things together (whether cooking, blockading or fetching water), connections emerged through engaging in particular tasks and actions. Whether ritualized or random, this collective work demanded and facilitated collaborations. In addition, many women interacted daily with soldiers and occasionally, especially at actions, with police officers. Differences in how women engaged these 'authorities' were largely shaped by other differences between women.

This leads to the second point in Ahmed's analysis that my dissertation explores. Ahmed argues that the alignment of the individual with the collective is "imperfect and hence generative." No two bodies attach to feminism or a feminist community in the same way, nor do they ally perfectly with each other. Disputes and tensions are as much a part of "doing the work" as consensus and conviviality. The asymmetry of how individuals in a community attach to each other, to that community, to those outside of it, and to related activities and objects generates questions about what Ahmed has elsewhere termed "the differences that matter" (1998). In the case of Greenham women, a number of

significant differences arose between and among protesters as they engaged in the daily work that constituted life at the camp. I take these differences as a generative site that shaped and sustained Greenham's dynamic movement culture.

Some of the major differences that mattered at Greenham involved differences in race, ethnicity and class. While Greenham—and the women's peace movement more broadly—has been historicized as a 'white middle-class movement' in the U.K. and the United States, I approach the camp and the support network as a "white majority women's movement," rather than a "white women's movement." This distinction calls attention to the significance of foregrounding questions of 'race' and racialization at Greenham. In my study, I aim to examine Greenham in a way that makes visible how women's diverse experiences continually gave shape to the movement. In particular, I am concerned with how different women of color's active participation at the camp, in the support network and in related organizations, both challenged and inspired women at Greenham. I am interested in the divergences as well as the overlaps in critiques of Greenham offered by different women of color, as well as in the various (class, national, geographic) locations from which these critiques were raised.

In both the United States and the United Kingdom there were a number of women of color working and often actively shaping the anti-nuclear movement. In the United States prominent Black feminist activists including Angela Davis, Alice Walker and Sonia Sanchez were visibly engaged in early 1980s nuclear protests, writing, giving public talks and making speeches at rallies. In the UK, a number of prolific non-white women were also active participants in the anti-

nuclear movement including Wilmette Brown and Amanda Hassan. The analyses and perspectives these anti-imperialist, anti-racist feminists brought to the movement provided participants with ideas to reflect on and helped refine many women's positions.

For Amanda Hassan, making links between local and global struggles against state and colonial violence was necessary for the advancement of the Peace Movement. Hassan called on CND, Greenham and the Peace Movement as a whole, to address what it meant by 'Peace.' She argued that peace needed to be redefined "not only as an absence of bombs, but as an absence of violence, organised, encouraged and perpetuated first of all by the State" (1984, 6). Struggles in Central and Latin America needed to be linked to issues of US military expansion in England. Similarly, Wilmette Brown's book *Black Women and the Peace Movement*, had a profound affect on Hassan as well as many other women active in the Peace Movement, particularly black women who often felt marginalized, misrepresented, mistreated or simply ignored. Hassan wrote that reading Brown's book was like receiving a gift; it was "the key which put all the pieces together" (8). For Hassan, speaking out about these connections and links—which both she and Brown were actively doing—gave confidence to others and made anti-racist work possible.

Second, I want to open up space to think about whiteness as a relational category and as a national, ethnic and racial marker that remains invisible if not explicitly addressed. Here I also want to call attention to how whiteness is made static when simply pronounced as a descriptive that carries with it a fixed assumption of class and national belonging. While many of the white women at

Greenham were middle-class, heterosexual English women, many others were not. A number of white women came from working-class backgrounds. Some women were Irish, others Jewish (both groups that experienced oppressive behavior at the camp). And the majority of women were not heterosexual. These differences compound monolithic notions of whiteness. They also serve as a reminder that while categories of both ‘women of color’ and ‘white women’ sometimes need to be mobilized in order to make political claims, it is important not to forget that people are complex. Avery Gordon introduced the term “complex personhood” to describe how people are “beset by contradictions.” People are always more than social categories (1997, 4-5).

At the same time, I try to keep the white supremacism of 1980s England in the foreground of this study. As the title of Paul Gilroy’s 1987 book put it simply, “There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack.”⁶ In the early 1980s, Black and Third World feminist criticism proliferated. Calls for a recognition of how British colonial legacies impacted current conditions of racism and poverty came from a diversity of people ranging from postcolonial scholars to anti-Apartheid activist. Likewise, coalitions across race, class and gender emerged and disappeared. Just as in feminist activist histories more broadly, at Greenham there were white women with varying degrees of consciousness and commitment toward issues of racism, imperialism and poverty. Likewise, white women’s efforts to forge

⁶ For a discussion of race, gender and nation in the UK in relation to Greenham, see Amos and Parmar (1984). Amos and Parmar pose a number of important challenges and concerns, calling for a more strident anti-imperialist politics in the British peace movement. Interestingly, however, some of the objections they raise were based on misinformation about Greenham. The solidarity politics and analyses of Empire being formed at Greenham were often not the visible parts of the protests. As such, Amos and Parmar’s claims about the lack of Greenham women’s involvement in other projects is often thought by Greenham participants and other critics to be overstated in this article.

dialogues and coalitions with women of color were met with celebration, hesitation, repute and failure. The more context and detail that can be brought into an analysis of specific political community formations (and dissolutions), the more nuance can be given to how and when differences in social movements are generated, as well as to how and when these differences matter. Thus, in viewing Greenham as a ‘white majority movement,’ I approach it as a site through which white supremacism was both perpetuated and contested.

In 1987 a split at the Greenham peace camp occurred in which women from Yellow Gate separated from the other gates after a series of ongoing disputes that culminated in an incident regarding finances and racial politics. The controversy surrounding the disputes, and the stark differences in women’s accounts of what happened, call for an extensive and careful study of the split. As my analysis focuses on the peak years of the camp between 1982 and 1985, I do not consider this dispute here. Also, while the differences between individual gates is significant, throughout my study, I generally refer to Greenham as a whole, only distinguishing between gates when the context of my analysis calls for a more nuanced discussion of camp or gate personalities.

Both Yellow (the main) gate and Blue gate lasted until the base was closed. As the main gate, Yellow gate was the most visited and transient camp. Women there often hosted the press, international and male visitors. Also, located off a main road, blue gate attracted younger women and developed more of a punk anarchist environment than other gates. Green Gate, had a strictly women-only policy and all times and was nestled more deeply in the woods away from soldiers and surrounded by the natural environment of the common. Women here

were often more likely to be engaged in eco-feminist and spiritualist practices such as Wicca and (neo-)Paganism. Orange, Violet, Red and Woad gate were set up a bit more sporadically. Many women's groups who regularly came to visit Greenham would return to the same gate each time, developing affection for their smaller camp (75-82). Roseneil argues that "the establishment of a number of gates served to create physical and discursive space for the management of differences between women at Greenham" which strengthened the camp. Yet, at the same time, it "opened up lines of fracture within the camp, above all between Yellow Gate and the rest of the camp" (82).

While I want to complicate any universal understanding of 'Greenham' or 'Greenham women', I also seek to construct a broader vision of this social movement as what Scott Uzelman calls a "communicative phenomenon" (2005, 18). Here I follow Uzelman's vision of social movements as "dependent upon the establishment and maintenance of local spaces and diffuse networks of communication through which communities are imagined, developed and mobilized for action" (18). In terms of questions of place, it is most often the relation between 'Greenham' as a local space of protest, and 'Greenham' as a diffuse network of protesters that interests me. While I privilege the space of the camp as a site of communication and cultural production, I am at the same time interested in how ideas and artifacts circulated, constructing Greenham as an imagined community—or, in the words of its participants, as an ever widening web.⁷

⁷ The 1985 December demonstration and gathering was titled 'Widening the Web', a phrase used to reflect the growing Greenham network and the call on women to forge more links between

Another highly contested and controversial set of differences generated between women at Greenham regarded the question and practice of separatism. The issue of Greenham as a women's-only camp was the focus of many conversations, newspapers articles and movement publications on Greenham. An investigation of the complex dynamics of Greenham's separatism and the anxiety it caused both interpersonally and structurally, could easily be the focus of an entire study. For the most part, I treat Greenham's separatism as a constitutive element of their protest, rather than a strategy that is up for debate. My approach to separatism is largely informed by the work of Marilyn Frye. Frye conceptualizes women's separations as both an act of controlling access and of seizing the power of definition (1983, 107). By determining who can and cannot access your physical space (here the peace camp), women are able to create a discursive space in which they can engage in new roles and relations, granting themselves "definitional authority" (107). By refiguring their roles as wives, mothers, sisters and lovers, women change the very meaning of the word 'woman', restructuring social reality (107). Frye argues that women's separation causes anxiety precisely because it regards women taking power and cutting off access to men.

While Greenham women's separation from men was systematic and explicit, it was also always significantly incomplete. Regular visitors were constantly coming to Greenham from across England and other nations. Women campers took trips to major cities for waged work, political events and visits with

nuclear militarization, imperialism and racism. See also Roseneil (1995, 103) and my discussion in chapter three on spider and web symbols.

lovers, family and friends. Male supporters sometimes came to Greenham during the day as most gates women's-only policy applied to men staying overnight at the camp.⁸ There were actions in which men participated by assisting with child care and other support work. Of course, not all men who participated did so in a way that respected women's mandates, nor was men's participation always welcomed by all women. After the decision to become women only, there still existed a range of views on the practicalities and purposes of separatism.

Perhaps most significantly, women's lives at the camp were never separate from the life on the base. The material juxtaposition of these two living environments shaped camper's daily lives. Women constantly interacted with soldiers and the physical materials of the base—its nine mile perimeter fence, rows of razor wire, concrete buildings and large armored vehicles. At the same time, women's camps were set up on the common land—a habitation that included gorse, heather and bracken. Tim Cresswell describes this juxtaposition as a disruption of the “hegemonic-geographical order.” He refers to the chaotic, unhierarchical camps at Greenham as a “heretical geography” that transgressed normative geographic space of both the military base and the Newbury countryside (1996, 100). I will explore these ideas in detail in chapter four where I discuss the Greenham fence.

Chapter Breakdown

⁸ Green Gate was an exception to this as they had a women's-only policy that was always in effect. Yellow Gate generally received the greatest number of male visitors as it was the ‘main gate’ of the camp.

Chapter one, “Can the Women’s Peace Camp Be Televised?: Challenging Mainstream Media Coverage of Greenham” investigates how Greenham women responded to mass media coverage of the camp. I analyze how Greenham women became aware of the dominant images being constructed of them by the mass media, and then challenged those images through a diversity of strategies which included media blackouts, filing libel suits against papers, writing letters to the editor and staging performative interventions. Throughout the chapter I draw attention to both the production of media and the ways in which media physically moved across time and place. In addition, I raise questions of authorship and labor in regard to the production of press coverage, considering relationships between institutions, journalists and social movement participants. I argue that a study of the relationships between media producers and media texts can yield insight into how social movement participants actively shape, and are shaped by, media representations.

Chapter two, “Written in the Mud: Grassroots Media Coverage of Greenham,” examines coverage of Greenham produced by movement protesters and supporters. From the early months of the protests, women wishing to offer different perspectives on Greenham than those found in the corporate press, created their articles, interviews, cartoons, poems and stories. This work incorporated a wide and vibrant array of anecdotes, analyses and images of life at the camp. I look specifically at peace movement publications and the women’s movement press, as well as to the Greenham documentary *Carry Greenham Home* (1983) and Greenham women’s camp-based publications. I look at how such publications served to mobilize new participants, circulate information about

events, document women's actions and create forums for cultivating ideas, demands, tactics and analyses and I argue that the political economic environments in which grassroots media are produced, must be considered in relation to the content of such publications. Social movement publications often face a lack of funding and resources, as well as precarious labor conditions and frequently re-locating offices. Following from this, I situate these women's publications in relation to the histories and political trajectories of zine-making, arguing that the ethics and values that shaped Greenham women's publications share a great deal of similarities with current zine-making cultures and cultural productions. In doing so, I generate a framework for how to analyze and historicize social movement publications in relation to zine-making, insisting on the importance of considering the political economies of print production and their relationship to the material qualities of newsletters as movement artifacts.

Chapter three, "Metal Goddesses for Earthly Survival: Symbol and Myth-making Practices at Greenham Common," focuses on how women's creative symbolic practices and their use of tools challenged the dichotomous constructions of women peace activists' relations to technology, such as the binaries of nature/technology, organism/machine and human/animal. Here I return to the anti-nuclear activism at the heart of Donna Haraway's feminist cyborg to discuss how Greenham women meshed symbolic attributes culled from both goddess and cyborg imaginaries, developing figures such as Cybil the snake, the rainbow dragon and the 'Metal Goddess'. I also address some of the problems and possibilities surrounding ecofeminists' appropriations of indigenous and Pagan cultures. Throughout the analysis I argue against conceptions of 'symbolic action'

that rest upon a divide between symbolic and material practices. I use Greenham women's craft-based activism as evidence of how the production of 'symbols' requires embodied engagements with technologies, whether pencils, paper maché, knitting needles or scraps of wire. In doing so I situate Greenham in trajectories of craft-based activism, sometimes now referred to as 'craftivism.' My examination of Greenham women's material-symbolic production reveals the emergence of what Noël Sturgeon has somewhat playfully proposed as a cyborg ecofeminism: a feminist politics that integrates spiritual and ecological principles in its support for ethical uses of technology (1997, 194).

My fourth chapter, "If These Fences Could Talk: The Greenham Fence as Communication Technology" examines how the iconic barbed wire fence that surrounded the US Air Force base at Newbury, and marked the border of the encampment at Greenham Common, became a physical and discursive site for women's protest activity. This chapter argues that while the fence functioned as a physical artifact of militarism, separating women from the military base, it also served to demarcate the space of protester's camp-based 'home.' I argue that the fence's permeability and vulnerability as a barrier gave way to a number of communicative engagements. As women repeatedly decorated, climbed over and cut down the fence, State police forces and military personnel were forced into a struggle to maintain it as a physical perimeter and signifier of security. In addition, women talked to soldiers, police and other women through and around the fence. In these ways women's communication and other activist practices were significantly mediated through or by the fence. To demonstrate this, the chapter draws on examples from a rich archive of fence-related documents found

in Greenham women's written anthologies, demonstration booklets, camp newsletters, personal photographs, radio broadcasts and documentary videos.

My fifth chapter, "Singing for Our Lives: Constructing Community & Collective Identities in Greenham Women's Songs," investigates how songs functioned as a means of communication, sustaining community and generating collective identities among Greenham women. Singing was an important part of the protests at Greenham Common and songs played a role in the everyday life of Greenham campers. In this chapter I situate Greenham in relation to the rich singing histories of both women's music communities and the Civil Rights movement. I argue that Greenham songs produced counter-narratives of history, creating feminist legacies across time and place. I also look at how singing functioned at Greenham demonstrations and mass actions, generating collective strength in confrontational situations. In the final section of this chapter I look at how written and musical recordings of songs and singing marginalize or entirely erase the existence of lesbian desire and women's erotic friendships. I suggest that there was a body of 'queer songs' developed and performed at Greenham that is not accounted for in the many peace songbooks and recordings that came out of the 1980s anti-nuclear movement. The 'queer songs' arise out of Greenham as a community strongly shaped by the women's music movement and the presence of a diversity of sexual practices and affiliations between women at the camp. While grouped together by the press under labels like 'Man-hating Lesbians,' women at Greenham took on (and sometimes refused to take on) different self-identifications. As Sasha Roseneil's research on Greenham documents, there were radical lesbians, lesbian feminists, occasional lesbians, heterosexual women in

marriages, women married to men with women partners, etc. Likewise, platonic, monogamous and polyamorous relationships between women existed alongside each other at Greenham (2000, 277-309).

My conclusion, “One Man’s Junk Is Another Woman’s Artifact: Studying & Archiving Social Movement Culture” returns to some of the central questions I have started with here. I draw together the key insights made in each chapter to argue for a reconceptualization about what counts as a historical artifact and what counts as media object. Here I return to concepts developed throughout the course of the dissertation to discuss some of the implications my research might hold for social movement studies, cultural studies of protest and communication studies, as well as for cultural institutions such as museums and archives. I call for better preservation of social movement cultural artifacts and more focused studies on these objects. While grassroots media texts relate anecdotes, conflicts and events often hidden from mainstream news reportage, drawings, cartoons, poems, songs and stories reveal the multi-dimensionality and materiality of a movement’s symbol and myth-making practices. In relation to my study, this attention to artifact offers insight into the cultures that shaped Greenham, as well as to the ways in which Greenham has shaped contemporary activist practices. Second, I propose that the technological objects protesters engage with in the everyday life of their activism should be considered as historical, cultural artifacts. These artifacts include craft objects, everyday technologies and tools for direct action. I argue that these objects mediate social interaction and emotion as they become invested with protesters’ feelings and ideas through acts of transfer and circulation between movement participants both past and present.

Can the Women's Peace Camp Be Televised?: Challenging Mainstream Media Coverage of Greenham

The curious thing was that no-one knew how to draw a Greenham lesbian.

-Ruth Wallsgrove on the tabloid press

*Every note you take
Every tale you make
Every film you fake
Every muck you rake
We'll be watching you*

-Greenham Women's Protest Song (to the tune of Sting's Every Breath You Take)



Figure 2 *Sunday Express* Cartoon of Greenham Women Reprinted in *Spare Rib* May 1984

From living rooms to pubs, political meetings to prison cafeterias, reports of Greenham traveled through newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and often through word of mouth.⁹ The onslaught of press coverage the peace camp received between 1982 and 1984 made ‘Greenham’ a household name. As the peace protest’s popularity grew, women at the camp quickly became aware of their public image and began to devise strategies to confront and subvert mainstream media practices and dominant representations. Some women would purposefully interfere with cameramen’s shots; others would refuse interviews, while still others might interrupt a reporter’s questions to make a specific point about war, poverty or homophobia. In addition, women would produce critiques of mainstream media coverage in the letters sections of newspapers, as articles for movement publications, or in the pages of their own Greenham newsletters.

The diversity of coverage Greenham received offers rich material for an analysis of the dynamic interplay between media outlets, media producers and media readers. I examine how Greenham was reported by the mainstream media. I include in the term ‘mainstream media’ national as well as local television and print media that were produced, generally for profit, by trained journalists and I look in particular at how Greenham was portrayed by the British tabloid press, the ‘leftist’ *Guardian* and *The Newbury Weekly News*. I examine, in detail, exposé stories on Greenham that exploited the camp’s women-only mandate by sending in ‘undercover’ reporters to gather inside scoops. While protesters were often angry and disappointed about misrepresentative and defamatory coverage, I argue

⁹ One scene in the documentary film *Carry Greenham Home* (1983) shows a woman reading a newspaper story on Greenham over a megaphone to a crowd of women blockading the main gate of the base.

that many were also keenly aware of how these negative representations were being constructed. They knew that the institutionalized practices of journalists made it impossible for them to control their representation and devised innovative strategies for resisting ‘the media frame.’ At the end of this chapter I explore how stories of Greenham traveled outside of the camp, transforming newspaper coverage. I argue that a content analysis of Greenham coverage must take into consideration how the movement of media changes the meaning and significance of representations in relation to where, how and why people engage media texts. Through this movement the negative coverage of Greenham women was transformed into objects of inspiration, offering disenfranchised women models of activist subjectivity, despite (or in spite of) the coverage’s denigration of the camp. To produce this analysis I draw from a wide range of materials gathered from archives, rare book distributors and women’s personal collections. These materials include a large range of national newspapers, movement magazines, anthologies on Greenham, novels and plays, camp newsletters, recorded interviews and personal papers.

Representing Greenham

In the 1984 “Peace Not Quiet” special issue of the British feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, occasional Greenham camper and independent journalist Ruth Wallsgrove wrote, “The way the papers have treated Greenham is surprisingly predictable. You could use it as a pocket guide to the British Press—liberal, decent *Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*, pseudo-objective *Times*, snobby *Telegraph* and absurdly reactionary *Sun*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*”

(Wallsgrove 1984, 21). As Wallsgrove points out in her article, press coverage of Greenham varied quite significantly across Britain's different national publications. While the tabloids ran attention grabbing stories focused on women's sexuality, their lack of femininity and the muddy conditions at the camp, the Guardian often celebrated the 'ordinary housewives' who had left home for peace. In what follows I offer a brief overview of the national papers, as well as some of the local papers that paid particular attention to the Greenham protests.

Alison Young's *Femininity in Dissent* offers a thorough and insightful analysis of how negative images of femininity at Greenham were constructed in particular by the tabloid press. Both the space of the peace camp and the bodies of the peace campers were described as dirty, filthy and mucky in a number of press reports, particularly those written for the *Sun*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* (1990, 56). While in the early months of Greenham there was some supportive coverage of protests, those women hailed as noble housewives soon became defiled as 'no good mothers.' Ruth Wallsgrove commented, "The *Daily Mirror* ... has always stressed the sacrifices for the sake of the children. But the same ideas—of leaving families behind, of weathering the mud—have been consistently used *against* women at Greenham by other papers" (Wallsgrove 1984, 21). Wallsgrove also pointed out the tabloid presses sensationalized coverage of peace camper Helen John's divorce. John's husband, interviewed for a number of tabloid stories, reportedly told the *Daily Express* that Helen John "had changed from a housewife and mother we knew into fervent feminist and nuclear protestor" (Wallsgrove 1984, 21). Also in August of 1983, a number of stories ran condemning the mother of a baby living at the camp for allowing a

child to live amongst the Greenham squalor (Young 1990, 59-60). The destabilization of the normative roles of mother and wife produced at Greenham faced regulation through ridicule under the representational regimes of the tabloid press. Rather than envision or attempt to represent models of activist motherhood, the tabloid press invoked rigid categorizations, staying within the bounds of its prescribed lexicon.

The *Daily Express*, among other papers, also ran a number of stories between 1982 and 1984 linking Greenham women to Russian communism. Young writes, “The women were said to be the puppets of pro-communist men who undoubtedly despised them for their stupidity but acknowledged their utility in the propaganda war” (1990, 47).¹⁰ As Young alludes, this linkage served more to dismiss the Greenham women’s political claims and tactics, than to actually incite widespread fear that the women were potential threats to national security. Deemed more a public nuisance than an enemy of the state, such coverage legitimated the everyday use of verbal and physical abuse carried out by police, soldiers and vigilantes.¹¹

The ‘liberal, decent’ *Guardian* offered the most national coverage of Greenham and likewise was perhaps the most frequently discussed media source. While the *Guardian* generally contained articles that were supportive of the peace camp, the paper frequently highlighted the maternal and ‘respectable’ elements of the protesters, ignoring or overshadowing Greenham’s more radical, anarchic and

¹⁰ This image of Greenham women as communist devotees was parodied in Greenham songs, such as “We Work for the Russians” which can be accessed on “Documentation: Greenham Common Peace Camps Songbooks” *Danish Peace Academy* (<http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham.htm#Index>). I discuss the use of parody later in this chapter, and in chapter five I address Greenham songs.

¹¹ I offer a more in depth discussion of violence in chapter four. See also Sasha Roseneil (2000).

queer dynamics (Roseneil 2000, 156). Greenham peace camper Nicky Edwards dramatizes this ‘santization’ of Greenham in her novel *Mud*. In the first excerpt, fictional peace camper Jo argues with her girlfriend Beryl about media representations of Greenham women. In the second excerpt, Jo explains this same point to her friend Ada:

[Jo] ‘You generalize from the kind of Christain/hippy ethic of a few women in the peace movement and attribute those attitudes to all of us. What about all the stropdy dykes confronting the state and challenging traditional ways of living in peace camps?’

[Beryl] ‘What about them? They’re largely invisible.’

[Jo] ‘Invisibilised. By the media and the liberal public’s desire only to see what they can understand.’ (1986, 82).

[Ada] Don’t get me wrong, but all that stuff they do always seems a bit,’ she looked for the word, ‘good. If you know what I mean’
...

[Jo] ‘Yes,’ I sighed. ‘I do know what you mean. And, no, it wasn’t like that. Isn’t. But that was the sanitized version that the press gave the public when we were flavour of the month. After all, they couldn’t come out and say it was good because it was all women, tough and raucous and rude and separatist, could they? So it all got prettied up for popular consumption.’ (1986, 106).

In both of these exchanges Jo notes the discrepancy between the liberal media’s portrayal of Greenham women and her experiences of women at Greenham. These

sanitized representations diluted the politics of the movement, while at the same time the *Guardian*'s liberalized coverage was partly responsible for bringing in visitors, as well as donations of supplies and money. The line of communication between Greenham women and the *Guardian*-reading public extended beyond those readers already involved in the Peace and feminist movements. Large scale symbolic events that were meant to raise awareness of particular issues relied on the liberal press as a vehicle to gain public support. Issues such as the harms of nuclear radiation, the conditions at Holloway prison, and the exploitative ventures of uranium mining companies could not reach a broader support base without this press coverage. It was also not unusual for articles, particularly those by columnist Paul Brown, to contain inserts with detailed information on upcoming demonstrations or needed supplies. Jenny Peringer sardonically captured this supportive aspect of the camp's relation with the media in a diary entry dated May 12, 1983, "Bad time for an eviction. Even the *Guardian* is slagging off Greenham at the moment" (Harford and Hopkins 1984, 145).

The Berkshire press and other local papers across the United Kingdom also contained articles on Greenham women. Coverage was especially common in lefty papers such as London's *City Limits*. In addition, reports appeared frequently in papers from places which were the home of many Greenham women such as Cardiff, Wales. In *Greenham Women Everywhere*, Cook and Kirk recognize this local publicity and advised women to contact local papers for coverage of their peace actions as it is often easier to have a 'newsworthy' story in your locality (1983, 99). Local papers often provided a more immediate connection between the camp and women living outside of urban, political centers than the national

press could. By connecting issues raised at Greenham—particularly those around women’s only spaces, women’s empowerment, motherhood and sexuality—to people’s local lives and communities, this press coverage worked to make Greenham more relevant. This was especially significant for those women who were supportive of protests but could not come to the camp. Additionally, a number of Greenham supporters (and detractors) wrote letters that were published in local papers. Letters sections offer people access to their local newspaper reading community without demanding the expenditure of much time or resources. Also, as letters sections devote space to a (however limited) range of perspectives, they can serve as a forum of debate. At times they provide a catalyst for reflective thinking about one’s own position and foster possibilities beyond those contained or limited by the representational frameworks that shape a newspaper’s editorial content.

Newbury Weekly News

While local papers outside of Newbury were often supportive of the peace camp, the content of the *Newbury Weekly News* was almost unilaterally negative and reactionary. This paper had the most extensive and consistent coverage of the Greenham protests, with almost weekly reports throughout 1982-1984. At first the paper was relatively supportive of Greenham. However, the longer the women stayed at the camp the more hostile coverage of the protests became. A second page article run on October 22, 1981 reported that “the protesters have maintained

friendly relations with both base security men and police.”¹² By January 21, 1982—nearly a year before the first December mass action—the tone had already begun to shift. The headline of the front page news read, “PEACE CAMP WOMEN TOLD TO GO.” Mr. Cyril Woodward, chairman of the Newbury recreation and amenities committee, told the paper, “We have given the women a reasonable amount of time to make their protest, but they are trespassing and they must go.”¹³ Over the next three months council members, police officers, protesters and the Newbury mayor, were quoted in newspaper stories on whether or not the camp should remain. Letters pages featured debates between local residents, with views ranging from the scathing to supportive. In 1983 animosity between those with different attitudes toward the camp intensified as *Newbury Weekly News* stories’ coverage of Greenham began to focus almost exclusively on the purported costs and harms the community had to bear as a result of the protest.

Viewed over time, the newspaper can be seen to have systematically delegitimated the Peace Women and rallied residents against them. Greenham supporter Lynchcombe dedicated an entire pamphlet to analyzing the *Newbury Weekly News*’s coverage of Greenham. In it, Lynchcombe argued that the paper “not only forms local opinion, it *is* local opinion. It reflects the locality in everything, not least in the fact that it features the arms industry prominently” (n.d., 6). The *Newbury Weekly News* gave a good deal of room to those who opposed the camp and was a primary source of advertisements for the anti-Greenham group of wealthy local residents, RAGE—Ratepayers Against

¹² *Newbury Weekly News*, October 22, 1981.

¹³ *Newbury Weekly News*, January 21, 1982.

Greenham Encampments—which ran a series of cartoons demonizing Greenham women protesters (27).

The paper's editor, Lou Cummings, and managing director, Reg Blake, were both prominent figures in the community. They were linked to major businessmen, local politicians, the chief superintendent of the Newbury police and the town's head magistrate through their active membership in the Rotary Club. As I discuss further in chapter four, Lynchcombe deems this group an oligarchic “Newbury mafia” (39), with a vested financial and social interest in the continuance of the US military base. This, as Lynchcombe argues, explains the paper's condemnation and increasing frustration with the Greenham protests.

Television Coverage

Television coverage of Greenham was less regular but equally ambivalent in its approach to Greenham. Crews came to report on the camp during large scale events such as the embrace the base demonstrations that brought 30,000 women to Greenham to form a human chain around the base's 9mile perimeter and the silo action that saw over 40 women break into the base at dusk and dance atop the missile storage silos. The sporadic nature of television coverage was due to both the difficulties of ‘capturing’ Greenham for a news report, and women's hesitations to inform the media of every action they planned.

Photographer Ann Snitow wrote that getting good footage of Greenham, in industry terms, was a challenge for television crews. She described the difficulties of ‘capturing’ the peace camp, “Meetings without podiums, spontaneous acts that can erupt anywhere without notice, a world without hierarchies of space or time—

this is the Greenham that has every intention of maddening the media which always demand a controlled orchestration of event” (1985, 45-46). Nick Couldry makes a similar argument in his media analysis of Greenham’s television coverage. He writes that Greenham disrupted the “specific spatial order implicit in media production” that the “right place to debate on issues such as nuclear weapons is a place at the ‘centre’ (Whitehall, Westminster, television studios), rather than the site of the weapons themselves” (1999, 339).

At the same time that Greenham was physically difficult to cover, protesters did not always want the media present. In *Rocking the Ship of the State*, Peace camper and writer Gwyn Kirk describes how a media presence can simultaneously publicize and jeopardize an action in her recollection of the January 1, 1983 ‘Silo Action’:

After much discussion [about inviting the media] a couple of women contacted journalists in London to try persuading them to travel the sixty miles to Greenham in the early hours of New Year’s Day without giving away all the details in advance. This strategy was successful, and the gamble certainly paid off in terms of worldwide TV coverage of women dancing on the silo, but the cavalcade of press vehicles, headlamps blazing, driving up a track to the base shortly before dawn was hardly a subtle approach (1989, 123).

Kirk writes that the attendance of the press and of television crews in particular, certainly led to the international coverage of this action.¹⁴ Yet, at the same time, Kirk argues that the media's presence and their use of flashbulbs (despite women's requests they keep them off), alerted security and led to the arrest of two women at the fence.

While the presence of the media could jeopardize protester's actions, Kirk and some other women felt that the press offered protection from police violence during actions. The presence of reporters during actions and evictions was thought to reduce—although by no means eliminate—the amount of police violence exercised on women participants. In *Greenham Women Everywhere*, editors Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk excerpt from a Dec 14, 1982 *Guardian* article covering the Embrace the Base demonstration. The article quotes Assistant Chief Constable Wyn Jones. In the article, Jones reports that while hundreds of women had committed arrestable offences during the day, they were not “vindictive or malicious.” The women were demonstrating out of “deeply held political convictions,” thus, the Constable stated, “I do not think the circumstances justify the full sanctions of the criminal law.” Cook and Kirk use this article to show how the media can ‘protect’ protesters. They write, “It would be nice to be able to take these much publicized words of Wyn Jones at face value. However, in practice, it would have been very hard for the police to arrest such large numbers of women. Television cameras and press reporters made aggressive police tactics unwise” (1983, 99).

¹⁴ Images of the Greenham women dancing atop the missile silos continue to circulate as an index (or referent) for Greenham. They grace book covers, retrospective articles and news clips, standing in as a visual marker of the women's creative direct action.

Yet, at the same time as the presence of reporters could deter aggression, the police's ability to frame its policing as benevolent in press coverage could also function to mask actual assaults and aggressive arrests that occurred during demonstrations. In addition, there was no guarantee that reporters would film police harassing protesters. Interviewed for the Radio 4 documentary "Greenham Women, Greenham Men", one officer stated, "The cameramen quite often would turn away when we started dragging women away. They would find something else to film...I think that they got a fed up with it. They got a fair bit of abuse [from the women] as well, because they were males you see."¹⁵ What the officer here saw as Greenham women's abuse of male reporters was often a manifestation of protester's annoyance with how men dismissed and demeaned women at Greenham by treating them as ignorant, misguided or naive. In the next section of this chapter I look at Greenham women's successful and unsuccessful attempts to create bonds with women journalists in efforts to subvert Fleet Street.

Women Journalists and Greenham

One way women confronted sexist treatment and misogynist representations was by enforcing a women's-only media mandate. When this was in effect, reporters and crew members had to be women in order to gain access to the protest campers. In a report on the first December mass action, 'Embrace the Base,' Alma reported in the feminist newspaper *Outwrite*:

¹⁵ "Greenham women, Greenham men," n.d. *BBC Radio 4* (London, England, British Library Sound Collection, B8589/06).

A row [took] place when the women at the main gate refused to talk to the smartly dressed creeps who did not hesitate to put women down: ‘shut up you stupid woman – if we had not given you such publicity (when?) you would not have had ... this turn out’ (piss off you silly git)...the women did not shut up and continued shouting for women reporters (not many around). When women photographers turned up at the gate, the women were pleased to oblige.¹⁶

Similarly, Jean Freer recounted the making of a short BBC documentary in which the woman director insisted on having an all women crew:

It was necessary to go outside of the BBC to find film and lighting technicians to complete the team. The womyn seemed to enjoy working together, we gave them every co-operation (repeating songs, letting them film inside benders, etc etc) and the programme was favourable to the camp and led to more local women coming to offer baths. Thus in helping ourselves we also enabled the film crew to experience being women together (1984, 7).

Just as the insistence on women only spaces at the camp encouraged women to develop technical skills and work collaboratively with each other, implementing this policy had many of the same effects for television crews. As women were significantly underrepresented in these fields, the policy both called attention to

¹⁶Alma, “The Press,” *Outwrite*, Jan 1983.

women's exclusion and provided opportunities for the few women performing these technical jobs.

However, women only mandates and investing trust into women journalists was not always a successful strategy. As Gwyn Kirk notes, "There was no guarantee that mainstream newspapers would use photos from freelance photographers" (1989, 123). Likewise, most supportive women freelance writers were published in the movement press rather than the mainstream papers. In addition, the tabloid press would often exploit Greenham women's commitment to working with other women by sending in undercover reporters or soliciting women to go to Greenham to produce 'insider stories'. The next section of the chapter examines specific incidences of this, looking in particular at how homophobia and heteronormativity shaped coverage of Greenham in the tabloid press.

The Inside Scoop: Exploiting Greenham's Women's-Only Mandate

In 1984 journalist and novelist Caroline Blackwood came for a short visit to Greenham where she participated peripherally in camp life and conducted interviews with campers and Newbury residents, including those involved in the local vigilante groups that were both physically and verbally abusing protesters. Blackwood published a book on Greenham entitled *On the Perimeter* that received numerous reviews and was available in most bookshops in the United Kingdom. However, while it claimed to be an objective look inside Greenham, most Greenham women felt its portrayal of the camp was inaccurate and offensive.

One disappointed response to Blackwood's book came from a Greenham camper in the November 1984 edition of the *Green and Common News*. The Greenham camper warns that "although this [book] looks at first like the idea book for your non-feminist friend or auntie who wants to know about Greenham – I don't recommend it." She details why, citing Blackwood's failure to position herself in relation to Greenham, internalization of negative media representations of Greenham women as smelly, dirty, etc. and obtuse homophobia.¹⁷ The camper argues that Blackwood "doesn't put herself in the picture clearly. She doesn't say whether she changed in any way by going to Greenham, or simply regarded it as an assignment now behind her."¹⁸ The camper's disappointment here regards Blackwood's ambiguous loyalties. After spending intimate time with women at Greenham, campers had hoped she would feel a connection to the camp, rather than exploit their lives as fodder to boost her own career. The hope that some Greenham women had that the spirit of the camp could raise the consciousness of women reporters was often unrealized. This suggests the distinction Nancy Hartsock makes between 'knowing' one is a woman and acquiring a feminist standpoint. A feminist standpoint is a distinct political perspective that arises through critical self-reflection about your own and other women's situations. Being a woman, in and of itself, cannot guarantee the emergence of such an embodied political perspective (Hartsock 1983).

¹⁷ For more on Blackwood's book see my discussion of snake symbolism in chapter three and further discussion of homophobia in chapter five.

¹⁸ *Green and Common News*, November 1984 (London, England, Women's Library, Archive Collection 5GCW/E).

In November 1983, A “Sun Special Inside Report” appeared, lambasting Greenham women’s separatist politics and sexual expression. Titled in capital letters, ‘MEET THE GREENHAM MANHATERS,’ the *Sun* special contained a large font pull-quote reading, “Four in every five are lesbians—all are united in their hatred of men.” Jean Ritchie, who went to Greenham as a visitor in order to garner this story for the *Sun*, writes, “The younger they are, the more butch they are.” A bit later in the article, an emboldened part of text reads, “Women openly kiss, cuddle and hold hands at the camp.” These descriptions of women’s behavior are interspersed with quotations from British soldiers who say they would shoot the women if they were given weapons. Ritchie ends with a lament that these Greenham women have “turned away genuine peace campaigners” and other women, who like her, “only half-qualified” because they were committed to their husband and sons at home.¹⁹

The interspersion of overtly homophobic sentiments with the threat of physical violence evidences the ways in which gender, sex and desire are simultaneously policed.²⁰ Here, for example, lesbianism is affixed to the culturally intelligible categories of ‘man-hater’ and ‘butch’. This move aligns sexuality (lesbianism) with desire (woman-lover/man-hater) and ascribes these traits through, as well as onto, a gendered body (butch) that is characterized by female masculinity. Normative gender markers including assertiveness, confidence, short-hair, baggy-clothes, punk insignias, etc. were common to those women

¹⁹ Jean Ritchie. “Meet the Greenham Manhaters,” *Sun*, November 7, 1983. (Women’s Library 5GCW/E/2)

²⁰ Discussions of this can be found in feminists work on compulsory heterosexuality. See, for example, Adrienne Rich (1980) and Judith Butler (1999).

classified by the press as “aggressive,” “man-hating” or “butch.” As Judith Halberstam argues, the refusal to accept ambiguously gendered female bodies points toward a conservative and protectionist effort to keep the power of masculinity attached to men (1998, 15). Such protectionism takes on the form of verbal, discursive and at times physical assault. In this article, the negative or negating associations attached to the butch lesbian perform the normative function of delegitimizing (and hence dehumanizing) the bodies of Greenham protesters. Gender and sexual nonconformity are offered as justification for the soldiers’ attitudes. This, in effect, worked to sanction the violence against Greenham women perpetuated by authorities and vigilantes.

Anne Robinson’s inside scope on Greenham, written for the *Daily Mirror*, begins from a very different perspective than this sun exposé. Robinson distances herself from other journalists who deploy dominant representational markers of Greenham women as poorly dressed, dirty, smelly, and “all lesbians.” Yet, while her article is certainly less demeaning than Ritchie’s, the position she takes seeks to justify women as ‘ordinary’ or ‘normal’ by positioning them as *not* ‘lesbian subversives.’ The presentation of the article employs the same aesthetics as the one from the *Sun*, emboldening or italicizing words like ‘Smelly’ along with references to lesbian sexuality. This obsession with the ‘dirt’ of the camp points to a number of anxieties around the protest camp and Greenham protesters. The squatted peace camp was indeed quite muddy as its ‘floor’ was made of dirt and England’s heavy rainfall regularly turned this dirt into mud. As I will discuss in detail in chapter four, the notion that hundreds of women would be willing to forgo the comforts of home to live in the mud troubled many people. It disrupted

the very notion of what constituted a home and with it, our attachments to property, permanence and privilege. The alignment of lesbian sexuality with ‘dirty women’ evidences the culture of homophobia that existed (and continues to exist).

Robinson writes that for her visit to Greenham she wore her ‘dog-walking outfit’ of jeans and a wooly hat. She tells readers that upon arrival at Greenham a soldier shouted to his friend “Ah, there’s a smelly.” As she approached the camp, Robinson says she felt surprised at the warm welcome she received. She was “not spat at, mocked, hectored or indeed propositioned.” The next section of text reads in italic, “I didn’t find myself among a group of lesbian subversives. Most of the women I could just as likely have bumped into in a bus queue.” She follows this with a sympathetic remark that campers’ hostility is frequently a result of how they are treated by the press. Robinson concludes her article, arguing that “what Greenham women suffer from more than anything else ... is a distorted public image”—while the “stronger women” have been filmed by the media in ways that “portray them as angry, unpleasant, vicious and violent,” the “gentler majority are rarely seen.”²¹

Here, as Alison Young argues, Greenham women are represented in a way in which the characteristics of individuals are ascribed to groups. In Robinson’s report there are two very distinct representations of groups mobilized: one, a vocal, strong, mass of lesbians; the other a gentle set of ordinary mothers. As linguist Roger Fowler contends, “‘fictitious groups’” have conceptual solidarity

²¹ Anne Robinson. “Why the Greenham women aren’t what they seem,” *Daily Mirror*, November 23, 1983. (London, England, Women’s Library, Archive Collection, “Press Cuttings,” 5GCW/E/2)

for the culture, but typically do not display social solidarity; their members do not necessarily associate with one another” (1991, 94). Such categorical group constructions function within the discursive paradigm of news journalism as a means of simplifying and familiarizing readers with social movement participants. Robinson’s attempt to position herself as both an objective observer and a movement sympathizer is also a common strategy in press coverage of social movements, employed both to create an ‘insider’ feel and to politically align a publication for or against a cause. While Robinson’s article may help elicit support for Greenham by taking on this perspective, its portrayal of Greenham women bears little resemblance to women campers’ personal accounts of life at the camp.

In another Greenham exposé, Sarah Bond writes from an explicitly heteronormative perspective in her story for the *Daily Express*. Bond constructs ‘the lesbian’ as other, in some places even differentiating ‘women’ from ‘lesbians’. As the article begins, Bond immediately sets herself apart from the campers and narrates her observations of Greenham women by deploying a series of dominant media markers. She writes, “For the next two weeks I was to mingle with a group which included drug-takers, lesbians, genuine idealists and firebrand militants.” Most of Bond’s article is devoted to discussing women’s use of cannabis, the wet, muddy conditions of the camp, and women’s overt lesbianism. Like Richie, Bond also refers to Greenham women as man-haters, yet her attitude toward lesbianism parallels Robinson’s. She writes:

Half the women I lived among at Greenham were lesbians,
striding the camp with their butch haircuts, boots and boiler-suits.

They flaunt their sexuality, boast about it, joke about it. And some take delight in proclaiming their loathing of men. Like any other 30 year old woman, I have long since ceased to be embarrassed by the sight of lesbian couples holding hands in public. But their antics at Greenham were astonishing.²²

Bond's tone evokes a 'common sense' homophobia that justifies a discomfort with lesbian sexuality by appealing to a sense of sexual decency and by framing lesbian women's interactions with her as attacks on her heterosexuality. Yet, while this piece in many ways resembles the others discussed, the anxiety over sexuality in Bond's commentary provides rich source material for constructing counter-narratives of lesbian desire at Greenham.

Bond's article, which bears the title "Life and love in the camp that bans men," is one of the only national press stories to ever explicitly explore the relationships women had with each other at the camp. Instead of only describing women as lesbians, Bond actually talks to women about their sexuality. Excerpts of these conversations (or at least reported conversations) speak toward the multiplicity of sexualities at Greenham, even though they are couched among an argument against the 'public' display of lesbian desire. For example, Bond recalls "One avid man-hater named Sue" who, after overhearing that Bond had a boyfriend, said, "We'll have to convert you – you poor little heterosexual." Read from a queer perspective, or read queerly, this comment speaks toward the humor and parody cultivated around lesbian sexuality at Greenham. Though the reader is

²² Sarah Bond "Greenham: The Inside Story," *Daily Express*, April 9, 1984. (London, England, Women's Library, Archive Collection, "Press Cuttings," 5GCW/E/2)

not told whether Sue was teasing Bond, in a queer reading of this article, Bond's nervousness or discomfort can be seen as an intentional affect of Greenham women's subversions of heteronormative scripts. Later in the article Bond reports that some "lesbians masquerade as peace women and go to Greenham just for sex because it is one of the few places where they can be open about it." Bond argues that women who come to Greenham are shunned if they don't go gay. Again, from a queer perspective it seems pretty reasonable that women would want to go somewhere that they could openly engage in erotic relationships with other women.

The documentation of lesbianism presented in these tabloid press stories function both as justificatory discourses for homophobia and violence against women, while at the same time providing historical documentation of the presence of lesbian sexuality at Greenham. Bond, in particular, offers evidence of the camp as a space ripe with "lesbian possibility"—a place where women began to express and act upon their desires for other women.²³ Bond quotes a nineteen year old woman camper, "I turned gay after I got here. But I'm not a man-hater and I freaked out the first time I slept with a woman." This statement is perhaps the most honest articulation about sexuality found anywhere in national press coverage of Greenham. Here, lesbianism itself is momentarily demystified and held up as a possibility. However, this rupture is quickly contained. Bond follows it up by describing how she bonded with other straight women at the camp. She

²³ See Roseneil (2000, 282) for a brief discussion of Adrienne Rich in relation to lesbianism at Greenham. I pick up Roseneil's insights in more detail in chapter five.

reports that, together they had a laugh over the “jeering lesbians” that “resented ‘straight’ women.”

Although the final remark here is again dismissive, Bond deploys the term ‘straight’, putting it in scare quotes. While this may seem an insignificant use of punctuation, scare quotes are frequently applied to words in stories with political content as a way to introduce movement and subcultural terms to a broader audience of readers. The term ‘straight’ is introduced here to those who are presumed not to know what “lesbians” think of mainstream culture. As such, ‘straight’ becomes socially intelligible only when “the lesbian” comes into existence as a real presence and possibility. The centrality of lesbianism and women-identification at Greenham forces this linguistic shift, marking the heterosexual as a temporary other. In line with this, Sasha Roseneil argues that at many of the camps around the different Greenham gates, “women almost had to opt-out of lesbianism; they had to ‘come out’ as heterosexual” (1995, 158). As I will discuss in detail in chapter five, this captures the ways in which, as Roseneil writes, Greenham was a space of “gyn-affection and queer normality” where many women experimented with sexual practices and expressions (2000, 290-291). In broader political terms, the term ‘straight’ functions as a way to reveal the heteronormative underpinnings of society and its assumptions. Within queer communities the term also functions to navigate and discuss desire, reverse the heteronormative gaze, and demarcate the boundaries of a sexual community.

The assumption that women journalists’ loyalties would rest with Greenham women over the institutions they worked for was often misguided. The careerist interests of women journalists often superseded the very possibility of a

shared feminist politics. Women journalist's homophobia, as well as the homophobic media institutions in which they operate, also prevented them from forging alliances with Greenham women. On some occasions, the disloyalty of women journalists to Greenham women cost protesters their jobs and family support as these exposé reports would name women as lesbians and drug takers (Roseneil 2000, 290). At the same time, producers and editors intentionally employed women to create intra-gender divisions that delegitimated Greenham protests. The disappointment some campers felt following the publication of journalists' exposés exhibits women's broader anxiety around the relationship between gender and (feminist) politics. Many women at Greenham discovered first-hand that 'sisterhood' did not organically emerge from women's gender identity—a reality that the Women's Liberation movement at the time was confronting more broadly.

Undermining the Inside Scoop

While the defamatory remarks made in articles such as these were often illegal according to the policies of the press board, the cost and resources needed to bring charges of libel against a newspaper (particularly if it was part of a larger media conglomerate) were far more than most campers could incur. In the later years of the camp long-term camper Katrina Howse, who was fed up with years of media defamation, brought on a libel case. In 1992 Howse won a suit against News Group Newspapers. She filed for damages for libel after an article in the November 3, 1990 issue of the *Sun* called her a “scram scrounger” and a parasite, accusing her of not working or paying poll tax. The judgement for this case ruled

that the Sun's remarks were entirely unfounded. Howse was an active mural artist, an unwaged political worker and exempt from poll taxes as she lived at Yellow Gate. Howse described working on the case as requiring tremendous support from others doing "tireless research" and "endless writing." However, as the press release for her successful trial states, this notable case "broke with the tradition that says only the rich can defend their character (there is no Legal Aid for defamation actions)."²⁴

In 1983, Rebecca Johnson employed a far less costly, yet far less public form of resistance to media misrepresentation. She wrote an article in the largest (and only broadsheet) editions of a *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter* that condemned negative portrayals of Greenham in tabloid exposés. Johnson's critique directly responded to Nicky Kirkwood's 'inside story' for the *Daily Mirror*. As was common in the other tabloid press stories I discussed, Kirkwood demonized aggressive women at Greenham. Campers showing affection or desire toward each other were also spotlighted and described disparagingly. Johnson criticized the explicit homophobia expressed in Kirkwood's article:

One of the saddest prejudices revealed by the Mirror was against lesbians. Homosexuals in our society are discriminated against and regarded as legitimate targets for thugs and violent attacks. It is perhaps remarkable that despite their own oppression, lesbians are prepared to give energy and strength to the peace movement. Homosexuals exist in the Labor Party, CND, the Tory Party—everywhere. It is perhaps a sign of the new society we are trying to

²⁴ *Yellow Gate News*, June 1993 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South)

create that lesbians can be a little less terrified and closeted [at Greenham].²⁵

Here, the story from the *Mirror* becomes the object of Greenham women's analysis. By re-circulating images and content from the article embedded in a critique, Johnson is able to destabilize the ideological function of the *Mirror* feature. While this mode of engaging the tabloid press could not have the same kinds of outcomes or exposure as a libel suit, it offered a way to interact with the images being produced of Greenham women by the tabloid press. Critiques like Johnson's stimulated a collective space within the women's peace movement for critical reflection and heightened media literacy. While not all Greenham women might agree with all of Rebecca's ideas, the critique is able to reframe issues of homophobia and aggression. Rebecca uses this space to assert Greenham women's commitment to collectivity and free expression, invoking what Roseneil calls Greenham women's "common values" (2000, 114).

Live media offered another space for women to resist the misogyny and homophobia perpetuated by the institutional media. Unlike pre-recorded news reports, producers of live programs could not censor or edit women's statements. In efforts to disrupt what could otherwise become another story belittling Greenham women, protesters at times took advantage of live television and radio interviews. Women developed skilled, spontaneous ways to confront journalist's sensationalism and sanitization of Greenham women. Carole Harwood, a married woman protester with three children, recounts one occasion on which she took the

²⁵ *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983, 11 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South)

opportunity of a 'live' broadcast to trouble how Greenham women's sexualities were being constructed by the media. Harwood played upon her status as a 'respectable' British woman to draw attention to the demonization of lesbianism occurring in the press. Harwood recounts this event in the anthology *Greenham Women are Everywhere*:

On the anniversary of the founding of the camp I was asked on the radio about the unacceptable lifestyle at Greenham and the interviewer quoted from that morning's *Daily Mail*...It was going out live and I was to be the reassurance. 'And we all know about the charges (!) of lesbianism at the peace camp.' I knew what he wanted and expected me to say. My mouth went all dry and the palms of my hands all wet. He smiled encouragingly. I told him if the thought of women making love with one another was more threatening than the idea of men making war with each other, then I found that frightening. I said a bit more, making the connections between male violence and war, talking about the media treatment of rape, pornography, Greenham women. The friendly breakfast show personality went paler and I swear his eyes narrowed, just like in the stories. He didn't say goodbye as I left the studio, nor politely stand as he'd done when I arrived (1983, 111).

Harwood's refusal to reaffirm a safe or sanitized sexuality of the Greenham camp expressed her commitment to building a space that could simultaneously cultivate a lesbian community and confront women's homophobia. In the beginning of the camp, many heterosexual women at Greenham were uncomfortable or outright

intolerant of lesbian women. They expressed concern that lesbian issues and lesbian sexuality would compromise the public image of protesters as “common women”—white, heterosexual, British wives and mothers. Jean Freer argued in her pamphlet, *Raging Womyn*, “Every womon [sic] who stays at the camp and every womon or man who visits must confront their homophobia and if they support us, begin to root it out of themselves” (1984, 7) If women could not do this, they often left the camp. Harwood’s intervention on this radio program signaled for her the work she was engaged in to “root out” homophobia.²⁶

Interrupting the Media Stage

As a place-based outdoor protest Greenham also offered a unique situation in which the difficulty of producing a ‘media stage’ presented protesters with opportunities to disrupt the ways in which media coverage of protests at the camp were orchestrated.²⁷ A scene from Kidron and Richardson’s documentary *Carry Greenham Home* (1983) captures one occasion on which a reporter exhibits her frustration at not being able to ‘control’ the Greenham protesters. As the shot

²⁶ Carol Harwood was one of a small number of Greenham women to regularly appear on media programs, be quoted in newspaper articles and recorded in Greenham anthologies. While Harwood and others might not have intentionally sought media attention, the rise of such spokeswomen was at times a source of conflict among Greenham women. Such personal recognition stood at odds with the Greenham ethos of non-leadership embodied in the motto “The Only Stars are in the Sky”. Rebecca Johnson, who wrote the critique of Kirkwood’s article discussed earlier, was another camper who received a great deal of media attention. Johnson first came to Greenham as a graduate student and went on to live at the camp for five years. She quickly took on a number of political tasks, including speaking with reporters. Johnson was a common contributor to early Greenham newsletters and other Peace Movement publications. In 1983 she stood as a candidate for the Women for Life on Earth party. She was also featured in numerous radio documentaries, on television programs and in press features on Greenham.

²⁷ Following the theatrics of the Black Panthers, the Women’s Liberation Movement and other militant 1970s activists, by the early 1980s television had become a stage for protest. For insightful discussions of how the Black Panthers were of the first groups to use television as a stage for protest, see T.V. Reed (2005) and Jane Rhodes (2007).

opens we see a number of Greenham women outside of a courthouse during a trial. A woman reporter is recording a news clip on the trial. As the reporter begins her newscast, a young Greenham protester runs in front of her, disrupting the shot. The protester then begins doing cartwheels and the reporter grows increasingly agitated. It is precisely in the media's attempts to control, or at times just to understand Greenham as a place of and for politics, that the importance of the setting of protest becomes clear. As such, Greenham women's strategies of interruption offer insight into the political theatrics of news, and into the tactical possibilities for usurping the media stage. At the same time, it reveals reporters discomfort and annoyance when not able to capture the image of Greenham they seek. This can lead to less press coverage or more antagonistic reporting.

Perhaps the most widely deployed way women collectively articulated their criticism of the press was through the use of humor and parody. Women at Greenham wrote songs, drew cartoons, recounted anecdotes and even wrote a play mocking the way media content represented Greenham women. For example, the second verse of the song "At the Peace Camp, Newbury, Berkshire," sung to the tune of 'An English Country Garden', relates the repetitive nature of reporters questions and what kinds of assumptions framed their interviews:

What are the questions the media will ask us

At the Peace Camp, Newbury, Berkshire?

I'll tell you now of some that I know,

And the rest, you'll read them later.

'Why did you make this sacrifice?'

'Can I talk to someone nice?'

‘How does it feel now you have failed?’

‘Can you pose by the gate?’

‘Hurry up, it’s getting late.’

At the Peace Camp, Newbury, Berkshire

(printed in Roseneil 2000, 86).

As I will discuss in detail in chapter five, the use of familiar tunes functioned to create a sense of collectivity and made teaching lyrics easier as many protesters already knew the original song. A dramatized parody of the media is also offered in the Common Ground collective’s play *The Fence*. Like the lyrics from ‘At The Peace Camp, Newbury, Berkshire,’ *The Fence* performs the repetition of the media’s questions. Scene six, “The Media”, opens with a series of posed headlines:

1 MAX *holds kettle over fire.*

Caption: ‘Polly puts the kettle on.’

2 WOMEN *hug and leer at each other.*

Caption: ‘Lessies for Peace’

3 WOMEN *wave angry fists.*

Caption: ‘Angry women harass male visitors’ (1985, 121).

Here women physically animate spectacularized media scenes, or frames, freezing their bodies to express how journalists’ can manipulate photographs that capture selected, static moments of time. Juxtaposed with sensationalized captions, this bodily performance of media myths and symbols is deployed as a mode of deconstruction. It reveals how caricatured identities literally get attached to images of women’s bodies which, through repetition and broad circulation,

became dominant representations. As a mode of communication, the play exhibits what Margaret Laware terms Greenham's women's "embodied rhetoric" (2004, 19). Laware argues that in order to understand how Greenham women communicated their resistance, we must conceptualize rhetoric as a material, embodied and collective act (29). Performances like *The Fence* attest to this claim.

Parody—as an activist tactic—was very effective for calming nerves and raising spirits, yet the media critique these parodies produced could only travel so far. Whether planned or spontaneous, these collective performances were practiced primarily in the space of the camp. While geographically confined, it is important that such community practices are understood as far more than cathartic relief. As a localized strategy that functioned primarily for those already involved in the protests, parody can be an essential collective ritual that sustains the energy and passion of social movement communities (Taylor and Rupp 1993).

Scraps of Resistance

The active strategies of resistance I have discussed so far evidence Greenham women protester's sophisticated media literacy and creative interventions into the production and reception of dominant media texts. In this final section of the chapter I look at women's practices of clipping, saving and sharing newspaper articles on Greenham as a form of scrapbooking. I argue that the surplus of meanings in media texts are both revealed and reconstituted through scrapbooking practices. As such, I discuss how these women's scrapbooking

practices demonstrate the ways readers become authors of texts, transforming dominant representations of Greenham.

While the content of national newspapers was generally derisive or degrading, their wide-scale circulation allowed information to travel to women who were not already connected to peace or feminist organizations. Nick Couldry argues that media coverage of Greenham was always significant in spite of its hostility to Greenham women for a number of reasons. First, because Greenham was a place-based protest, the scene or ‘frame’ of the story was the Greenham Common nuclear military base. Coverage of the camp publicized the base’s existence and exhibited images of the militarization of England’s countryside. These images were disturbing to much of the British public and without the camp would rarely have been made visible on a broad scale. Second, the scale of coverage Greenham received during peak years (1982-1984) served to amplify the symbolic effects of the protests (1999, 341). Even when an article’s content ridiculed Greenham women, it marked the occurrence of a protest event and often functioned to peak women’s curiosity.

This phenomenon is dramatized in Sarah Daniels’ play *The Devil’s Gateway*, originally published in 1983. The main character, Betty, is a housewife currently receiving state benefits and living in council housing with her children, mother and emotionally abusive husband. She becomes fascinated by the Greenham women as she reads news stories and sees short pieces covering protest events on television news programs. Intrigued, Betty begins clipping out articles on Greenham women from newspapers and buying extra newspapers to find out more about the protests. She hides her collection of clippings in an old cereal box

to keep it out of sight from her family, and in particular away from her husband who derides the Greenham women's protests (Daniels 1991).

Betty, who spends her days inside her home tending to chores and errands, has no access to Greenham except for what she can read from papers and watches on the television news. As Betty clips these articles from newspapers and begins to assemble her own cereal box container for them, the values and labor practices that initially shaped this content shifts. While Betty's husband espouses the derogatory content he hears and reads on Greenham women as truth, for Betty such content generates a passionate curiosity. By cutting these articles from their newspaper-container, Betty is able to move them around. She dumps them out on her kitchen table, piecing together the bits of information they contain in new and unsanctioned ways (Daniels 1991).

Rather than contained in a national newspaper shaped by the corporate interests of the publishing world, Betty's clippings are stored in a cereal box—an artifact emblemizing her relegation to, as well as her control over, the domestic space of the kitchen. What publication the articles came from or who wrote them is not significant for her purposes. This personal archive, actively created by Betty, becomes another sort of container entirely. One that stores stories, but not in the ways they were intended to be told or heard.

Feminist technology scholar Zoe Sofia argues that media artifacts can be thought of as container technologies. An audio recording or a book, she writes, is a “storage technology for other spaces and experiences” (2000, 190-191). In what follows I look at the notion of container technologies, developing Sofia's use of the term to argue that scrapbooks are ‘container technologies’ that actively shape,

as well as carry, the content that they store. First introducing the idea of a ‘container technology,’ Lewis Mumford argued that the role of ‘containers’ was often overlooked because of scholars’ focus on tools. He suggested that because containers were associated with the feminine, scholars disregarded their significance as technological objects (Mumford cited in Sofia 2000). Sofia picks up Mumford’s discussion of gender and container technologies, arguing that these technologies are generally associated with the ‘feminine’. They are thought of as passive and static, rather than as active technologies. This has led to a lack of consideration of how containing—or storing—is shaped by, and shapes, human relations. In her work, Sofia aims to correct this “phallic bias” by reformulating the act of containing. She draws from Donald Winnicott’s work on space to argue that containers are not just empty spaces or objects that passively hold things. Rather, they are what we “put stuff into, and thereby identify with” (2000, 185). Sofia’s conception of containment borrows from Donald Winnicott’s “intersubjectivist accounts” that view the “holding and supply” of space “as the result of maternal labours” which require “care” (190-191).

Jonathan Sterne expands on Mumford and Sofia’s discussion of containers in his work on the mp3 as cultural artifact. To describe the function of the mp3, Sterne applies Mumford and Sofia’s definition of an *apparatus* as “a container that transforms as it holds” (2006, 828). Sterne considers how the material aspects of the mp3—its function as software and its micro-miniature size—impact the ways in which people use and make sense of this technology (832). While Sterne is addressing a ‘new media’ technology, his consideration of how the material and functional aspects of a media object shape people’s practices can be applied to

‘older’ technological forms.²⁸ Although the specificities of his argument relate only to this technology and its historical moment, I would suggest that many technologies can be productively considered in terms of their capacities to shape content and produce value. In other words, any object that has a storage function can be thought of as a container technology, whether it is an mp3, a video cassette or a cereal box scrapbook.

In her work on the history of scrapbooking, Ellen Gruber Garvey argues that “the scrapbook absorbed material and labor, processing and transforming them” (2003, 221). Rather than writing, the scrapbooker’s labor—or authorship—consists of “a process of recirculation, in which information is sorted and stockpiled until it can acquire value by being inserted into a new context” (224). The sorting and stockpiling of texts—here via the assistance of a cereal box storage container—detaches meaning from the original source of the texts. Garvey argues that scrapbookers, “literally made new media out of old” (224).

For both Garvey and Sofia, masculinist conceptions of technology and authorship are held responsible for the depreciated value of these kinds of active transformations. Both the apparatus and utensils that interest Sofia, and the scrapbooks that interest Garvey, tend to be viewed as insignificant, (and thereby) domestic objects. While Sofia points toward a phallic bias in how technologies are thought about, Garvey argues that the concept of ‘gleaning’ might better account for re-mediation activities like scrapbooking than the more frequently used term ‘poaching.’ She argues, “Like the poacher, the gleaner does not own the land, did

²⁸ For important discussions on how all media have, at some point in history, been ‘new’ see Gitelman and Pingree (2003) and Marvin (1988).

not produce the crop or livestock, but steps in when it is ready, takes what is available, and puts it to her or his own uses. Gleaning shifts from the implied masculinity of shooting game, engaged in a kind of warfare with the landowner, to a model of gathering that is not passive or compliant, and is decidedly open to feminine participation” (208). Garvey suggests that this model of gleaning falls more in line with corporate publishing practices, as publishers cannot control the circulation, ordering or reordering of their texts. Even while copyright can limit use, it cannot stop readers from moving “old texts to new contexts” (208). Interestingly, in a gesture that resonates strongly with Greenham protesters’ numerous excursions over and through the perimeter fence, Garvey writes of nineteenth-century scrapbook makers as trespassers who moved across “the enclosure of authorship and publication” (208).

Another group of women who sometimes clipped and stored stories of Greenham from the national, corporate papers were women prisoners. National newspapers have a much greater ability to travel into and around prisons than other media forms, as prison officials carefully censor incoming materials. Thus, although the content of these articles rarely offered an accurate documentation of Greenham women’s lives or actions, the very fact that such records circulated served to establish connections between imprisoned women and Greenham protesters.

One Greenham camper, Carmel McConnell, served a short prison sentence for her involvement in the occupation of the base’s sentry box (guard booth) at the Main Gate on August 27, 1982. In a diary entry she recorded on prison toilet paper (and smuggled out in her sock), McConnell mentioned her surprise at

prisoners' knowledge of Greenham's existence. She wrote, "[The] most important thing is that the women in here know something about us and have been coming up to us with newspaper cuttings about Greenham" (Harford and Hopkins 1984, 83). Like Betty, women in prison were creating their own Greenham archives from scraps of newspaper clippings. The content of these archives was then passed between prisoners and imprisoned Greenham women as a mark of recognition. The physical movement of the cuttings can be seen an act of communication that generated meaning in excess of the article's content. The 'value' of the newspaper articles shifts as their function is transformed from bearer of information to a gift or token of affinity. The labor involved in cutting and collecting these scraps contributes to this shift in value. Here, the women prisoners' actions signified to Greenham women that their work was important enough to save or store.

Some Greenham campers also collected and circulated press clippings and recordings of television and radio news programs. This enabled them to see patterns in the coverage and develop strategies to challenge recurring misrepresentations. In 1984 camper Beatrice wrote a call to women asking for help to establish a Greenham file. For two and a half years Beatrice had been collecting newspaper articles along with photos, postcards, police charge sheets and leaflets. In her appeal for more materials she wrote:

During the last 3 years a lot of things have been written about us ...

A lot of people collect a lot of stuff about us—but did you realize that it is for us important as well – to be able to look up things – information [about] what happened on certain dates – information

about the bases – articles being used as evidence in court – or little things just adding to the history of the camp.²⁹

Here Beatrice suggests ways in which Greenham women can use the media's documentation of their activities. Beatrice notes how constant evictions and occasional prison sentences make it difficult for any individual woman living at the camp to collect for the file alone. With the help of other women, Beatrice says she will organize a file for collective use at the camp. As I discussed earlier in relation to Betty's clippings, Beatrice's file becomes a new kind of archive or container for information on Greenham. While Greenham women might object to the 'factual' content and representations found in official media news and police reports, these materials provide other functions. For example, they can do the work of recording dates events took place and the names of authorities involved at a protest action or arrest.

Other women who made clippings would send them out with notes asking or encouraging women to write in responses as Letters to the Editor. Some campers and supporters in the larger Greenham network frequently wrote Letters to the Editor. In *Greenham Women Everywhere* Cook and Kirk advise readers that local papers' letters pages are often a popular section of the paper (1983, 99). During times of tension at the camp, letters pages often became public forums for the internal debates happening at the camp. This can be seen during the decision to implement a women-only policy in 1982. Women's letters sought to correct

²⁹ *Green and Common News*, July/August 1984 (London, England, Women's Library, Archive Collection 5GCW/E).

inaccurate information, offer different perspectives, or open up important issues for more nuanced debate.

Conclusion

Letter writing, and the other resistant practices I have examined in this chapter, all sought to intervene in the dominant representational regimes constructed and deployed by the mainstream media. In the next chapter I examine grassroots media coverage of Greenham that offered alternative, counter-hegemonic representations and perspectives. I look at how Greenham was engaged by the anti-nuclear and feminist press, as well as in the Greenham documentary *Carry Greenham Home* and in camp-based publications. I situate these materials in relation to the contemporary rubric of ‘autonomous media,’ detailing how these participatory media forms offer significant insights on the daily protest life and broader politics of the Greenham encampment that cannot be found in the mainstream media.

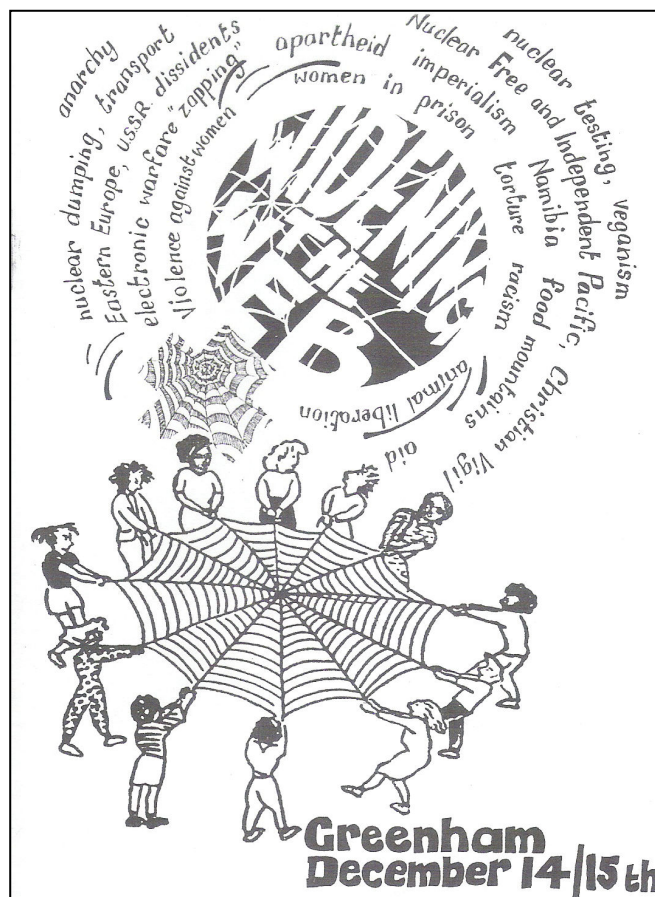
Written in the Mud: Grassroots Media Coverage of Greenham

Isn't it time we did a little more to subvert Fleet Street and support womyn's media?!?!

-Liz, Greenham Camper

Let's share and celebrate our many differences of ideas, approach and response with ourselves and other people; upset the homogenous media image of what Greenham women are and what they do.

-Green and Common, April News 1984



**Figure 3_Widening the Web Demonstration Booklet
December 14/15th 1985**

Alternative views of Greenham, found in various peace movement and feminist media offered far more nuanced accounts and discussions than the mainstream press. In recent years the term ‘autonomous media’ has come to name a variety of media practices undertaken by social justice activists. Alternative visions of Greenham found in peace movement, feminist and camp-based media, in many ways resemble contemporary autonomous media practices. Andrea Langlois and Frédéric Dubois define autonomous media around three primary characteristics. First, they “undertake to amplify the voices of people and groups normally without access to media” (2005, 9). Second, they work apart from dominant institutions (corporations, governments, the military). And third, they are participatory (9). Langlois and Dubois also argue that autonomous media, influenced by feminist critiques of the split between rational and emotional knowledge, work to “breakdown hierarchies of access to meaning-making” (10). While the term autonomous media became popularly used as part of the political language of the alterglobalization movement, each of these characteristics could easily be applied to the many publications that are considered as ‘social movement media’ or ‘grassroots media.’³⁰

Peace movement, feminist and camp-based media all created space for the amplification of protesters voices, a diversity of women’s perspectives, and a range of criticisms, celebrations, and reflections on the Greenham encampment

³⁰ The term ‘alterglobalization movement’ broadly refers to a social movement comprised of NGO, Union and grassroots activist seeking alternatives to global capitalism. The movement is critical of international financial institutions and governmental bodies such as the G8, World Bank and the World Trade Organization. The term ‘alterglobalization’ emerged as an alternative to both ‘globalization’ and ‘anti-globalization,’ providing a more positive nomenclature and an acknowledgement that globalization is a contested process in which activist struggle to bring about democracy and social justice.

and protest. Working apart from dominant institutions, these publications were not-for-profit and served to promote Greenham events and other groups engaged in political struggles. Such publications can be thought of, in J.K. Gibson-Graham's terms, as non-capitalist enterprises that coexist alongside the capital marketplaces of institutionalized publications (1996, 90-91). As Bob Ostertag argues, movement media are distinct from institutionalized media for a number of financial and social reasons. The (ideal) productive relations of communality, collectivity, and labor as self-creativity differ from that of a corporate, profit-driven media enterprise (2006, 3). Likewise, the values that shape the production of movement publications, such as a commitment to selling advertisements only to non-profits and community-based groups, make its value as a commodity quite different to that of daily tabloid. In addition, while movement publications are often ephemeral, they are also treasured, hoarded and archived away by movement participants, giving them a value that far exceeds their financial worth on the market.

Perhaps most significantly, this media was participatory. It offered a space for the communication and discernment of "intelligent feelings" about militarization, nuclear disarmament, feminist anti-imperialist politics and collective living (Seller 1985). Contributors covered protest as participants, not observers (Ostertag 2006, 3). Some Greenham campers, already working as freelance journalists and photographers, contributed to movement publications' stories of the camp. In addition, there were a number of what Ostertag terms "accidental journalists"—people who do not necessarily have any formal training or institutional support that come to take on the task of documenting protest

activities (10). For example, Liz Galst, a camper who worked on the Greenham newsletter in 1984, began doing journalism in college “not sort of intentionally just kind of by accident.” After Greenham she went on to cover GLBT issues as a writer for different publications and continues to work as a freelance journalist today.³¹ Other women began as “accidental journalists” and ended up on the payroll for institutional publications. For example, Ann Pettit, organizer of the original peace march from Cardiff to the Greenham air base, helped create the first Greenham newsletter, wrote for CND’s *Peace News*, and later became an occasional writer for national publications such as the *Guardian*.

This broad range of participant-observers covering events at Greenham led to exchanges across diverse activist communities and social networks. Many women active at Greenham also participated in various women’s and lesbian groups. Some belonged to the Labour Party, communist and socialist groups, various international solidarity groups, anti-facist and anti-apartheid groups. When these women wrote for movement publications, they were often writing from within one protest community to or for another related community. As such, connections and conflicts, as well as new strategies and tactics were frequently shared via the overlapping communication networks sustained, in part, by the publications of these related social movements.

The alignment of Greenham with the concept of autonomous media helps to link past forms of social movement and grassroots media with contemporary digital and internet-based media-making practices. In particular, as Greenham was one of the first movements to successfully mobilize participants through the use

³¹ Liz Galst. Personal correspondence, June 29, 2007.

of documentary video played off video cassettes, it offers up a site for a situated, historical analysis of how ‘new media’ technologies were incorporated into social movement activism in the years before the ‘digital revolution.’ Likewise, the language of the ‘web’ that populated Greenham’s protest culture resonates with, and perhaps prefigures, the communicative infrastructure of many contemporary social justice groups, particularly in the alterglobalization movement.³²

In the first section of this chapter, I look specifically at feminist and peace movement publications and promotional materials, including the documentary video *Carry Greenham Home*, to show the importance of studying movement media as distinct from—and often counter to—dominant media representations. Each media publication and journalist, as well as the makers of the Greenham documentary, had a distinct relationship to Greenham events, groups and participants. These relationships were often marked both in the content and coverage, as well as in the tone and approach. In the second part of the chapter I examine camp-based newsletters and demonstration booklets that were produced by women at the peace encampment for women in the broader Greenham community. I discuss how Greenham women became media producers, creating their own newsletters, booklets and other ephemeral media. The poetry, cartoons, sketches, songs, intricate drawings and haphazard doodles generate images of Greenham as a place rich with creativity, spontaneity, political experimentation and self-reflexive thinking. I explore the ways that these autonomous media artifacts were physically produced and circulated among women at the camp and

³² See the chapter three for further discussion of web-related practices and symbolism at Greenham.

in the wider Greenham network. I argue that these documents, considered in their artifact or material form, offer rich insight into how physical and discursive political environments shape—and give rise to—distinct social movement cultures. I end this chapter by positioning Greenham’s grassroots newsletters and demonstration booklets in relation to zines. I argue that Greenham’s camp-based media should be considered as part of the genealogy of zine-making, rather than exclusively as ‘movement ephemera’ or ‘social movement publications.’ Placing this kind of media production alongside that of zines and their histories helps to bridge gaps in chronological histories of women’s grassroots publication and intervenes in narratives of zine-making as an individualist or ‘underground’ exercise, as is argued by Stephen Duncombe (1997), Chris Atton (2002) and many Third Wave feminist scholars.

Peace Movement Publications

The self-declared “independent radical fortnightly” *Peace News* provided campaign updates as well as articles on national and international events related to peace issues. In terms of content, the newsletter presented pieces both critical and supportive of the women’s peace camp, displaying its members at times in ambivalent and often competing stances toward the camp’s women’s-only mandate, anarchic organization structure and direct action tactics. Like the *Guardian*, Peace movement press reports tended to focus on those Greenham women who were “nice housewives and concerned mothers,” rather than the

aggressive punk lesbians with crew-cuts.³³ The anti-nuclear and anti-US military politics of Greenham women were often represented, while the anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian elements of women's protests were not often discussed. Yet while *Peace News* often reproduced dominant visions and versions of Greenham as either 'good women' or 'hostile lesbians', they were generally supportive of the camp and gave room to the perspectives of women engaged in Greenham protests. One way they did this was by publishing articles by Greenham protesters and women affiliated with the camp. These articles contrasted sharply with institutional media coverage.

For example, Lucinda Broadbent's January 21, 1983 article for *Peace News* directly confronted media misrepresentations of Greenham, offering an insightful and well researched analysis of national media coverage. Broadbent surveyed eight of the most widely-read national papers that covered the December 12th 1983 'Embrace the Base' demonstration at Greenham. Her article begins with a table comparing descriptions of women protesters' behavior in one column with the police's behavior in another. She found that military metaphors such as '[women] went into battle' were used to describe protesters, whereas pacifistic metaphors such as 'tried to cool the situation' were ascribed to the police's actions. Broadbent writes that by doing this "the papers direct the blame for the violence towards the women who sat peacefully at the Gate" and distort women's engagement of non-violent tactics by describing them in violent terms (i.e. 'screaming and chanting', 'hurling themselves in front of buses'). She goes on to

³³ Rebecca. *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983 (Feminist Archive South)

detail the ways in which reporters act as “godlike observers,” walking over and stepping on women as they scurry to take pictures of police dragging women out of the blockades of the gate. This observer position also means that reporters never really get to know what participating in the protest feels like. She argues:

[The Press] churn out all the familiar stereotypes—sincere grandmothers, concerned housewives, burly lesbians, chaos and arrests—as if they captured all the really newsworthy facts, without finding out how we saw it all, and without ever admitting the limitations of their view.³⁴

Broadbent contrasts this coverage with women’s own accounts of the demonstration. She ends her article by linking this media event with the broader effects of such journalistic behavior, stating, “This is how women get written out of history. Yes, all these newspaper reports *are* better than being ignored, but the ‘storm-troopers in the front line’ are not satisfied.”³⁵

This article further evidences the extent to which Greenham participants actively developed a sophisticated media literacy.³⁶ *Peace News*, as part of the movement press, provided a space for such criticisms to be worked out. Broadbent’s writing style and tone is validated in the pages of the magazine in a way in which it would not be in a more institutionalized research publication. Likewise, movement publications like *Peace News* aimed to publish their reports very quickly, making them timely resources for movement participants. As Chris

³⁴ Lucinda Broadbent. “Greenham Common: the media’s version” *Peace News* January 21, 1983 (Women’s Library, Archive Collection, “Press Cuttings,” 5GCW/E/1).

³⁵ “Greenham Common: the media’s version.”

³⁶ As I will discuss in more detail later on in this chapter, Broadbent’s concluding remarks also evidence the ways in which self-parody functioned as both a healing mechanism and a form of critical engagement.

Atton argues, emerging political issues, conflicts and debates are often at the very heart of movement publications (2002, 12). They offer what Walter Benjamin has called an ‘organizational usefulness’ that goes beyond their rhetorical function to provide an ‘organizing function’ (cited in Atton 2002, 23). In other words, their aim is to express a political outlook often absent from other media, as well as to cultivate and sustain social movement communities.

Another important publication put out by a Greenham support group was the glossy, sixteen page pamphlet of quotations, stories and photographs called *The Greenham Factor* published by Greenham Print Prop. An informational and fundraising resource, *The Greenham Factor* was sold at infoshops, community centres and radical bookstores for one pound. To encourage people to buy a copy, rather than browse through one or borrow a friend’s, the cover banner advertises that proceeds go to the camp and that the pamphlet includes a poster. Again, this text focused on and reinforced the ‘ordinary housewife’ image of Greenham. For example, a large quote on the second page reads “I’ve been accused of being cruel and hard-hearted for leaving my children behind, but it’s exactly for my children that I’m doing this. In the past, men have left home to go to war. Now women are leaving home for peace” (“The Greenham Factor,” 2-3). As I will discuss in chapter four, ‘women leaving home for peace’ became a Greenham soundbite, used in television coverage, Tony Biggins Opera ‘The Gates of Greenham’ and on other support group’s promotional material. A few pages later, another large quotation reads, “You see, I really fancy some grandchildren” (“The Greenham Factor,” 9).

Absent from the pages of this pamphlet were depictions and discussions of the camp's lesbian, punk and anarchist elements. Likewise, the vision of feminism it presented celebrated 'womanhood' free of the anxieties, challenges and subversions of the camp's separatist politics. It stuck to a 'liberal' frame in which women rejected the decisions of the government and its leaders, but not the very structure and function of government itself. For example, an extracted quotation in the beginning of the pamphlet reads, "Disenfranchised women, despite the vote, we are campaigning against Cruise missiles, but in doing so we are also taking on the world" ("The Greenham Factor," 2). On the same page text reads, "Democratic government is an expression of a civilized society. We want to safeguard our civilization and halt the erosion of its democracy" ("The Greenham Factor," 2). While these extracted quotations certainly capture the oppositional sentiment of Greenham women's positions, the critique offered here differs significantly from the critiques of property, State violence and imperialism found elsewhere in women's writing and statements. Greenham anthologies, newsletters and interviews with campers capture a much broader range of critique, influenced by radical feminist, anarchist and socialist analyses of domination and government corruption, as I will explore in later chapters. Likewise, the notion and language of civilization evoked here appears at odds with many of the criticisms of 'civilization' found in Greenham women's writing and in feminists' analyses more broadly.

At the same time as it offered a skewed view of Greenham, this pamphlet had a distinct 'organizational usefulness.' Readers are encouraged to engage with the pamphlet as an object for activism. The text reads, "This publication is itself a

tool. Use the pages as posters, or send one to your local MP” (“The Greenham Factor,” 9). When the pamphlet morphed from text to posters, the images of women engaged in protest actions become far more significant than the written content. This meant that many people would encounter a large glossy poster and cut up pictures without necessarily encountering the text. As these kinds of images were costly to produce, it is very unlikely they would have been made at the camp or using camp funds. Similar to my discussion of scrapbooking in chapter one, here the acts of circulation, transfer and display alter the significance of the pamphlet’s content. In poster form such images function as a means of recognition within an activist community. The affective connection those involved in the protests have with the posters can produce collective feelings of belonging and serve to validate movement participants’ engagements at Greenham. At the same time, when sent to a local MP, the pamphlet functioned to re-emphasize and mark the protest as a significant political event. Likewise, if encountered by someone critical of events at Greenham, the poster serves as a confrontation, carrying with it the oppositional politics of the protest camp. In addition, as a cultural object or artifact, the dual-use of this material (as pamphlet and poster) gives it greater longevity as a piece of memorabilia. While a pamphlet is often tucked away in a box or on a shelf, a poster might remain up in a home, social center, infoshop or radical bookstore for years after its first publication.

Women's Movement Media

While supportive Peace Movement media tended to 'liberalize' or distort Greenham women's feminism, the Women's Movement publications brought these issues to the fore. Just as women chose to separate from men in order to develop their own politics, some campers felt it necessary to create separate, autonomous spaces from the "male Fleet Street ambassadors" to develop their own media.³⁷ Marilyn Frye argues that controlling access and undertaking definition are fundamental to women's acts and practices of separation (1983, 105). She writes, "Women generally are not the people who do the defining, and we cannot from our isolation and powerlessness simply commence saying different things than others say and make it stick ... but we are able to arrogate definition to ourselves when we repattern access" (106). Greenham women's autonomous media, as a constitutive element of the camp's broader separation from men, allowed women to "draw new boundaries and create new roles and relationships" (106). Protesters were able to produce alternative knowledges (and epistemologies), in part through the development of a language and aesthetic that manifested in their autonomous media production. This media served to "contest the symbolic reality constructed by corporate institutions of media concentration" (Langlios and Dubois 2005, 9).

Feminist publications such as *The London Women's Liberation Newsletter*, *Catcall*, *Outwrite* and *Spare Rib* sought to create this autonomous space of journalism by women, for women. In the early 1980s they served as important forums and resources for the Greenham network. These feminist

³⁷ Alma "The Press" *Outwrite* Jan 1983.

publications carried ads, flyers and information for actions, frequently offering explicit encouragement to women to attend. At the same time, these publications served as sites where women offered reflections and criticisms about Greenham. Unlike the majority of content in the local and national press, feminist publications were directly invested in the cultural and political relevance of Greenham. It's proximity to the movement—both in terms of labor, with readers and writers involved in Greenham protests, and in terms of value, having shared political ideals and goals—shaped the ways in which it produced knowledge about Greenham. As these publications were part of the broader feminist communities in the United Kingdom, they were read by women involved with Greenham. The proximity these publications had to the protests at Greenham was expressed, for example, on the Greenham Common perimeter fence. As Jan Parker recalled, covers of *Spare Rib* and *Outwrite* were affixed to the wire at the December 12-13, 1983 demonstrations that brought between 35,000 and 50,000 women to Greenham (1983, 19).³⁸

The most widely read feminist publication at this time was the magazine *Spare Rib*. By the early 1980s the magazine had been picked up by a commercial distributor, could be found on newsstands in most cities, and was read by an estimated 100,000 women every month. Ruth Wallsgrove argued that it was “the most important bulletin for the [feminist] movement in Britain” (1983b, 25). The magazine both wrote for and created a community of feminist readers. *Spare Rib*

³⁸As is common for large-scale demonstrations, estimated figures for this event range from 35,000 to 50,000. Greenham women present claim that the media figures vastly underestimated the number of participants. Sasha Roseneil cites 35,000 for this demonstration in her study of Greenham Common (2000, 195).

explicitly employed the idiom of community in its tone and format. The magazine was edited by a collective, had a lengthy letters page, comments on internal debates within and between women's groups, and featured advertisements for women cultural producers and women's events. While the protests were seen as a separate site for observation, they were also taken up in relation to the magazine's notional feminist community. Articles were framed either as questioning the relationship between Greenham Common and the Women's Liberation Movement, i.e. "*Can* we assume that [Greenham] has anything to do with Women's Liberation?"; or as exploring competing meanings and ideas about what Greenham is and should be in relation to feminist politics, i.e. "What sort of Peace do we want?" (May 1984). Women's prior understandings of, and assumed shared response to, how national newspapers ideologically functioned are both presented in this article. In response to denigrating tabloid press coverage of a Greenham women's divorce, Ruth Wallsgrove writes directly to her readers, "Altogether now—aaaaaargh" (1984, 21). This motion toward collectivity at once reveals and produces an intimacy between the publication and its readers.

Like *Spare Rib*, London-based feminist newspaper *Outwrite* was produced by a collective of women and was dedicated to offering news by women, for women. *Outwrite* called itself an 'internationalist feminist' paper concerned "with the development of feminism worldwide" and the examination of women's oppressions "in the context of imperialism, racism and class divisions."³⁹ Much of *Outwrite's* coverage focuses on women's struggles in 'Third World' countries and on the struggles of black women and women of color in the United Kingdom. It

³⁹ anon. "Up Against the Wall," *Outwrite*, Issue 70, November 1988.

offers one of the only documentations of women of color's participation in Greenham from the perspective of women of color. When writing by women of color within a movement is taken together with writing by white women on women of color and racism, a particular vantage point emerges where differences between women's standpoints can be read in relation to their written reflections. This allows for an analysis of recurring issues, framings and languages used to mark internal conflict. It is possible to see how women of color's narratives of exclusion are adopted and deployed by white women in different contexts and to different effects.

For example, in Kris's review article on Wilmette Brown's pamphlet *Black Women and the Peace Movement* she writes, "I personally would like the women's peace movement to take notice of the issues that affect Black women instead of just expecting us to join them in their demonstrations!"⁴⁰ This frequently reiterated description of exclusion in the peace movement marked out the terrain of the issue. In response to this position there were women of color who sought to connect the nuclear issue to black women's lives (Alice Walker, Wilmette Brown, Angela Davis, Sonja Sanchez), groups that brought women of color's issues into the peace movement (The King's Cross Women's Centre, Southhall Black Sisters), white women that worked more directly on issues affecting women of color, as well as white women who, as Kris writes, lamented the lack of women of color but did nothing to intervene in the problem, or who ignored the issue altogether.

⁴⁰ Kris. "Review of Black Women and the Peace Movement," *Outwrite*, Issue 23, March 1984.

Gail Lewis, a self-identified black socialist feminist, reports for *Outwrite* on how a political trip to Nicaragua made her rethink her attitudes towards Greenham Common. She begins the article by laying out what she perceives as a shared “bottom line” of black feminists’ diverse politics. For Lewis, the aims of the peace movement were “at best secondary to our immediate needs and at worst yet more of the same racist, nationalist, xenophobic and heterosexist attitudes which plague left politics in Britain.” During her meetings with Nicaraguan women, Lewis found that the black women delegates from Britain shared much in common in their struggles against racist state oppression. Yet, she reports being surprised by differences in their views over the importance of the British peace movement. She wrote:

On this question time and again we were left silent as Nicaraguan women talked of the tremendous international importance of Greenham Common, the leading role these women were playing in the anti-imperialist struggle etc. You can imagine we baulked and yet we were forced to learn a lesson from this.⁴¹

The lesson Lewis reports learning is that while there were many criticisms to be made about how Greenham was failing to incorporate black British women’s struggles and account for the movement’s perpetuation of certain forms of racism and nationalism, from a broader international perspective, she realized that “every chink in the armour of imperialism is a contribution to the struggle for liberation wherever it occurs.” She concluded that the aim of black socialist feminists should be to “develop criticisms (and cynicisms) in order to use them as a means to

⁴¹ Gail Lewis “Rethinking the Peace Movement,” *Outwrite*, January 1985.

challenge and transform the peace movements.”⁴² While Lewis reports that she still does not “want to embrace the base,” she does want to encourage black feminists to pressure the peace movement to embrace and more explicitly include the struggles of the oppressed and colonized as central to their own “struggles for peace.”⁴³ I will return to this and other issues of exclusion at a number of points throughout the dissertation.

Whereas *Spare Rib* included arts and culture features, *Outwrite* focused almost exclusively on women’s protest actions and campaigns, prison conditions and violence against women perpetuated by the State, in particular against women of color. As in the mainstream press, short write-ups were often framed by the number of women arrested at an action. However, the tone of *Outwrite* was quite different. This excerpt from a report in the January 1983 edition embeds the ‘facts’ of Greenham women’s arrests within a critique of the justice system:

Two women were ‘allowed bail because of their age!’ GRRRRR!

One of these women refused to be released and remained in police custody with the remaining 42 women until their appearance in court on 3rd Jan.⁴⁴

As in Ruth Wallsgrove’s piece on Greenham discussed above, here a collective expression of anger is marked within the coverage of women’s arrests. While readers here are not explicitly prompted to respond, as they are in Wallsgrove’s piece, the use of exclamation marks and capital letters call forth a collective analysis that assumes the reader agrees that allowing bail for women based on

⁴² “Rethinking the Peace Movement.”

⁴³ “Rethinking the Peace Movement.”

⁴⁴“The Press,” *Outwrite*, January 1983.

their age is discriminatory and degrading. This gives emotionality to the story as anger is directed toward the State (police, judge, court system). It also views arrest from the perspective of the protesters, rather than from that of the police or ‘law-abiding citizen’ as is found in mainstream press coverage of arrests.

Also similar to both *Peace News* and *Spare Rib*, *Outwrite* offered sophisticated and often humorous critiques of the mainstream media and national press coverage of Greenham. Again there are headlines, excerpts and stories from the mainstream press couched within critical commentary. A January 1983 story, “The Press” reads:

For the first time in ages women made the headlines of the British press. The enormous Greenham Common gathering proved too much for the male Fleet Street ambassadors ‘Maybe this marks the start of women taking over the world,’ cried the *Daily Mail*’s paranoid centre page headline.⁴⁵

This commentary evidences Nick Couldry’s argument discussed in the previous chapter that, for Greenham, any press was good press (1999). In its reference to both the *Daily Mail* and the “male Fleet Street ambassadors,” this *Outwrite* article belittles mainstream journalism. The author reverses the dominant representational regime of the tabloid press in which women—when not ignored completely—are generally demeaned. In other words, it is not Greenham women who are ‘paranoid’ about nuclear annihilation, but the *Daily Mail* and its reporters who are paranoid about their own annihilation. This, as Marilyn Frye, among

⁴⁵ “The Press.”

many others, has argued, is a common response to women's separatism and the feminist movement more broadly (1983).

Outwrite also ran small ads for feminist events and gatherings, but its tone and style often combined a familiar, supportive tone with a more 'hard news' approach that was rare in other feminist publications. Write-ups tended to steer away from personal anecdotes and avoided coverage of internal conflicts at the camp. As the editorial collective reflected in their final issue, "We had a reluctance to 'wash our dirty linen in public', and failed to report on internal disputes and malpractices within women's groups and organizations." Yet, while internal conflicts within organizations were not often addressed in the editorial content, the letters section of *Outwrite* provided a space for readers to discuss news article's representations of issues. As with local newspapers, the smaller size and reading community of grassroots publications means that letters sections are often a significant part of the paper with many invested readers. At times the letters pages are stages for debate where a variety of different views are expressed. Sometimes letters replying to letters will even be published as an issue spans a number of editions of a publication.

On occasion, campers would respond to press coverage of Greenham that they felt was misinformed or dismissive. For example, Greenham camper Jill responded to articles on Greenham published in *Outwrite* that she felt inaccurately represented the camp:

I find your coverage of the women's peace movement rather negative... You say that, 'Up 'til now Greenham has remained a one issue campaign', and 'the women have failed to make

practical connections with anti-imperialist and black women's struggles'. Well, yes—Greenham is a 'single issue' campaign, just as the miners' strike is a 'single-issue' campaign, but this does not mean that connections have not been made and that it's irrelevant to wider struggles. The struggle against nuclear missiles is inherently anti-imperialist. The Greenham women's anti-NATO stance *is* anti-imperialist.⁴⁶

Jill writes that *Outwrite* previously published an article praising the solidarity movement for a nuclear free Pacific because it "unites anti-nuclear politics with the independence struggles of the Pacific and land rights struggles."⁴⁷ She points out that this solidarity campaign was being run, in part, out of Greenham by women participating in the Greenham protests. She also argues that Greenham women were engaged in solidarity work with the miner's strike, were making links with women in Northern Ireland, and with campaigns about uranium mining in Namibia. Jill also noted that those black women working in the peace movement should not go overlooked. Jill concludes, "I'm not saying Greenham is perfect and always thinks out its mobilizations ... let's talk about the problems of Greenham by all means—but not in this dismissible way!"⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Jill, "Our Greenham Coverage," *Outwrite*, December 1984.

⁴⁷ "Our Greenham Coverage."

⁴⁸ "Our Greenham Coverage."

Documentary Video: *Carry Greenham Home*

Although the mainstream media was present for major public events at Greenham, the majority of actions and everyday practices did not receive coverage. Well known feminist Anne Snitow, a photographer and camp supporter, reflected, “I cannot imagine coverage of the most thrilling things I saw at Greenham, many of them glimpsed in darkness, in fog and rain, generated out of an unplanned impulse in a group thinking in common” (1985, 46). Snitow suggests that “perhaps this is just to repeat the old saying, ‘The revolution will not be televised’” (46). Yet while this was certainly the case for mainstream television crews, perhaps what was—or has become—the most significant media production made at and about Greenham is the documentary film *Carry Greenham Home*. In contrast to journalists’ accounts of Greenham, like that offered by Caroline Blackwood, *Carry Greenham Home* was viewed by many campers as “really indigenous and authentic.”⁴⁹

The footage of *Carry Greenham Home* was filmed by Amanda Richardson and Beebon Kidron beginning in December 1982. The two young film students went to the camp as part of a film-making assignment for their university course. Beebon recalled that at their first filming during the ‘Embrace the Base’ December 1982 demonstration they were around all male crews.⁵⁰ The police were letting male crews through the police lines, but not them. As they squeezed passed to get footage, women protesters cheered and, Beebon tells *City Limits*, they “were accepted as part of protests.” Drawn into the energy and passion of the

⁴⁹ Liz Galst. Personal correspondence, June 29, 2007.

⁵⁰“Greenham: a view from the stalls” – review of film ‘Carry Greenham Home,’ *City Limits*, 20-26 Jan 1984.

protest, Beebon says that at one point she was crying behind the lens, while Amanda was holding up the boom and singing. As the women continued to return to the camp for more footage, Beebon reflected that “the film became part of the politics” at Greenham. Rather than becoming accidental journalists (Ostertag 2006), Beebon and Amanda here became, in a sense, accidental protesters. At times Beebon and Amanda would pretend to be filming so “the police didn’t get so heavy.” She referred to a particular moment in the film where a woman is singing ‘Which Side are You On’ to some police officers. Beebon comments, “There’s no way the camera wasn’t behind that dance, that questioning of the police. We were the witness.”⁵¹

Amanda and Beebon didn’t make the footage into a film until the summer of 1983, when the Greenham peace camp was being vilified in the press. Beebon told the *City Limits* reporter, “Then it seemed necessary.”⁵² *Carry Greenham Home* was circulated via video cassette both nationally and internationally. Greenham support groups in cities across the United Kingdom would play the video in meeting halls, church basements and school classrooms, often with a protester or two on hand for discussion. As video recording technologies were becoming everyday technologies either available for loan or found in people’s homes and workplaces, duplication was relatively cheap and easy. At the same time, a documentary protest video was still a fairly new phenomenon and a novel way to spread the word. Even a few years prior, the cost of production and duplication would have been far costlier. This meant that the video could travel

⁵¹ “Greenham: a view from the stalls”

⁵² “Greenham: a view from the stalls”

around quickly and harness peoples new found excitement with home movie technologies.⁵³

Of course, these technological aspects are not the only reason the film was such an accomplishment for the filmmakers and the Greenham network. A passionate review of *Carry Greenham Home* in *Outwrite* outlines reasons for the films celebration and success as a resource for mobilization:

The fundamental difference between this film and anything produced on Greenham before ... is that it is made by Greenham Women ... The outcome of this is the most true to life representation of the *Peace Camp* that you are ever likely to see. Those who have been there will remember the atmosphere and relive the feelings that the film evokes, particularly the joy and strength of women participating together.⁵⁴

This “real life” effect is the result of the diverse actions and interactions the film documents. *Carry Greenham Home* shows images of the ‘Embrace the Base’ mass demonstration and blockade, images of women dancing on the missile silos, glimpses of the Rainbow Dragon Festival where women sewed together a 4 ½ mile dragon tail and weaved in and out of the base with it; the Teddy Bear Picnic at which women dressed in teddy bear and Easter bunny costumes to break into and have a picnic in the base; and of the bike lock action in which women locked the main gate to the base shut using the strongest bike locks available. In this scene we see soldiers produce larger and larger bolt cutters in attempts to break

⁵³ For release in theatres, the footage was transferred to 16mm film and opened on January 22, 1984 at Hampstead Everyman in London, England.

⁵⁴ Carol. “Carry Greenham Home,” *Outwrite*, February 1984.

the lock until they accidentally knock down the gate (with the lock still intact) using five foot bolt cutters that required a number of men to operate.

In addition, Beebon and Amanda's film captures the mundane moments, tense conversations and spontaneous small pleasures of life at the camp from breakfast on a cold winter morning to singing by the roadside to fighting over funds at a money meeting. Carol also points out in her article that "not all the emotions evoked are pleasant." Shots of evictions and the rough policing of blockades capture fearful and violent moments of protest. Rather than offer a simple message, Carol suggests that this gives the film depth, showing the camp "warts and all."⁵⁵ Often documentary video of protests focus solely on moments of intense action, confrontation with authorities, property destruction and moments of collective joy. While these kinds of images certainly contain and evoke strong emotions, they remain detached from the day-to-day context of organizing, eating and protesting. The Greenham documentary intersperses images of these different occasions. This creates a sense not only that viewers could "carry home" the sentiments of the Greenham protest, but at the same time, make Greenham home (albeit for most a temporary one).

Greenham-based Media

The warts as well as the joys, passions, worries and wonders of Greenham women formed the content of the camp's newsletters and demonstration booklets. From the early months of the protests, women at Greenham began to assemble a newsletter and other forms of publicity in order to mobilize new participants,

⁵⁵"Carry Greenham Home."

circulate information about events, document their actions and create forums for cultivating their ideas, demands, tactics and analyses. Two collections of writing by Greenham women are Harford and Hopkins' (1984) *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* and Beth Junor's (1995) *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: A History of Nonviolent Resistance 1984-1995*. However, while they each contain a good deal of women's writings from camp publications, they only reproduce textual content, de-contextualizing writing and drawings from its original sources. Formal aspects are lost in this preservation as typeface and layout become standardized. Likewise, drawings, borders and other aesthetic features are mostly excluded. Similarly, on the few occasions that scholars cite camp-based materials in their research on Greenham it is this bare content that is considered. Quotations are extracted and used alongside other sociological data and historical information. In either case, the form, production methods and distribution of these camp-based publications are not considered as sites of study in themselves.⁵⁶

In this last section of the chapter I look at Greenham's camp-based media. I raise questions about form as well as content, about production as well as circulation. I then turn to examine a controversial incident in which a camper burnt thousands of copies of a Greenham newsletter to protest what she perceived as censorship. I use this incident to frame some of the key values at stake in Greenham women's production of autonomous newsletters. I end with a

⁵⁶ Those who have written on Greenham and the media (Young, Cresswell, Couldry) focus on local and national British newspapers. Jolly and Liddington's work use documents from personal collections and Roseneil draws on an extensive set of interviews. None of this research focuses on camp-based media artifacts.

discussion of how these camp-based publications can be productively thought of in relation to zines and zine culture.

Given the limited technological resources at the camp, the easiest media form for women to put together were handwritten newsletters that could be reproduced outside the camp. Newsletters made by women at Greenham varied in frequency, size and layout. Original materials were created and collected mainly at the camp. Sometimes an initial set of copies were made by mimeograph. Originals, whether still in pieces or already laid out, were then sent off for reproduction. Sometimes a support group was responsible, other times a woman with a car would go into Newbury to make a set of photocopies. On a few occasions, particularly for larger events in the earlier years of the camp, CND would take responsibility for producing materials. A limited number of copies ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand would be produced and then sent back to the camp and distributed to campers, support networks and to those on any kind of Greenham mailing list that was available at the time. Individuals and groups receiving materials would sometimes be asked to make additional copies for further circulation. Larger publications, such as the February 1983 edition covering the time from November 1982 to mid-February 1983, were also sold in independent bookshops and women's centres for a price of around 30-50p. The undated broadsheet *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter* that came out [circa] October 1983 is marked with 'Donations appreciated' on its leader.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ This information is gathered from my archival research as well as from personal correspondence with Liz Galst, June 29, 2007.

The newsletters generally included a large amount of creative writing and artwork and they were reproduced in a decentralized fashion. Small groups and individual readers were, in part, responsible for copying and circulating the publications. The publications contained a variety of works by women residing at various gates, as well as work contributed from other women in the Greenham network, peace protesters and international visitors. Most of the Greenham publications feature different hand-written pieces. Some pieces are typed and writing is often accompanied by small sketches or cartoons. There are also larger drawings, political cartoons and maps of the base included in the publications. There is very little consistency in format and lay-out. Within a six month period the size and shape of these publications changed from an A5 booklet to an A4 booklet to a broadsheet newspaper. Very few of the Greenham newsletters used standard layout techniques. Individual contributions were generally separated by hand drawn lines or borders containing elements such as small images of women's signs, bolt cutters, anarchy or peace signs.

Newsletters were not produced on set dates. In early periods of the camps life (1981-1983), newsletters were far less frequent and 'news' could cover a span of several months. Between 1983 and 1985 newsletters were more frequent, though still rarely came out monthly for more than a period of a few months at a time without interruption. For instance, on one occasion in 1984 campers published both "June News" and "More June News" and in 1985 published "August and Most of September News."⁵⁸ The varying interests and experience of women living at the camp affected the aesthetic and economic aspects of

⁵⁸Newsletters held at Feminist Archive South

producing the newsletter. Loosely organized committees—sometimes of only two women at a time—were formed at various points to make decisions about the newsletters. This was a very casual and sporadic affair. As camper Liz Galst recalled the process, “One of us [who put together the newsletter] would go, ‘Oh yeah it’s time to do the newsletter.’” They would then walk around the base, gathering bits of writing or drawing women had done, as well as news and updates from each gate.

While there was a great deal of variation in all aspects of the newsletters, a few regular features can be found, such as a list of upcoming events, reports on evictions, details of imprisonments, and the status of ongoing court cases. These newsletters allowed movement participants to explore and experiment with political ideas. They gave women a venue to share poetry, writing, journal entries, sketches, political comics and other artwork. As such, they encouraged forms of expression often absent from both institutional and social movement publications. While the newsletters were not read or contributed to by all women, they often offer a sort of crystallization point where major issues and conflicts of the time were addressed from a diversity of viewpoints. Newsletters were well-suited to capture the everydayness, spontaneity and fluidity of life at the camp. Thus, as historical records, this kind of writing provides insight into the intricacies and minority opinions that accompanied splits, transformation and changes at Greenham that are often lost from dominant historical archives.

Booklets for Greenham events were similar to newsletters in some respects. They also contained poetry, artwork and prose by women at the camp. However, as content was specific to a planned event, booklet producers

additionally provided schedules, maps, legal briefings and an introduction to planned actions. Visitors that came to Greenham for events were encouraged to come up with their own actions, contribute to those already under works and generally help out to keep the camp running. This vision of a communal event shaped by participants drew heavily from anarchist and feminist organizing practices. Those living at the camp and those in the support networks organizing logistics sought to breakdown divisions between organizers and participants. In this tradition of nonhierarchical organizing, operational tasks such as cooking, cleaning or digging a ‘shit pit’ were taken on by individuals. As these events were women-only, worries about gendered divisions of labor could be circumvented. In fact, Greenham women invited men to specifically help out with childcare crèches, cooking and other forms of support usually relegated to women. Thus, while event booklets provided a ‘program’, their lack of detailed procedures differentiate them from more traditional programs. In addition, their creative content, inclusive tone and frequent uses of the pronoun ‘we’ and ‘our’ functioned to actively construct a community.

‘Why I Burned 5000 Newsletters’

The documentation of a controversial event in 1983 brings some of the issues of autonomous production to the forefront. In early fall Green Gate resident camper Jean Freer burned 5000 copies of the 16 page, broadsheet *Greenham Women Peace Camp* newsletter. In November 1983 Freer released a statement about her action entitled, “Why I Burned 5000 Greenham Newsletters.” In it she touched on a number of issues:

Do we at this camp consider ourselves feminist? I have presumed (possibly incorrectly) that we do. Our newsletter then would be presumed to be uncensored and unedited. The material that was collected was collected on this basis, to be printed in 1000 copies (decided at a newsletter meeting) to be distributed from the camp. The material was given over to a woman to paste up and print. She censored, edited including changing titles and creating titles, and decided to produce 6000 copies to be distributed by CND to all their regional groups. This last decision was taken at a money meeting because 'there was no time' to call a newsletter meeting. So wimmin particularly concerned with the newsletter had no way of knowing such a crucial issue as distribution through CND of material not written with them in mind was to be discussed (1984, 2).

This event, and its documentation, raises questions about the relationship between media production and content. In this first paragraph of the statement, Freer discusses what she perceives as a disloyalty to the Greenham ethos. Freer believed that decisions about the newsletter should have been made by the newsletter committee even if women at the camp did not have the resources available to reproduce and circulate as many copies. The integrity of the publication, according to Freer should not have been compromised in an effort to reach a wider audience.

Freer also attributes her decision to burn copies of the newsletters to the censorship of articles, primarily of her own article. Freer had written a lengthy

response to *Breaching the Peace*, a feminist pamphlet criticizing the peace camp. The article was shortened and a title was added that read “Where are our Feminist Friends?” Freer felt that this distortion would cause an aggressive response in readers. Here Freer equates ‘editing’ with ‘censorship.’ She envisioned a camp-based publication in which editing occurred collectively, or at least, in the space of the camp, rather than by an outside, institutional group. Unlike Greenham, CND was a mixed organization with hierarchical structure and far more formal political procedure. Hence, for Freer, turning the newsletter over to CND was perceived as a loss of autonomy. For Freer, the act of handing the newsletter over to CND constituted the transfer of the power of self-definition, a value that laid at the heart of Greenham women’s separatism. In her view, a feminist commitment to women’s autonomous decision making outside of institutional bodies (like CND), was disregarded in the decision to allow CND to reproduce and distribute the newsletter.

Freer’s action was condemned by most women at Greenham as selfish and unjustifiable. However, the conflicts Freer draws attention to in her statement were part of larger contested issues regarding autonomy, feminism, publishing and political expression. The scarce office resources available at the camp, along with constant evictions and large discrepancies in the amount of funding on hand, made it difficult to keep the newsletter (or much of anything) running regularly. These difficulties were often documented in the pages of the Greenham newsletters, along with call outs for support.

A newsletter cartoon titled “Is Anybody Out There? Spot the Difference” represents similar concerns. The comic strip shows two separate images. The first

is of a communal feminist home where a group of women are depicted collectively cooking, washing clothes and caring for a child together in a small

Figure 4_Comic on Greenham Newsletter Readership



number of things. First, that women supporters were often so busy with daily work that engaging with Greenham—via the newsletter—was something they didn't have (or couldn't make) enough time for. Second, that these women did not have a lot of money and did a large amount of unwaged housework, making it difficult for them to offer financial contributions. And third, that, in stark contrast, upper-class or elite men had large amounts of leisure time to sit around critiquing and scoffing at the efforts of the Greenham women protesters. The cartoon represents the distinction between women's 'kitchen table politics' and men's 'dining room table politics.' The kitchen table marks the space of women's conversations during collective domestic work, whereas the dining room table signifies the forum of men's deliberations apart from the labors of housework.

Another issue that made it difficult to keep the newsletter going smoothly was the constant evictions, which in the winter months of 1984 and 1985

sometimes occurred numerous times a day, particularly in bad weather. Stories, supplies and materials could be confiscated or lost in the commotion. On one occasion the newsletter was seized by police as a result of a spontaneous trespass action. The February 1985 *Green and Common* newsletter opens with a story of what occurred. It was handwritten in all caps and bordered at the bottom by a long row of connected women's symbols:

The reason this newsletter is so late is because on Wednesday February 20th, 4 [conjoined women's symbol] were driving into Newbury to print the finished copy—having taken a wrong turning they decided to turn round in the driveway of Indigo Gate—For some reason the guards opened the gate!! So the [conjoined women's symbol] drove in. They were almost immediately arrested under section 3 of the Official Secrets Act and are now on bail until April 12. Everything in the car was seized 'as evidence' – including address books, personal letters and the newsletter. We have had to write the whole thing again—sorry it is so late.⁵⁹

This intro to the newsletter goes on to apologize to women whose stories were lost and calls on readers to send in material for later newsletters, as well as feedback on how to improve it and if it is “being wasted” as “it costs a lot to produce.”

This event is at once extraordinarily particular to Greenham as a place-based protest, and highly relevant to current on-site production of activist media.

⁵⁹ *Green and Common*, February 1985 (London, England, Women's Library, Archive Collection 5GCW/E).

It points to the spontaneous nature of direct actions at Greenham—particularly of opportunistic trespasses that evidenced the lack of security on the base. At the same time, it relays the distinct, precarious character of autonomous media that is produced at the site of protest. As we have seen increasingly over time, the police will often take any opportunity to confiscate activist media—be it a pad of paper, a camera or a video recorder.

In this newsletter there is also an intimate revelation to readers about the production processes involved in compiling, copying and distributing the newsletter. Problems, anxieties and practical concerns are laid bare to readers as they are compelled to participate in making the newsletter through financial and material contributions. These concerns are echoed in two later newsletters. The November 1985 issue of *Green and Common* uses humor to prompt newsletter recipients to become more actively involved with the newsletter. It contains a list entitled, “What You Could Do With This Newsletter”:

Before you use this newsletter to line your bird cage, consider-

- Reading it
- Circulating it amongst your [peace sign] group
- Giving it to your next door neighbor
- Sending it to your mother, sister, daughter or maybe your cousin in Australia
- Leaving it in a visible place in your dentist’s waiting room
 - or in the launderette
- Making loads of copies and handing it out at the bus station

-Or anything else to get the news to more [three conjoined women's symbols]

The writer(s) of this list seek to share distribution strategies with readers in order to decentralize and increase the circulation of the newsletter. To do so, it puts to use a number of imagined identities and practices of notional Greenham newsletter readers that differ significantly from the representational markers offered by the institutional press, while at the same time producing (and reproducing) certain images of Greenham women. For example, it references women belonging to peace groups (rather than, say, Anti-apartheid groups), and cousins in Australia (not India). Here the vision of a 'typical Greenham women' is based upon the model of a white British woman. At this time, there were many more women of color active in anti-apartheid campaigns than in peace groups in the United Kingdom. Likewise, most British-born people living in Australia would have been white migrants. British women of color, many who are part of postcolonial diasporas, would be far more likely to have relatives in countries previously colonized by the British Empire.

As white women were the largest demographic of Greenham supporters, it makes sense that these markers are mobilized here. Yet, at the same time, such references always maintain particular inclusions and exclusions that shape feelings of collective belonging. This is particularly the case when a text—such as this list—interpolates the reader, asking her to take up the identity positions offered. This said, a middle-class model is also offset in the list. The less costly “bus station” is given as an example (rather than the more expensive train station).

Likewise, “the launderette” connotes a poor or working-class subject, as most middle-class homes would be equipped with their own washer.

The strain of not having an office near the camp was felt by many campers who were actively involved with the newsletter, media correspondence, writing press releases and promotional material. For the majority of Greenham’s peak years, a London office and regional support groups took on much of the administrative work needed to sustain Greenham. On the one hand, this helped to create a broad and (for the most part) non-hierarchical ‘web-like’ support network. On the other, the distance between these spaces and the camp often furthered tension, as it was impossible for those not at the camp to experience the daily actions, conversations and routines that constituted life there (Roseneil 1995, 74). In the “August and Most of September” 1985 edition of *Green and Common*, Liz provides readers with an update on the office situation:

Greenham is in the midst of closing down our office/rest house [in London] ... Meanwhile, the camp is looking for an office in or around Newbury so that we can do our office work and be contacted a little closer to home.⁶⁰

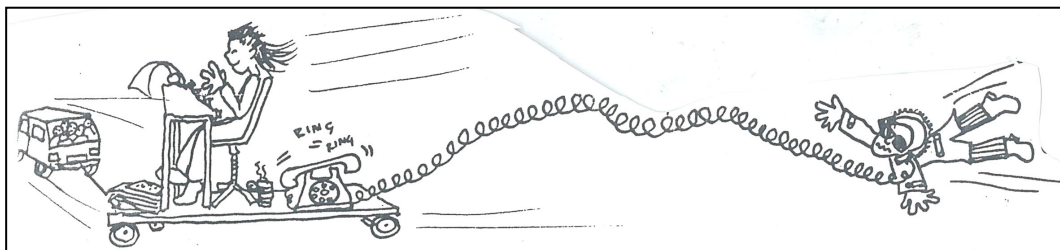


Figure 5_ The Greenham Office is Moving

⁶⁰ *Green and Common*, August and Most of September, 1985 (London, England, Women’s Library, Archive Collection 5GCW/E).

This update is accompanied by a cartoon drawing of a woman typing at a typewriter on a desk beside a stack of papers, cup of tea and ringing telephone. The floor of this ‘office’ is affixed to wheels and it is being pulled by a car full of women, while a reporter trails behind attached by a cord to the telephone. In response to constant evictions, some women at Greenham put everything they could onto wheels to enable them to roll away their belongings during evictions, evading the seizure or destruction of their goods in the “muncher”.⁶¹ The image here of a mobile office references this practice. The trailing journalist resembles other newsletter cartoons that depict soldiers and police trailing behind Greenham women, connoting the many ways in which women were often able to subvert, evade and trouble authorities.

Over the past decade, digital technologies have become increasingly used as activist tools. Handheld digital recorders and cameras are commonly used by both amateur grassroots media journalists and for protesters personal documentation. This has led to a large increase in the documentation of police brutality and the transnational circulation of documentation of small-scale direct actions. Mobile phones are also frequently employed for organization prior to and during protest events. They allow protesters to alert each other of their location, police presence, arrests, surveillance and other obstacles. At the 2007 Camp for Climate Action in England (and elsewhere) ‘tickertape’ text message updates kept people informed of various events and actions occurring throughout the week-

⁶¹ Women also used prams to store food, plants and other belongings. “Muncher” was the nickname used to refer to the garbage truck that women’s possessions were put into during evictions. For discussions of evictions and women’s building see Roseneil (1995, 120-124) and (2000, 107-108); Harwood and Hopkins (1984); as well as discussions and drawings in the Greenham newsletters. I had a lengthy discussion about the practice of sawing off shopping trolley wheels to make mobile structures with Liz Galst. Personal correspondence, June 29, 2007.

long action camp. As most mobile phones now come with cameras and (short-run) video capabilities, the ability to document continues to increase. Laptop computers and wireless internet access has enabled autonomous media stations to be set up at demonstration sites. At their best, these stations create space for participatory news publishing and skill-share. People can upload stories and images from the day straight onto the internet, offering a diversity of perspectives and outlooks.

A great deal of research has gone over the past decade exploring the changes new media technologies have had on activist cultures.⁶² A study of Greenham and other 1980s Social Movements' grassroots media making can offer this scholarship a historical context in which to discuss the rise of new media as part of a trajectory of activist uses of communications technologies. It can help us to remember that communication practices and infrastructures are shaped by new media technologies as well as by past movement cultures which influence and inspire contemporary activism. As Hakim Bey writes in his discussion of the activist "Web" in relation to the rise of the internet and other digital communications tools, "Word-of-mouth, mail, the marginal zine network, 'phone trees,' and the like already suffice to construct an information webwork. The key is not the brand or level of tech involved, but the openness and horizontality of the structure" (1991, 108). Seen as activist engagements each situated in their own technological (and tactical) contexts, we can position the transnationally

⁶² A number of edited collections have been produced looking at new media and social movement activism, particularly around the role the internet plays in this work. These include M. McCaughey and M. D. Ayers, eds. 2003. *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*. New York and London: Routledge; and Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds. 2002. *From Act Up to the WTO*. London and New York: Verso.

circulated *Carry Greenham Home* videocassette as prefigurative of the paths through the web that the activist digital video file now makes. We can place the Greenham chain letters and “please copy and circulate” newsletter messages as precursors to the email forward. We can analyze artifacts such as Greenham women’s newsletters and demonstration booklets as the indymedia’s of their time. In the final section of this chapter, I make one such connection, positioning Greenham’s camp-based media in relation to zine culture, another media form that has gained increasing currency over the past ten years.

Reading Greenham into the Zine Archive

Greenham Women’s print publications could be read as belonging solely to histories of the social movement press. However both their production processes and aesthetics share many similarities with zines. While there is great variability in the form and content of movement publications, there are a number of qualities that such formal publications share. Organizational newsletters from this time period were generally assembled, typed and photocopied at an office. They would contain primarily, if not exclusively, news and fact-based information relating to the group’s stated purpose or mission. They would come out—or at least aim to come out—on a regular basis delineated by calendar dates. And often their layout and content would be standardized across a particular period of time.

Zines, on the other hand, are often handwritten or made up from collected bits of typed out text. They frequently contain poems, song lyrics, political rants, drawings, cartoons and cuttings from other print media such as newspapers, magazines and different newsletters. Zines vary in form and layout, generally

resisting standardization and rejecting columnar formatting and standard typesets. Although there is no agreed upon single definition of a zine, paper zines are generally considered to be made by an individual or small group of people outside of an institutional context. Cultural producers and audiences of paper zines construct and participate in an alternative aesthetic and economic print culture. This is evidenced in the content, form, production, distribution and circulation patterns of zines.

Of course zines, newsletters and event programs are not completely separate forms. Heath Row writes that “zines encompass many aspects of the periodical press, including the modern underground press spawned by the alternative newspapers of the 1960s” (Row 1997). For Stephen Perkins, what differentiates zines from other periodicals and underground press publications is in part the place and practice of reproduction. He writes that many publications “utilized newsprint formats, and offset printing techniques, with the printing runs measuring in the thousands rather than in the hundreds. While much of the work in putting together the papers could be done in peoples' homes, studios and apartments, the final production invariably involved being taken out of the living situation and out to the printers” (Perkins 1992) For Perkins there are notable differences in typeset and layout between zines and other alternative press publications.

In line with Perkins, I would argue that it was Greenham's DIY ethos, non-hierarchical organizational structure and scarcity of office equipment—along with women's interest creating alternative cultures—that contribute to their publications' material likeness to zines. Likewise the kinds of production and

distribution systems women engaged are common for zine publications. During the 1970s punk movement zine producers were largely influenced by anarchist principles of autonomy, individual uniqueness and anti-authoritarianism. Zines, as Fred Wright argues, often embody these politics. According to Wright they express “a thumbing of the nose at the Symbolic order that attempts to designate and define the boundaries of human subjects” (Wright 1997). It is not surprising then, that Greenham women’s commitment to cooperative autonomy and nonhierarchical structures lent itself to a ‘zine-like’ print culture. Much as the relationship between anarchism and feminism was often evidenced in practice but not explicitly stated, the relationship between Greenham newsletters and punk zine culture share what might be called quiet connections.⁶³

Anna Leventhal proposes that zines are a form of “minor media”. She draws from Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion of ‘minor literature’ to discuss how zine production “ought to be regarded on a continuum of independent media development” (2006, 2). She works through Deleuze and Guattari’s three characteristics of minor literature in relation to zines in order to position them as a media form that carries significant cultural histories. As Leventhal argues, the ephemeral nature of these “occasional publications” is often used to dismiss them as trivial. Yet it is precisely their ephemerality that makes these objects so significant (6). As each publication has a low reproduction cost and can be circulated among numerous readers, the potential audience is high compared to the costs of production. These publications are thus able to move as expressions

⁶³ For articles on the connections between anarchism and feminism, see Dark Star Collective (2002).

of both important news and new ideas. In doing so they function as a way to share information, as a support system for the community, as a showcase of contributor's creativity, as a tool for mobilization, and as a space in which creators and audiences can actively employ and generate collective languages.

While Leventhal's aim here is to argue for better archival preservation of zines, her insistence on this media's unique qualities and socio-historical importance is highly relevant to my analysis of Greenham women's ephemeral print productions. For these materials to be seen as part of a history of print culture, they must be considered as a form of media in their own right. Moreover, a focus only on these publications' content decontextualized from their form cannot provide the kind of analysis necessary for understanding Greenham as place-based social movement. I would suggest that Greenham women's writing—and social movement writing more broadly—should be considered in their artifactual form. Further, where and when they resemble the ethos and aesthetics of zines, they should be considered within (or at the very least in relation to) genealogies of zine culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that grassroots media must be considered as a form of media in their own right. As holds true today, grassroots media develop critiques of dominant representations and deploy counter-representational strategies (to varying degrees of success). This is one of the most significant features of the grassroots media that makes it distinct from mainstream or corporate media. Grassroots media can also provide nuanced and detailed

accounts of disputes, debates and controversies in a movement, as well as syntheses of new critiques, images of incorporated symbols, and reflections on past movement ideologies. While they can by no means account for every perspective, these contextual artifacts provide rich resources for analyzing how movements are always made up of varying, competing claims and affinities. What the grassroots press might compromise in extensive editing and revisions, it offers in timeliness and swift publication.

In this chapter I also argued that Greenham women's writings and drawings should be considered as movement artifacts. This media—as with autonomous media more broadly—should be examined in their material-semiotic form as objects of cultural memory (Hirsch and Smith), as container technologies that can open up a “landscape of feelings” (Sofia 2000, 190). Often what appears on the page is the result of individual and collective reflection. They are versions of events and interactions that simultaneously crystallize and construct the symbolism, the metaphor and the common languages generated at the protest camp and in the larger support network. These are perhaps the most significant archives of ‘received history’ available to us as researchers. As such, the following chapters of my study draw heavily from these publications. I attempt, wherever possible, to situate the content of Greenham women's published work in relation to where and how it came to be part of their movement.

In the next chapter I look at prominent myths and symbols produced at Greenham and documented in camp-based newsletters and demonstration booklets. I follow up on Donna Haraway's brief comments on Greenham women to offer a detailed investigation of how Goddess and Cyborg figures co-existed

and combined in Greenham women's activist practices and language creation. I trouble the divide generally drawn between and around these figures in ecofeminist criticism, offering an alternative vision that sees women's symbolic-material productions as meaningful and meaning-making engagements with craft technologies as well as with the nuclear and other military-industrial technologies of the base.

‘Metal Goddesses for Earthly Survival’: Myths and Symbols of the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp

“[Cruise missiles] are floating signifiers moving in pickup trucks across Europe, blocked more effectively by the witch-weavings of the displaced and so unnatural Greenham women, who read cyborg webs of power so very well, than by the militant labor of older masculinist politics.”

-Donna Haraway

The left in general, and the labour left in particular, has never shown much interest in traditional cosmologies or myths. The signs are, however, that we had better start learning soon.

-Christ Knight, Greenham protester

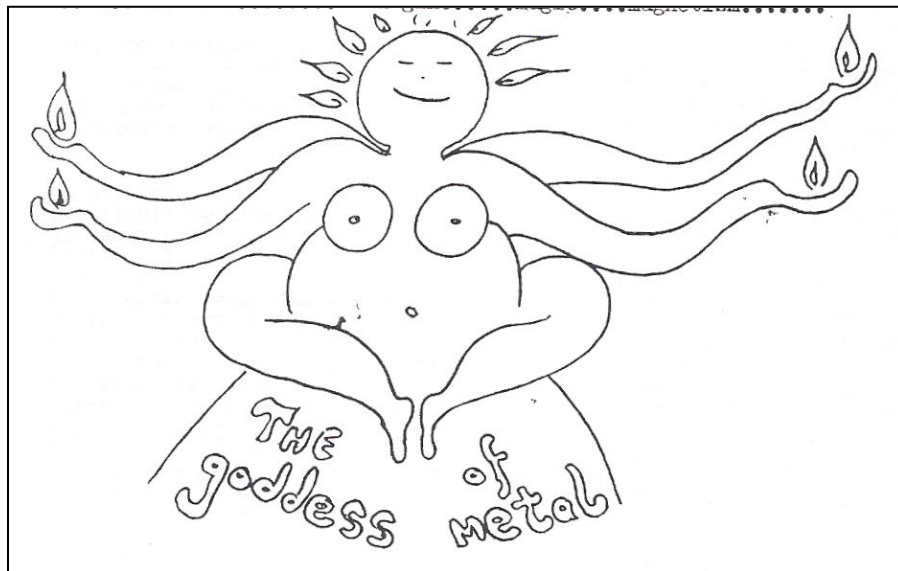


Figure 6_The Goddess of Metal from the *Rainbow Dragon Festival* booklet, 1983

In the 1970s and 1980s Western feminist artists and writers began to engage religious, scientific, and popular myths from a variety of cultures, working to reclaim female figures ranging from Eve and Athena to spinsters and witches. In her introduction to the *Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, Barbara Walker summarized this feminist practice stating, "It is especially important for women to learn more about the language of symbols, because many common religious symbols were stolen from ancient woman-centred systems and reinterpreted in the contexts of patriarchy" (Walker 1988, xi). In many ancient Western cultures, spirituality and 'nature' were intimately intertwined. Figures such as Gaia in ancient Greek mythology and Anu in Celtic mythology were worshipped as the Earth Goddess (202). As such, many feminists concerned with ecological destruction were drawn toward reclaiming these symbols and myths.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the rise of Goddess reclamation in the late 1970s and the emergence of the feminist cyborg that stood as a challenge to her revival in the 1980s. I situate both these figures in relation to the nascent ecofeminist movement and the broader women's liberation movement of their time. I discuss critiques of both Goddess and cyborg feminisms, addressing in particular the oppositions constructed between these feminist figures as they continue to occupy the theories and imaginations of feminists today. I then propose an alternative theorization that imagines the Goddess and the cyborg as compatible, coexistent, and at times, hybrid forms. This theorization arises from and introduces my analyses of Goddess and cyborg feminisms at Greenham.

In my examination of Goddess and cyborg feminisms and their relation to Greenham, I look at how women's symbolic and myth-making practices formed

part of a political destabilization of nature and technology, organisms and machines, humans and animals. My analyses of these dynamics in relation to cyborg and Goddess figures draws primarily on writing and imagery found in camp newsletters and program booklets for events that were produced by women living at the camp. I focus on these ‘camp-based’ artifacts because I am interested in how the physical environment and community of the camp affected women’s symbol and myth-making practices. While such Goddess figures are often explicitly marked in women’s texts, I apply the term ‘feminist cyborg’ retroactively. I do so in efforts to map an activist history of feminist cyborg figures that can offer insight into their current and future potential as social movement tools. I argue that Greenham women’s symbols and myths arise, in part, from their diverse engagements with the technologies and environments of the military base encampment. In their efforts to challenge, undermine and reveal the national and imperial myths upon which nuclear warfare is based, protesters re-imagined the possibilities of metal, uranium, wire, etc. They offered ethical visions of technological possibilities based upon a global accountability for ‘earthly survival.’ As part of this mapping, I look at how women’s symbol and myth-making practices created tensions as well as connections between women campers. In particular, I look at feminists’ criticism and hesitations around Goddess and cyborg figures in relation to issues of essentialism, spiritualism and cultural borrowing.

Reclaimed Goddesses & The Rise Of The Cyborg

One of the most influential (and controversial) books to explore the feminist practice of Goddess reclamation was Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* first published in 1978. Daly's book addressed how "phallic myths and language" served to "generate, legitimate, and mask" the destruction of both women and nature. These dominant phallic myths constitute what Daly refers to as the "foreground." They are the images commonly seen in art, literature and the mass media. However, these images also have a "Background" of women-centered histories. By moving into and engaging the Background, feminists could reclaim myths and symbols (1978, 2-3). This journey into the Background called upon women to "re-member the Goddess" who has been killed (both metaphorically and existentially) by patriarchal rule and ritual. Re-membering the Goddess was a way for women to move toward their "creative integrity" hidden from them by patriarchal oppression (111).

Daly's book was widely read and circulated between women connected to feminist institutions and activist communities.⁶⁴ It also influenced the research and publication of more histories of goddesses. For example, in 1981 Patricia Monaghan's *The Book of Goddesses & Heroines* was first published. Monaghan argued that mythographers used three tactics to restrict information about goddesses: first, they were ignored all together; second, they were referenced without name or only as the relation of a male god; and third, they were often marginalized by being bunched into a single chapter. When goddesses were

⁶⁴ For an important critique of Daly's text which discusses Daly's exclusion of women-centered African Goddesses see Lorde (1984).

discussed, their stories were generally told from the viewpoint of the male gods (and male mythographer) who tended to classify goddesses as virgins, mothers or whores (xiii-xv).⁶⁵ For Monaghan, the practice of goddess reclamation involved both reviving lost stories and altering the perspective of the stories mythographers have told.

This revisionist form of myth-making, was (and continues to be) a predominant feminist practice. Women used creativity and humor to formulate sophisticated critiques of dominant language practices, myths and symbols. Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler's (1985) popular feminist dictionary rewrote definitions from a feminist perspective, while including words that were central political concepts in feminist communities. Both playful and critical, *A Feminist Dictionary* embodies the cultural dimension of the extensive academic research and feminist criticism around sexist language, representation and state policy being conducted at the time. Similarly Suniti Namjoshi's *Feminist Fables* reimagined traditional folklore subverting women's gendered roles and behavior, while offering, in mythic languages and forms, new stories that captured feminists' growing consciousness of both everyday and global oppressions. Namjoshi's short fables were frequently reprinted in feminist magazines, journals and newsletters during the 1980s. Her stories also resonated with and inspired some of the women at Greenham.

Various depictions of symbols that celebrated womanhood were developed alongside these reclamation and revisionist practices. Also of ancient

⁶⁵ These modes of historicizing female goddesses share much in common with how female rock musicians have been included (and excluded) in narratives of rock history. For more on this see Feigenbaum (2005).

origins, the biological sign for females is taken from the celestial symbol for the planet Venus, named after the Roman Goddess. While dominant (patriarchal) readings regard the Venus symbol as a depiction of a hand mirror referencing women's vanity, another explanation is that it represents spirit (a circle) over matter (the cross). In 1969, feminist Robin Morgan designed a button with a fist inside of the female sign's circle for the Miss America Pageant protest. This quickly caught on, becoming an internationally recognized symbol of feminism (Freeman 1974). The dominant meaning of the circle as mirror was usurped by this image of collective, resistant power. The raised fist, thought to have originated during the Spanish Civil War, was adopted by the Black Power movement in the United States. Morgan's borrowing here was intentional, referencing the rich political histories out of which the feminist movement in America arose.⁶⁶ The symbol quickly traveled through other burgeoning women's movements and was adopted as part of an amassing repertoire of transnationally recognizable feminist iconography.⁶⁷ At Greenham, variations of the women's symbol appeared in newsletters, promotional flyers and even on notes and memos. Conjoined twin women symbols and women's symbols with peace or anarchist signs in them also featured heavily in Greenham Women's publications. On many occasions space was left in typed articles for women's symbols to be inserted by hand. And in other places women signed their contribution with a women's symbol.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the history of the clenched fist see Lincoln Cushing (2006) "A brief history of the 'clenched fist' image," *Docs Populi* <http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/Fist.html> accessed 22 October 2007.

⁶⁷ As I will briefly discuss in chapter five, the movement culture of the Civil Rights period and Black Power era influenced feminist peace activism, in both overt and subtle ways.

By the early 1980s altered spellings of words such as “womyn” and “herstory” that celebrated womanhood were of common usage in Anglo-feminist magazines, on event flyers and in other informal written communication such as letters and memos. Many women at Greenham also adopted these language practices. Joan Freer documents this in her pamphlet *Raging Womyn*. A full page cartoon depicts a judge in a courtroom full of Greenham women reading out charges. As he says, “It has been alledged that these ladies...” the women in the gallery start shouting alternatives. Wiimmiin!! Wombyn!! Womyn!! While it might be quite difficult to actually scream out Wiimmiin!! Greenham protesters did object to being called ladies, girls and other derisive names used during court proceedings. They also often refused to swear to God and instead swore to ‘The Goddess’. The courtroom was an important space in which Greenham women extended their claims to self-representation and definitional authority. In refusing the authority of the State to decide what a woman is, what constitutes ‘breaching the peace,’ and what counts as ‘criminal damage,’ protesters refused to work within the predetermined codes of the legal system. I will discuss a specific incidence of this in chapter four.

While a number of feminists and Greenham women protesters participated in reclaiming Goddesses and myths, many others were critical of this practice. As Joni Seager has put it, “For every woman who reveled in the association of ecofeminism with earth Goddesses, there was one who winced” (2003, 943). Many feminists, both in the broader feminist movement and at Greenham Common, were very skeptical about these spiritual beliefs and reclamation practices. In the September 1985 edition of the UK feminist magazine *Spare Rib*,

Barbara Norden recalled asking herself of Greenham, “Didn’t all the woolen webs and songs with lyrics about women being ‘the spirit’ that saved the world reinforce ideals of feminine virtue that were pseudo-religious?” (1985, 6). Likewise, Carol Ehrlich saw the turn toward spiritual feminisms as destructive to a socialist feminist project. She warned that the spirit of ending hierarchies would be lost if “Goddess worship ... convince[s] women to take up new forms of dominance-submission” (2002, 43). Ehrlich saw Goddess worship as the antithesis of women’s struggles for liberation. This debate over the political affectivity and meaning of Goddess feminisms is central to both the questions and controversies raised in Donna Haraway’s cyborg manifesto. In the next section of this chapter I look at the emergence of the feminist cyborg and some of the criticism that surrounded the rise of this feminist cyborg figure.

The Emergence of Cyborg Feminism

Originally published by the *Socialist Review* in 1985 under the title “Manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s,” Haraway’s now famous text is, in part, an examination of women’s antinuclear activism during the early 1980s. In the opening footnote for the reprinted “Cyborg Manifesto” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, Haraway acknowledges colleagues and graduate students engaged in debates and discussions arising from feminist conferences and workshops on new technologies in 1983 and 1984. She further notes in her introduction to the *Haraway Reader*, “Many of the entities that command my attention were birthed through the reproductive apparatuses of war” (2004, 3).

Donna Haraway's manifesto raised concerns about the "organicism" of ecofeminist and pagan feminist movements that constructed 'nature' in opposition to 'technology'. Offering an alternative, Haraway claimed the 'cyborg' as a potential feminist figure. The cyborg, or cybernetic organism, is marked by "the breakdown of clean distinctions between organism and machine and similar distinctions structuring the Western self" (181). For Haraway, both Goddess reclamation practices and cyborg figurations were products of "the machines and consciousness of late capitalism" (174). What distinguished cyborg figures from Goddess figures is that while the Goddess clings to nature to oppose technology, the cyborg breaks down distinctions between the 'natural' and the 'technological' in order to challenge systems of domination (174).

In her manifesto, Haraway specifically identified Greenham Common women's analyses of the military-industrial complex, establishment of non-hierarchical communication infrastructures, and their tactical methods for intervening in the sitting and transportation of cruise missiles. As can be seen in the quotation used to introduce this chapter, Haraway describes how cruise missiles were more effectively 'blocked'—both physically and symbolically—by the creative resistance practices of Greenham women, than by "the militant labour of older masculinist politics" (153). Here Haraway describes how Greenham women used symbolism and metaphor in place of conventional masculinist political discourse to interfere with the operations of military power. Through embodied, collective, material-semiotic practices, Greenham women constituted part of what Haraway saw as an emergent feminist cyborg politics. These protesters learned to critically read the patriarchal, military-industrial languages

through which the base personnel, police and court system operated together. Through their sophisticated understandings of these systems of power, they created tactics to intervene, to block and to harness this power. To do so, they generated their own symbols, figures and myths—out of pens, paint, glue, wire, fabric, needles and wool. They wrote as well as cut, sawed, pasted, wove and sewed their alternative technological visions.

The feminist cyborg's roots in women's anti-nuclear activism at the end of the Cold War era have been largely eclipsed. Little has been written about the historical, political or cultural relevance of the cyborg in regard to feminists' anti-military activism. Whether it is a result of Haraway's critical analysis or her poststructuralist approach, the emancipatory constitution of Haraway's cyborg is frequently heralded as a techno-zealot's fantasy. Critics of cyberfeminism often see the cyborg either in opposition to feminist projects invested in re-valuing the earth's eco-systems, or as an incompetent model for collective feminist activism in the face of increasing biotechnological controls and bodily surveillance.

Carol Stabile positions ecofeminists in contrast to cyborg enthusiasts. Critical of the valorization of the cyborg figure, Stabile argues, "The promises of monsters and of the cyborg should not blind us to the cyborgs being forced upon us (1994, 94). At the same time Stabile is also wary of ecofeminisms that often exhibit a "puritanism" (12) by promoting a mythic sense of matriarchy and sisterhood (27-30). This, she argues, can lead to an essentialist view of women that fails to consider uses and engagements with technology that exist outside of normative notions of femininity and female embodiment. Similar to Stabile, Renate Klein is dubious of the cyborg's emancipatory potential. In her playfully

titled essay, “If I’m a cyborg rather than a goddess, will patriarchy go away?” Klein argues that the cyborg bears too much resemblance to technoscience discourses that medicalize and exploit women’s bodies (1999, 197).

Also wary of cyborg imaginaries, Judy Wajcman argues that we “need to beware of focusing on the cyborg image as a utopian aspirational icon in the service of feminism” (2004, 95). Yet with this claim, Wajcman also acknowledges the many ways in which Haraway’s cyborg has been interpreted beyond and sometimes in conflict with her intentions. Wajcman argues that while many feminists latch onto the cyborg’s multiplicity and destabilization of fixed roles and identities, they can forget that “real women do live physical difference in the flesh” (96). Wajcman suggests that this misreading is not accidental, but the result of “Haraway’s emphasis on playfulness and pleasure, as well as engagement and commitment ... [which] is at once seductive and perplexing” (100). For Wajcman, the cyborg as a political figure is too metaphorical. She seeks a more concretized outline for not only imagining but enacting emancipatory techno-feminist subjectivity.

As Haraway has become *the* theoretical marker for the birth of cyberfeminism, careful readings of her work have been replaced by what Judith Halberstam has called a “hollowed out” citation (Halberstam 2007). As ‘Haraway’ has become synonymous with ‘the feminist cyborg,’ both the nuance and subjects of Haraway’s original analysis are frequently lost. The cyborg is attributed (or filled up with) a variety of new meanings that at times bear little resemblance to its origins. As the feminist cyborg moves, its political context and political content is often not carried with the text as a referent. In her analysis of

citations of feminist theorists in feminist journals, Claire Hemmings found that Haraway was frequently evoked as the mark of a poststructuralist turn away from the purported naive essentialisms of feminism's past (2005, 125). Hemmings argues that Haraway, along with Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler, "are celebrated for pointing to the failures of an 'early' feminist emphasis on sisterhood" (130). This abstracts them from the political terrain of feminism—particularly from feminism as an activist practice. As Hemmings writes, they are "split from their own legacies within feminism, symbolically, textually and politically situated as 'other' to and 'after' that imagined past" (131).

For Haraway, this results in a dislocation of cyborg theory from feminists' anti-nuclear activisms of the early 1980s. As Haraway reflects, "What I was trying to do in the Cyborg piece [around the question of nature/technology] is locate myself and us in the belly of the monster, in a techno-strategic discourse within a heavily militarized technology" (Penley 1990, 12). Haraway's cyborg offered an attempt to negotiate competing feminist anti-nuclear discourses and protest tactics. She intervened into particular rhetoric around the re-claimed Goddess figure that, at the time, heavily influenced feminist's activism. The direct action movement against nuclear weapons and nuclear power was largely shaped by neo-Paganism and other spiritual feminisms (Epstein 1991). Haraway's proposal for a "techno-strategic discourse" imagined alternative languages, images and myths (culled largely from feminist science fiction writing) through which feminist activists could respond to "militarized technology" (Penley 1990, 12).

In the next section of this chapter, I explore how the hollowing-out of Haraway's cyborg, along with the cyborg's construction as an escape from feminism's naïve past, together erase or distort its anti-nuclear activist roots. To do this I turn to texts that explicitly take up the relationship between the Goddess and the cyborg in regard to Haraway's work. I argue instead for a reconsideration of the cyborg as a historically and geographically contextualized figure that emerged out of—and as inspiration for—the anti-military, anti-racist and ecofeminist activisms of the time. Such reconsideration can, perhaps, reinvigorate the task of creating techno-strategic discourses for a feminist anti-militarism that works from—rather than forgets—these women's early 1980s anti-nuclear activisms (Young 2003).

The Cyborg Vs. The Goddess

Over the past twenty years a number of people have directly taken up Haraway's claim that, "I would rather be a cyborg than a Goddess" (1991, 181). Figures of the cyborg and Goddess are referenced in opposition in numerous essay titles, including: Nina Lykke's "To Be a Cyborg or Goddess" (1997), Elaine Graham's "Cyborgs Or Goddesses? Becoming divine in a cyberfeminist age" (1999), Nod Miller's "I'd rather be a goddess than a cyborg" (2001), and Stacy Gillis' "Neither Cyborg nor Goddess" (2004). In each case these figures are opposed and polarized and a malevolent relationship is ascribed to this pair. For example, Lykke (1997) interprets Haraway as rejecting the cyborg. For Lykke the cyborg figure emerges as a means to dismiss Western spiritual ecofeminism:

When Haraway sides with cyborgs and rejects goddesses as possible points of departure for feminist critiques of global power structures and 'social relations of science and technology' (Haraway, 1991, 172), it is meant as a challenge to Western spiritual ecofeminists. According to Haraway, their claim that we may overcome the present ecological world crisis through the revival of mythical images of the healing mother goddesses of prescientific world-views is an expression of inadequate nostalgia (Lykke 1997).

According to Lykke, Haraway's analysis of technology exhibits a pragmatic embrace of modernity coupled with a disdainful rejection of goddesses long passed. This dominant reading of Haraway envisions a battle: in one corner, a dated essentialism; in the other corner, a hip anti-essentialism. Matisons' discussion of Haraway's argument captures this well:

The dichotomous opposition that Haraway establishes between cyborg and goddess is a revealing one. She implies that feminism has to choose between a holistic, tree-identified, essentialist utopian feminism and a technologically savvy, cyber-identified anti-essentialist survivalism (cited in Gillis 2004).

While this "implication" is presented as the hidden truth of Haraway's work, it is not a narrative summary of her argument. Rather, Matisons has interpreted Haraway along the lines of the dominant script that does not recognize the links and conjunctures between what get called "goddess feminism" and "cyborg feminism".

Such oppositions can also be found in broader narratives of ecofeminist history. In her article on the body in ecofeminist thought, Terri Field reads Haraway's claim that "the goddess is dead" as a definitive declaration against ecofeminists' reversion to "myths of natural and organic wholeness/holism" (2000, 46). For Field, Matisons and Lykke it is impossible to imagine any affinity between the goddess and cyborg in Haraway's text. The cyborg comes onto the scene, and as she does so she negates the political efficacy (if there ever was one) of the Goddess.

In line with Hemmings, I see such scholarly readings of Haraway as the result of pervasive dominant narratives about feminism, rather than the shortcomings of any particular author (2005, 118). The cyborg and the Goddess in Haraway's text have come to stand in for a number of complex approaches to questions about nature and technology. They now often function as indexical signs, which have what Susan Gal describes as a fractile distinction (2002, 81). As I discuss further in chapter four, Gal argues that such signs "can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting onto narrower contexts or broader ones" (81). When projected onto a battleground of technology versus nature, the cyborg and the Goddess come to stand in for other dichotomous pairs. In Matisons' text, for example, this pair signifies further distinctions between tree-identification and the technological savvy, between holism and anti-essentialism.

Yet while interpretations of Haraway's cyborg tend to position the cyborg in opposition to the Goddess, some of these same feminist critics see affinities between the two. In her article discussed above Lykke writes, "I am in search of a subject position, which includes both goddess and cyborg, because I think that the

feminist critique of technoscience needs both” (19). Elsewhere Lykke elaborates this position, arguing that the differences between cyborgs and goddesses have been overstated. Both cyborgs and Goddesses are engaged in blurring the divide between human and animals, and in offering alternatives to the destruction of the planet (1996: 27-28). Lykke proposes that feminist science studies should not reject either metaphor. Rather, she suggests that the pair might take time to explore a “monstrous sisterhood” between them, what she terms the potentials of “cybergoddesses” (29). Thus, Lykke reads Haraway’s cyborg as a rejection of the Goddess, yet in her own work refuses to oppose these two figures. While I am sympathetic to Lykke’s position, I want to suggest instead that this ‘monstrous sisterhood’ is indeed present (or possible) in Haraway’s text. And, more importantly, that monstrous cyborgGoddesses populated the activist practices of women’s anti-nuclear activism, particularly that of the women at Greenham Common, as Haraway notes in her manifesto. The Goddesses one finds at Greenham offer alternative technological visions and sophisticated critiques of militarized technologies.

While many have referenced and quoted Haraway’s declaration, “I’d rather be a cyborg than a Goddess,” attention is rarely paid to the beginning of this same sentence which claims that the cyborg and Goddess are both “bound in the spiral dance” (1991, 181).⁶⁸ The spiral dance is a traditional Pagan ritual that begins with people in a circle holding hands. As they move around, a dancer breaks open the circle and leads the rest of the dancers in a spiral motion toward

⁶⁸Whether or not it was Haraway’s intention that we take this image of the ‘spiral dance’ literally, I think it is important to consider its significance.

the circle's centre. The dancers continue 'spiraling' in and towards the centre and then out. Every participant comes face to face with every other at some point during the dance. On October 31, 1979 the first 'reclaimed' spiral dance took place in San Francisco, celebrating the release of Starhawk's book *Spiral Dance*.⁶⁹ In both its historic and reclaimed form, the dance is meant to inspire creativity and create community. It is always a collective, not an individual affair.

Considering the significance of the spiral dance to feminist cyborg politics can offer an alternative to visions of cyborgs and Goddesses battling it out for the title of most emancipatory feminist. Instead, collaborations between cyborgs and Goddesses can be imagined and their cohabitations deemed possible. The historical existence of cross-bred cyborgGoddess figures can even emerge. As Haraway suggests, reflecting on her manifesto, perhaps there can be—and has been—an elsewhere place “born out of the hard (and sometimes joyful) work of getting on together in a kin group that includes cyborgs and Goddesses working for earthly survival” (2004, 3). In the section that follows I argue that cyborg scholarship can offer a theoretical vocabulary for examining how Greenham women's creation of a symbolic and metaphoric language radically destabilized dominant ways of thinking and talking about bodies and technologies. Perhaps this is, in part, a 'Reclaiming of the Cyborg,' and of her oppositional activist practices, from the perspective of women's collective anti-nuclear protest.

The oppositional cyborg is born out of both the prosthetic or the cyber(netic) of industrial capitalism, and from an incorporation of the mythic,

⁶⁹ “The Spiral Dance History and Traditions” *Reclaiming Quarterly*
<http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/spiraldance/spiral1.html> accessed 27 April 2007.

communal and spiritual energy that is rejected by the liberal subject of Western culture. Through her theorization, or perhaps meditations, on texts by US women of color, Haraway developed a concept of “cyborg writing” that positioned symbolism and metaphor as an activist practice. Political struggle was seen, in part, as a struggle for language:

The poetry and stories of US women of color are repeatedly about writing, about access to the power to signify ... Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing tools to mark the world that marked them as other ... In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture. We have all been colonized by those origin myths, with their longing for fulfillment in apocalypse (Haraway 1991, 175).

Saturated with “phallogocentric origin stories”, it was these “literal technologies” of militarism that women seized and subverted through “retelling origin stories” (1991, 175). In Haraway, as in these authors’ writing, “civilization” was seen to rest upon a rational/emotional divide as well as a nature/culture divide, which demanded that women conform to the discourses, as well as the structures, of militarism and patriarchal capitalism.

Like Haraway, a number of scholars analyzing Greenham discuss how symbolism and myth-making constituted a fundamental part of women’s resistance to nuclear militarization. Greenham women were able to disrupt the dominant language culture of the nuclear state, as well as the language of the male-dominated Left. Alison Young notes in her analysis of Greenham that

writing poetry allowed women to voice their feelings and bring the emotional body to the fore (Young 1990, 35-36). While the mainstream media utilized a language that demonized and degraded women, Young argues that Greenham campers, “Attempt[ed] to find a bodily expression ... independent of the negative connotations that femininity can attract” (45). Likewise, Margaret Laware’s article on Greenham women’s rhetorical strategies describes how protesters’ used feminist coding strategies to challenge and undermine masculine symbols of the military (Laware 2004). Along these same lines, Tim Cresswell uses literature on the carnival and carnivalesque to argue that Greenham women brought emotion into spaces delineated as cool and rational, such as the military base and the courtroom. For Cresswell, Greenham women’s symbolic protests disrupted the “hegemonic-geographical order” of both the military base and the Newbury countryside by making visible the grotesque body and objects from private life (Cresswell 1994).

Sasha Roseneil also details how Greenham women engaged in signification practices that brought issues of language and representation to the surface of their political action. “Against constructions of women as victims, as those who are ‘done to’ by men and governments or ‘fought for’ by armies,” Roseneil argues that, “women at Greenham came to perceive themselves as powerful” (Roseneil 1999, 170). For Roseneil the significance of the sign in Greenham women’s politics is evidence of the protests’ postmodernity. In postmodernity, “language and signs are more than merely the media for political messages; they are themselves part of the political process” 1999, 166). Signs and symbols are able to confront, transform and imagine possibilities. They disrupt

dominant language systems by offering alternative ways of marking and making sense of the world.

Here we can see direct connections with Haraway's conception of cyborg writing. Each of these Greenham scholars' analyses share with Haraway a concern about binary divisions that privilege the masculine over the feminine and erase the lived body from the realm of politics. In each, a great deal of attention is paid to women's use and appropriations of dominant languages, symbolism and metaphor. Yet, I want to argue that more than a feminist coding strategy (Laware 2004) or the retrieval of a lost emotional body (Young 1990), these "material-semiotic practices" were manifested in particular engagements between bodies and objects that re-imagined feminist subjectivities and reoriented the meanings and uses of technologies (Haraway 1998, 218). Cyborg theory thus offers a way of understanding not only how Greenham women were transformed through their production of language, but also how their language practices were intimately bound up with how they related to technological objects and to the technological environments in which they lived.

In what follows, I examine Greenham women's symbolic, technological and myth-making practices through the lens of cyborg scholarship. I argue that women's writing (and drawing) was a site of resistance through which they created activist subjectivities and reoriented the meanings and uses of technological objects (Haraway 1998, 218). I suggest that the reclamation of female Goddesses and the characteristics they embodied provided a means for women at Greenham to re-imagine, re-articulate and reconstruct the world around them. I argue that the re-significations involved in all of these (often

simultaneous) practices were at once both metaphorical and material, involving the creation of words and images alongside engagements with physical objects and environments. To construct this argument, I turn specifically to some of Greenham Women's symbolic and myth-making practices. I locate Goddess and cyborg figures found in their camp-based publications and situate them within the broader politics of the camp and feminist movement. I look in particular at figurations of the snake, spider, dragon and 'metal goddess' as they relate to invocations of both Goddesses and cyborgs. I then turn to an analysis of how Goddess and pagan symbolism was contested both at Greenham and in the broader women's movement. Here I also look at how cultural borrowing played out in some Greenham women's myth-making practices, discussing issues around racism, nativism and coalition-building.

Greenham's Cyborgs & Goddesses

Snakes were one of the most celebrated animal figures at Greenham. They appeared frequently in women's poetry, drawings, cartoons and various prose writing. Snakes adorn the cover of the *Women's Peace Camp* February 1983 newsletter. These snakes are in double spirals; a symbol of both snakes and the Goddess, representing the balance of the seasons.⁷⁰ The back cover of this 'newsletter,' a 32 page A4 booklet with a double staple binding, is decorated in spiral snakes. Even the 'W' of 'Women's' is fashioned as a snake. The extensive table of contents lists three features on snakes. These include a camper Jayne's

⁷⁰ On of the earliest events at Greenham was the March 21, 1982 Equinox Festival of Life (Harford & Hopkins 1984).

reflection on a direct action involving women entering the base underneath three giant fabric ‘snakes’; a graphic story of the snake action; and a proposal for upcoming ‘Snakes and Ladders’ actions.⁷¹

In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist reclamations of the snake drew from its history in Greek mythology and Minoan culture. In Greek mythology the snake was a symbol of Athena, the Goddess of wisdom. In Minoan culture, the Snake Goddess is thought to have been connected to the Mother Goddess or Earth Mother. The snake was also a symbol of rebirth. The shedding and regeneration of a snake’s skin signified the seasons and the continuous renewal of energy and knowledge. With the rise and spread of Christianity, these meanings attached to the snake were largely suppressed (Walker 1988, 387-388). Buffie Johnson writes, “The serpent serves as a metaphor for the impenetrable manner in which our lives change, twist, and renew themselves” (1988, 128).

This sense of renewal and of celebrating the changing seasons took on a particular significance at Greenham. Whether women were already inclined toward Pagan and Goddess celebration practices, or discovered them for the first time at Greenham, living outdoors through rain and snow with constant pressures from police, soldiers, media and visitors, gave ‘renewal’ and ‘regeneration’ whole new meanings. As camper Liz Galst put it, a connection to the earth “is good to have if you’re living in the mud in the winter.”⁷² Galst was among those who did not overtly engage in Pagan and Goddess rituals, though was drawn toward a deeper appreciation of the cycle of the seasons, the phases of the moon and

⁷¹ *Women’s Peace Camp*, February 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South)

⁷² Liz Galst, Personal correspondence, June 29, 2007.

generally being in touch with your environment, which came from living outside, especially amidst harsh conditions. Both Galst, as well as Sasha Roseneil, also recalled that women living at Green Gate were most involved in Pagan activities and Goddess worship. This Gate was more nestled in the woods, both attracting and producing eco-spiritualisms.

Journalist Caroline Blackwood criticized Greenham women's use of snakes in her expose about the camp entitled, *On the Perimeter*. Blackwood writes that she was disturbed by this symbol "beloved [by] the young girls on Greenham Common." She asks her readers, "Why had they chosen such a stupidly frightening and poisonous symbol? For her this "deeply feared creature...didn't seem to have very much to do with either peace or women" (1984, 21). Blackwood, whose writing was denounced by women at Greenham (see chapter one), thought that people would not be able to identify with women's attempts to reclaim snakes as a symbol.

Alison Young critiques Blackwood's reading as "a very closed view" in her book on Greenham. Young argues that the snake's "ambiguity is a source of power and potential for resistance to the dichotomy which presumes images to either possess or lack meaning" (1990, 38). Greenham women are not denying the associations of snakes with fear or poison, rather they are "choosing to play up certain forgotten or lesser known aspects" (37). As Young writes, Greenham women's use of these symbols was an attempt to confront and subvert the meanings ascribed to them by dominant culture. Galst described this practice as a

kind of “accidental symbolism.”⁷³ While only very few women were aware of the mythological history of all the symbols invoked at Greenham, many knew that their uses were prompting a reaction and generating new ways of thinking, living and creating at the camp.

On the day of Defense Secretary Michael Hestletine’s visit, February 7, 1983, over 100 women decided to enter the base as snakes in order to show how easy it was to break past security. These snakes were fabric and paper mache creations worn over women’s heads that moved into the base and along the base’s runway. Greenham camper Gillian Booth’s ‘A Snaky Story’ offers a five page graphic story of the adventures of snakes Cecily, Rosie, and Sybil as they entered the base. Booth narrates her story in swerving handwritten text around drawings of women holding up the snakes. The story ends with an image of Greenham women in a police van after Sybil was arrested. The text reads:

We amused ourselves further by chalking anarchy and peacewomen’s signs on a few patrol and riot helmets while being held in a van owned by men who call themselves ‘POLICE’. We saved Sybil’s head, which accompanied us to Newbury ‘Police’ Station and was released when we were after the charges against us were dropped.⁷⁴

⁷³ Liz Galst, Personal correspondence, June 29, 2007.

⁷⁴ Gillian Booth. 1983. “A Snaky Story” *Women’s Peace Camp*, February, 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South)

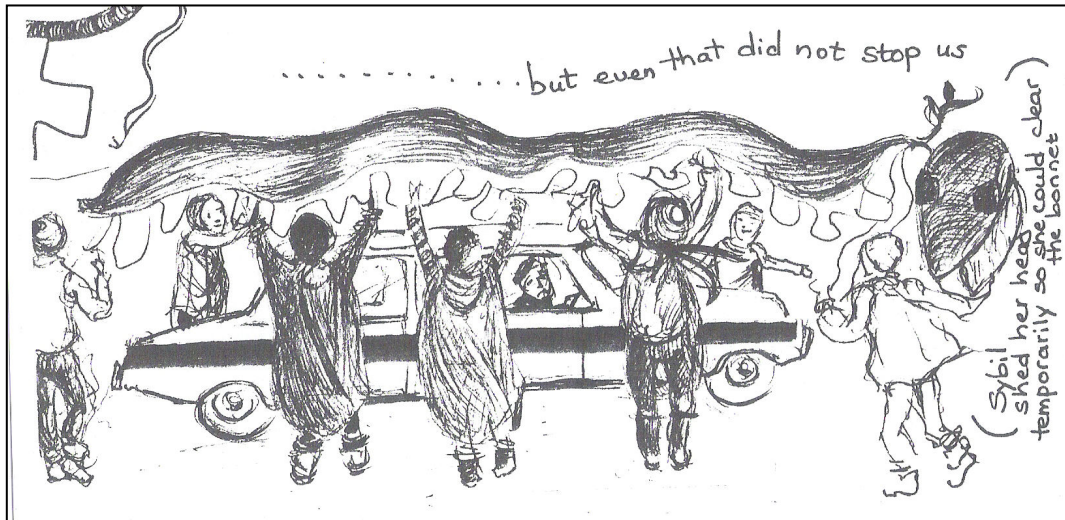


Figure 7_ Gillian Booth's "A Snaky Story" from *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, 1983

In Booth's story the snakes stand in for the groups of women beneath them, slithering through the base and along the runway. The bodies of the women and the animals mesh together. Yet these snakes are not organic. They are technological constructions made from women working with paper, flour, water, glue and paint. They were part mythic, part real; part human, part 'animal'. In other words, they can be read as cyborgGoddesses—part culled from Goddess reclamation practices, part crafted from physical engagements with the materials and signification systems of the military base. The snakes, as protest tactics, helped enable women to enter the military base, revealing the myths of 'national security' encoded into perimeter fences and guard towers. In this sense the Greenham snakes also evoke the 'trickster figure' prominent in Haraway's work. The trickster, in Haraway's lexicon, is both a mythic device and a methodology for reading the world (1999, 66). As Greenham women literally used these snakes

to trick authorities, they combined strategic readings of how base security operated with tactical maneuvers for sliding over, under and through the holes or cracks in its security system.

Booth describes how these moving snake-women befuddled the police. As the women took on the body of the snakes, the police became confronted with a situation outside their protocol. In order to arrest the women, they first had to apprehend the snake. Likewise, scribbling anarchist, peace and women's signs onto the police helmets recodes the symbolic power of the uniform as a marker of authority, revealing its function as costume. Yet, these "men who call themselves 'POLICE'" are, of course, still legitimated to arrest, detain and harass the women. While it does not, in itself, undo institutionalized relations of power, the dislocation of the policemen from their authority opened up important possibilities for action.

'We are the Web'

Spiders were another frequently reoccurring symbol in Greenham women's cultural imaginary. Boffie Johnson explains that the word spider, which comes from the Old English *spinan* meaning 'to spin', has signified a variety of different things across cultural and geographic contexts. Historically, the spider has been viewed as a goddess of fate, who "weaves her home from her own body and spins the thread of life (1988, 210). Almost exclusively imagined as a female, the spider is viewed as a protector, embodying both patience and industry (210). In the *Odyssey* the spider is a trickster figure, whereas the mythic Hopi Spider Woman is seen as the creator. In Jungian symbolism, the spider is a symbol of the

self, representing parts of the personality that include the conscious and unconscious (213). Each of these meanings, and others, emerge at the ‘foreground’ of spider and web figures as they appeared at Greenham.

The metaphor of ‘building a web’ and being connected to each other in a ‘web-like structure’ populated Greenham women’s speech and writing. Alison Young describes Greenham women’s reclamation of the spider as revolving primarily around the notion of the spider’s web. She writes that the web “shows connections between women or between ideas; it can be begun at any point or at any time; each single strand is weak and fragile, yet when interwoven it is strong, beautiful and efficient” (1990, 38). In line with Young’s reading, Roseneil writes that, “the web was a symbol of women's collective power, seemingly fragile, but actually very strong” (1999, 179, ft39).

Both Young and Roseneil also concretize their discussions of the symbolic spider’s web in terms of women’s networked politics. Each draws on the 1985 ‘Widening the Web’ December event which crystallized women’s efforts to make connections between issues of nuclear militarism and (among other things) anarchy, U.S.S.R. dissidents, violence against women, apartheid, imperialism, nuclear testing, women in prison, racism and animal liberation. Promotional material and the demonstration booklet for this event showed the image of a web being stretched out by a number of different women, each pulling on a strand that comes together in the centre.⁷⁵ Roseneil also discusses the notion of the web in

⁷⁵ “Widening the Web” December 14-15th 1985 (London, England, Women’s Library, Ephemera Collection). Noël Sturgeon (1997) discusses how the Women’s Pentagon Action unity statement performs a similar ‘weaving’ together of a diverse range of issues in attempts to build broader coalitions (65).

relation to Greenham's infrastructure, showing how the organization of the camp and its support networks constituted "a non-hierarchical, intricate pattern of individuals and groups, joined together by almost invisible yet strong connecting threads" (1999, 175).⁷⁶

Each of these invocations and understandings of webs at Greenham strongly resemble Haraway's conception of weaving found in her cyborg manifesto. "Weaving," for Haraway, is the practice of oppositional cyborgs. It is the differential movement/s of cyborg collectivities capable of blocking, harness, redirecting and appropriating flows of patriarchal and capitalist power in the "integrated circuit" (1990, 153-170). Chela Sandoval expands on Haraway's thought, suggesting that we think of this weaving as the process of synthesizing cyborg skills to form collective, oppositional political tactics (2000a & 2000b). Collectives that develop and deploy what Sandoval terms 'differential consciousness,' are characterized by their shifting tactics, identities and practices. While traditional feminist political groups (radical, liberal, Marxist, etc.) deploy ideologies as coherent strategies for action, collectives that move differentially are not committed to any one particular ideology. Instead there is a "crossing network of consciousness" or a "trans-consciousness" that sees "ideological differences" as tactics for mobility and resistance (2000b, 181).

Alison Young also draws upon Mary Daly's reclamation of the figure of the spinster in her discussion of webs at Greenham. Spinning, traditionally the work of women, became devalued after the Industrial Revolution, and the woman spinner became seen as a failure. As part of her call to bring positive aspects of

⁷⁶ For a detailed description of support networks see Roseneil (1995).

myths into the foreground, Daly called on feminists to see the spinster as an independent woman with a trade, rather than an aging maid without a husband (cited in Young 1990, 38-39). Young cites Daly to argue that Greenham women's use of the spinster figure was a "gesture of irony" that sought to "redeploy the spinner as an image of strength" (38-39). Again, while this reclamation of the Spinster was certainly a rhetorical strategy; spinning, weaving and knitting were also everyday rituals and activist practices at Greenham.

A number of women at Greenham literally learnt how to weave, knit and spin wool, often taught by the older women at the camp. Making good quality wool socks and sweaters was both a practical way to produce affordable clothes for living outdoors and a technique to pass the time. Whether on one's own or while chatting with other women around the fire, knitting could provide comfort and relief. The colorful jumpers, scarves and hats that came to be associated with Greenham women were often made at the camp. In 1985 Annie Butcher, a Greenham camper published a pamphlet called *Knitting and Picketing* with many stories, drawings and cartoons relating to life at Greenham. Annie had worked on the Greenham newsletters and contributed many of the comics, illustrations and doodles found in Greenham's camp-based publications. Her pamphlet, which would now most likely be classified as a zine (see chapter two), shows knitting needles made from snipped bits of the perimeter fence. Throughout the zine knitting is imagined as a pastime, a sustainable practice, a technological activity and a metaphor for renewal and regeneration. On the final pages there is a short poem and illustration telling the story of a woman unraveling an old sweater to construct a new one, "inventing as she went along." This again evokes the

reclamation of goddess symbolism around the figure of the spider, as well as a cyborgian practice of critically reading and re-signifying militarized technologies and spaces.

‘Weaving’ practices were also employed in the building of benders, and early on at the camp in the building of a tree house to deter the first eviction. Remembering preparations for the first eviction in the spring of 1982, Greenham camper Ruth recalls building a tree house which was meant to obstruct bulldozers from destroying the camp. Some women proposed that the tree house be built without the use of nails or other objects that would damage the wood. The house was to be assembled by weaving the walls and roof out of reeds found around the encampment:

The actual weaving of the rushes was hilarious. We all developed our own ways of doing it with string ‘stitches’ – no one knew how it ‘should’ be done, so it was a beautiful creative work of art. This was my first experience of one important characteristic of Greenham – that things can be created as and when they are needed – it’s both an organic and a political process: a response to whatever ‘comes up’ both in relation to what those in power do and to our needs as women (Harford & Hopkins 1984, 43).

Sandoval (2000b) describes this type of response to whatever comes up as an activist tactic developed under conditions where resources are limited. Flexibility is exhibited in how objects are used, largely because there is neither access to a plethora of raw materials, nor a set ideology dictating how it should be done.

In addition, this reclaimed image of the Spinster had already been explicitly put to activist uses. A few years before the Greenham encampment began, a Vermont woman's affinity group named the Spinsters had woven shut the gates of a nuclear power plant using wool, string and rags (King 1983, 45). At the first meeting for the Women's Pentagon Action, this story of the Spinsters was shared with the group of event organizers. Then, at the 1981 Women's Pentagon Actions, the Spinsters and others wove together entrances to the Pentagon (King 1983 50, 57). Images and anecdotes of these weaving actions spread through transatlantic ecofeminist, anti-nuclear and peace networks. These weaving actions were passed along by and to Greenham participants, influencing and inspiring similar tactics at the camp—and providing an excellent example of how movement ideas travel across time and place.

Just as the Vermont Spinsters used wool, string and rags to construct obstacles for authorities, Greenham women's webs became, at times, physical barriers, “baffling the policemen and court officials” (Young 1991, 38). On October 5, 1982 women set out to obstruct the laying of sewage pipes into the base. Reprinted in *Women at the Wire*, Jane's diary entry for the day reads:

First of all we occupied the site where they wanted to begin digging. For an hour about 20 of us wove a huge web of wool and string across the whole area. We entangled ourselves in it, some women sat amongst the threads, others lay beneath it. We were addressed, in turn, by policemen who told us that we were obstructing the contractors going about their lawful employment and therefore our behaviour was likely to cause a breach of the

peace. Then they began to drag us off very roughly, ripping and untangling themselves from the web (Harford and Hopkins 1984, 70).

As these accounts of ‘weaving’ activities and actions make clear, webs were not simply a metaphorical device used to capture women’s connections to each other. Nor were they only a means by which to describe women’s diffuse, horizontal communication networks. Rather, webs, like Greenham women, “were everywhere.” Threaded into fences, wrapped around trees, sketched across promotional flyers, webs were an essential part of Greenham’s (un)common language. At once, an embodied rhetoric, an ironic gesture and a cyborgian technological engagement, Greenham women’s many web-weavings called for a new conception of collectivity. It offered a challenge to the “informatics of domination,” weaving through both oppositional ideologies and tactics (Haraway 1990, 162). Taken as substantial elements of Greenham women’s protest—and women’s activism more broadly—these knitting and weaving practices can be situated in histories of women’s craft-based activism, as I will discuss later on in this chapter.

Witches

Also appearing in Haraway’s reference to Greenham were protester’s “witch-weavings” (1990, 153). This captures both the weaving practices I have discussed and women’s affinities toward the figure, both historic and mythic, of the witch. Witches were often construed as the “distant ancestors” of Greenham women. Influenced, in part, by feminist interpretations of the history of witches

published during the Women's Liberation Movement, many women became increasingly interested in the condemnation, mythology and popular representation of witches. Ehrenreich and English's pamphlet *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* first published in 1973, positioned witches, midwives and nurses of centuries ago as proto-feminists. Witches, they argue, were generally persecuted for three reasons: their sexuality, their organization with other women and their 'magical' powers to harm and to heal (26). It is these qualities that Ehrenreich and English explore to position witches as proto-feminists—women, excluded from society, who worked collectively as healers in their communities. This notion of collective healing and women's DiY practices was embraced and cultivated at Greenham. Ehrenreich and English write, "The witch-healer's methods were as great a threat ... as her results, for the witch was an empiricist: She relied on her senses rather than on faith or doctrine, she believed in trial and error, cause and effect" (30). This figure of the inquiring witch who "relied on her senses" was taken up by Greenham women.⁷⁷

Women at Greenham felt a connection between themselves and 'witches' as both groups of women faced ridicule, derision, contempt and physical violence for resisting patriarchal systems. Roseneil describes how women's associations to witches ranged from playful irony to taking up an interest in herbs and magic (2000, 16-18). While for some women the resonance was entirely spiritual, others spent time researching the history of witch trials and executions. The most public display of Greenham women's affinity to the figure of the witch came with the

⁷⁷In the later years of the camp some women at Yellow Gate began researching and writing short histories of witches that can be found in their publications.

1983 Halloween action in which 2,000 women—many dressed as witches—took down four miles of the nine mile perimeter fence surrounding the military base. ‘Armed’ with boltcutters and broomsticks, this action played on both the reclaimed feminist figure of the witch as an oppositional subject to the patriarchal order, and the commercialization or Disneyfication of the witch, recoded here as an anti-nuclear activist.

Women used a variety of methods to cut down the fence at different points. While the police and soldiers were prepared for a mass action, they were not prepared for the action itself. The majority of officers were situated inside rather than outside the fence, making it difficult for them to physically stop the women from cutting through the wire by standing between protesters and the fence. As the soldiers and police lost control of the situation, violence was used against the women. Many women took baton hits to the hands and arms, leaving a number of women hospitalized and some with broken bones (Roseneil 2000, 211-214). Police arrested 187 women at the action.

This action, and the numerous fence-cuttings that followed, involved an enmeshing of protester and bolt cutter, as I will look at in more detail in the following chapter. Here, the Greenham protester again evokes Haraway’s trickster figure, fooling the authorities by reading and intervening in their networks of power. Playful, yet serious; chaotic, yet intentional, Greenham’s fence-cutting witches—like the camp’s snakes and spinsters—enact symbolic-material interventions into the militarization of technology at the physical site of the military base. This mass act of fence-cutting also points toward the need to consider direct actions as symbolic-material interventions. If fences were only

rhetorically recoded it would not cost thousands of dollars to replace them when they fall to the ground. Likewise, if knuckles only metaphorically bled, women would not need bandages, stitches and casts for them to heal. Direct actions—such as criminal damage to State, military and corporate property—simultaneously destroy architectural structures and their symbolic power. This is precisely why they pose a threat to the hegemonic order and are policed through coercion and State-sanctioned violence.⁷⁸

The Rainbow Dragon

Like Snakes and Spider's Webs, images of dragons also became powerful symbols and mythic characters for some Greenham women. The Rainbow Dragon Festival was held on June 25, 1983 and drew together 2,000 women. The opening to the booklet produced by Greenham women for the event reads:

Today we are making a giant rainbow patchwork dragon. As with the web and snake symbols – the dragon has come to us, rather than us search for it. What does the dragon mean? It has been around for who knows how long – it emerges in countries all over the world. The root meaning of the word is 'to see clearly'.⁷⁹

At the festival, women constructed a 'Rainbow Dragon' composed of a large dragon head attached to 'serpent tail' made of sewn together patches. The dragon was collectively constructed through the attaching and shaping of rectangular banners sent from different parts of the world. By the end of the festival day at

⁷⁸ For a discussion of these issues see Naomi Klein (2002).

⁷⁹ *Rainbow Dragon Booklet*, 1983 (London, England, Women's Library, Ephemera Collection).

Greenham the tail had grown to 4 ½ miles. Months later, the dragon began its travels across Europe and to the States; its tail stretched to 6 miles long.⁸⁰

At the same time as the rainbow dragon was a symbolic figure, it was also a material construction, made out of a variety of technological elements or tools: sewing needles, thread, glue, fabric, paints, etc. Liz Knight writes of sewing up the dragon in her review of the action for the *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*:

We sat in circles, taking pieces of material in our laps, and began to sew all the bits together. My progress is very slow: sewing is something I've never liked and never done if I could help it! Canvas to cotton to silk to net to wool; old shawls and sheets and tablecloths and curtains: women's materials, pieces of many homes, of many lives, some very old, some new – all coming together bit by bit by bit for a new purpose.⁸¹

Here Knight tries to capture the collective nature of this task—women sitting in circles, each sewing a variety of fabrics, each going at her own pace, each making something that will come together as one. Knight's celebration of "women's materials" is not an essentialist claim that all material is feminine or that all women should sew. Rather, it is an invocation of women's historical labor practices. In fact, the juxtaposition here of Knight's lack of sewing skills and dislike for sewing with her celebration of this collective act of sewing the dragon,

⁸⁰ *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South).

⁸¹ *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South).

complicates any essentialist inference about the action. As Noël Sturgeon has argued in regard to US-based 1980s ecofeminisms, “A characterization of environmental activism by women as stemming from a ‘maternalist’ and therefore ‘essentialist’ politics misses the element of the tactical construction of collective identities and the use of such identities to ‘read’ configurations of power” (1997, 184). Sturgeon aligns this strategic construction of collective identity with Chela Sandoval’s theorization of “differential consciousness” I discussed above. As Sturgeon and Sandoval argue, often the universalisms produced in activists’ collective (and collectivizing) practices, are strategic, temporary and contextual.



**Figure 8_Cover of
the *Rainbow
Dragon Festival
Booklet***

Movement between the symbolic and material aspects of dragon-making is also evidenced in the cover image of the Rainbow Dragon booklet, drawn by Katrina Howse. The cover image shows a woman rising through the wrapped body of a dragon. In the bottom right hand corner, a spool of thread and a needle are set beside a couple of small, sewn up patches. The pronounced, large-scale imagery of the overlapped woman and dragon figures almost eclipses the small rendition of crafting tools positioned in the corner of the page. This draws out the majestic and otherworldly aspects of the meshed human and animal figures. Yet, at the same time, the very presence of the spool, threaded needle and already stitched together patches, invoke a sense of construction or craft labor. The smallness of the needle and thread both allows the creatures to take the spotlight, while reminding the viewer that the tools of imagination are both symbolic and material.

While the revalorization of craft-based activism at Greenham certainly produced universalisms that erase difference, it also called upon histories of women's craft practices. From the underground railroad symbols sewn by black women into traditional quilt patterns, to the suffragettes that brought their knitting with them to protest vigils, women have used craft practices in subversive and unsanctioned ways (Somerson 2007, 39). In the 1960s Black Americans set up the Freedom Quilting Bee cooperative as part of the Civil Rights struggle. In the early 1970s a number of feminist artists sought to reclaim and politicize craft as a legitimate form of artistic practice. *Womanhouse*, a collaborative installation by the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts, interrogated notions of domesticity, femininity, labor and consumption. Each 'room' of the

house was a work of art incorporating practices from crochet to sculpture (Broude and Garrard 1995, 32-47).

Over the past ten years there has been a revitalization of these kinds of politicized craft practices, now sometimes referred to as 'craftivism.' These craft-based activist practices include 'knit-ins' (where protesters collectively occupy a space while knitting), stitch-and-bitch sessions, and the distribution of free patterns for making craft objects that depict corporate and military crimes (Somerson 2005, 41). In England, the group *Cast Off* hosted knitting meetings and workshops in public settings including on the Circle Line underground train. Conceptualized as material-symbolic actions, Greenham women's craft-based activism can be situated in relation to other political craft practices. Their actions, situated as part of broader social movement histories, evidence how movement culture travels across time and space.

In this same booklet for the Rainbow Dragon Festival, Io explains what she sees as the significance of constructing the rainbow dragon, again drawing out the material-semiotic processes of myth-making:

Fairy-stories, nursery rhymes, myths; a lot of them need recreating into life loving, life affirming, life-respecting mythology. How else do we expect our children or our selves to get our unconscious examples of ethics that do not hold militarism and macho values as the only predominant ethics in our society. [sic] That's why the Rainbow Dragon that we are creating today has a mythology all of her own! She is the Rainbow Dragon that has been born through women's creativity, represents women's [sic] positive inspiration

from all over the world, our thoughts joined on one piece of material... that says just one thing, LIFE, We must respect and protect our living world. We do have an alternative to annihilation and our will to preserve it is represented in our beautiful Rainbow Dragon.”⁸²

The Rainbow Dragon, while an animal figure, is comprised of spiritual and technological elements. As a spiritual image the dragon expresses women's collective anger at the development and proliferation of nuclear technology. The figure marks women's transformation of this anger into “positive inspiration”. Io's statement here, written in part to women still “a bit unsure about [Greenham's] use of symbols,” explicitly acknowledges and articulates reasons for Greenham women's myth-making practices. The creation of alternative images, such as the rainbow dragon, offers a contrast to a “predominant ethics” of violence and militarism. While certainly a utopian and somewhat abstract vision, Io's call on women's creativity as an alternative to the annihilation of the planet being wrought by the current world order should not be reduced to naïve essentialism. The universalisms invoked here, again call upon Sturgeon's nuanced understanding of activist collective identity formation. She writes, “The unified categories of ‘women’ are constructed by environmentalist activists to signal and analyze the complicity of masculinism with projects of environmental destruction” (183). As they are “used as a tool to mobilize people on the basis of a collective subjectivity to take action *now*,” they do “slide into a universalism” (183). However, following Sturgeon, this universalism is both tactical (as a

⁸² Io, *Rainbow Dragon Booklet* 1983 (London, England, Women's Library, Ephemera Collection).

collective stance against) and unstable (as a changing, contested position within the movement). In terms of the Rainbow Dragon Festival, and Io's claims here in particular, a universal notion of women's life-affirming creativity is tactically mobilized as a force against macho values and militarism. Yet, within the broader context of Greenham as a movement comprised of numerous ideologies and practices, such invocations were highly contested. Many women found events like the Rainbow Dragon festival a bit too "cosmic."⁸³

Sasha Roseneil's position on Greenham in many ways parallels Sturgeon's analysis of US-based ecofeminist movements. She argues that Greenham women's essentialisms were contextual and strategic, "Most women at Greenham were not implying women are *naturally* more emotional, intuitive, or closer to nature than men, but were pointing out that the 'non-rational' was an important realm of human experience, and that it should be admitted as a resource in political action" (1995, 69). At the same time, she points out that within Greenham's internal politics, they were also contested. While some women were influenced by "feminist/matriarchal spirituality," other women rejected this interest and ridiculed women's "'cosmic' practices and ideas" (69). Feminist writer and occasional Greenham protester Ruth Wallsgrove sums up this kind of ambivalence nicely, in an article she wrote for the radical feminist magazine *Trouble and Strive*:

⁸³ The Greenham campers Roseneil (1995 & 2000) interviewed frequently refer to the women of Green Gate as "cosmic" which seems to be a broad categorization that includes women's ecofeminist spirituality, Pagan, Witch or Wicca rituals, Goddess worship, astrology, lunar rituals and other related spiritualism emergent in the broader women's and environmental movements.

I don't know where the organizers had got the idea of a dragon symbolizing women's strength, and I don't think I want to; but, again, up close the 'dragon' was not what it had seemed on paper. A three-mile patchwork of banners, quilts and embroidery from several countries, it was a labor of passion that I found very moving. Whatever else it is or is not, the peace camp is passionate (1983a, 4).

While dubious of the 'cosmic' symbolic nature of the rainbow dragon, Wallsgrove writes of how she was drawn into the action. I would suggest that this reflects the importance of the material aspect of the dragon's construction. As Wallsgrove reports, crafting the dragon was a "labor of passion." Here, the collective nature of this women's action usurps the myth-making element of the dragon festival as the point of affective connection. It is the material labor, the collective cyborgian practice of bodies making creatures out of tools together, that 'moves' Wallsgrove—in spite of her cynicism.

Metal Goddesses

Greenham women's everyday encounters with the technologies of the base led many women to formulate analyses of how material resources—such as uranium and other metallic elements—were extracted from the earth and used to make weapons. These analyses often drew together ideas from Goddess and spiritual feminisms with an explicit discussion of tools and technologies. Also appearing in the 1983 Rainbow Dragon Festival booklet, an anonymous prose piece introduces the figure "Goddess of Uranium" or "metal Goddess":

Metal is a natural element—use and abuse of metal is out of control – the core of the earth is believed to be metal – the earth reclaims metal, from her core, for her own. The Goddess of uranium is ANGRY. I had a tendency to ignore metal, until working on the dragon idea and looking into a Chinese horoscope book, about fire controlling metal (the dragon breathes fire) I began thinking about how the combination of male power and metal was a very dangerous thing and instead of disliking metal itself, I began thinking of it as a mis-used natural element ... Patriarchy has gone as far as it possibly can with metal ... e.g. with all the weapons and the control over physical life that it has.⁸⁴

This piece expresses how the author went from “disliking metal itself” to “thinking of it as a mis-used natural element.” Here she makes a distinction between the *essential nature* and *use* of materials. Metal is seen as an element that is constructed not only by its chemical composition but by the values and meanings that shape its use. The dominant values and meanings associated with metal can thus change along with people’s practices. The figure of the metal Goddess is created as a way to imagine alternative uses of this resource. Offering another account of metal, Sarah wrote an article entitled “Liberating Metal” in the *Greenham Women’s Peace Camp Newsletter*:

Metal is a compulsive substance exciting to cut and shape, to work with. Perhaps it is this excitement of metal that has sparked men to use it and use it. They have wanted to have her power, to make

⁸⁴ *Rainbow Dragon Booklet* 1983 (London, England, Women’s Library, Ephemera Collection).

their weapons. With this use of metal the earth is not happy. We can make other things together. Exciting, useful, powerful, life-enhancing metal things.⁸⁵

In Sarah's writing metal is referred to with a female pronoun, drawing a connection to the earth as a living being. Rather than seen as a static resource for man to use at his will, Sarah views metal as an active, alive technology, a "compulsive substance". She argues that its potential uses should not be defined or determined by military interests. Reclaiming the earth and its resources as part of a larger ecosystem, Sarah imagines alternative possibilities for engaging our technological world.

Sarah's writing strongly resonates with anarchist and anarchafeminist work on technology. Combining anarchist critiques of technology with feminist critiques of patriarchy, Peggy Kornegger argued that "Men can no longer be allowed to wantonly manipulate the environment for their own self-interest ... the presence of hierarchy and authoritarian mindset threaten our human and our planetary existence" (25). Here Kornegger cites Murray Bookchin's *Towards A Liberatory Technology*. Bookchin connects concerns for ecology with technological development in order to outline some possibilities for liberatory uses of technology. These liberatory uses would engage machines to limit the amount of toil required by work, freeing laborers to be craftsmen. Technology would be "based on...and tailored to the community" rather than driven by the accumulation of capital. (2004 [1965], 80-81). This attention to craft and vision of

⁸⁵ Sarah "Liberating Metal" *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South)

more just technological practices underlined much of Greenham women's daily life.

As daily living at Greenham required women to interact with both technologies of the base and the scarce resources of the camp, women were regularly involved in developing their own liberatory technologies. Many women quite literally 'liberated' metal from the fence as well as from shopping carts and scrap piles, in order to transform and build household technologies. Sasha Roseneil describes these practices at length:

During periods when evictions were infrequent a number of women, particularly at Green Gate, devoted themselves to making furniture from scrap wood and bundles of sticks. Women built mobile kitchens on wheeled pallets in order to be able to save food from the bailiffs ... Women at Green, Blue and Orange Gates built earth ovens to bake cakes, breads and puddings. Others forged grills and sandwich toasters from pieces of the fence which they had cut down. At Green and Blue Gates showers were rigged up from trees (2000, 108).

Many of the apparatus, utensils and other tools Roseneil describes here were depicted in illustrations in Greenham newsletters. The "More June News" edition of *Green and Common* contained a "Do It Yourself Hints" series of drawings. The four panel strip describes 'How to Make a New Grill'.

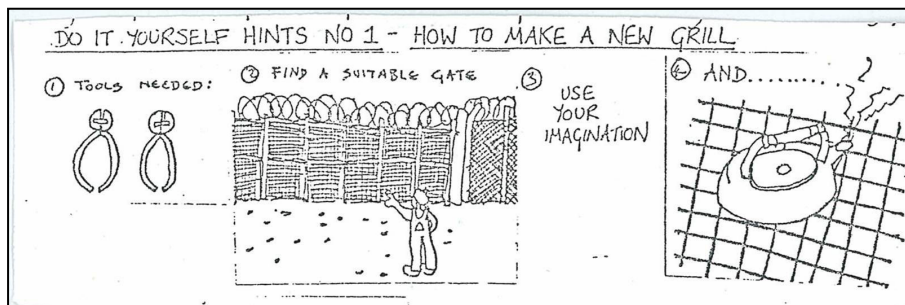


Figure 9_Do It Yourself Guide to Remodeling the Perimeter Fence

One begins with bolt cutters, then finds a “suitable gate.” Rather than telling you what to do through either text or illustration, panel three says, “Use Your Imagination.” This is followed by a fourth and final panel depicting a steaming teapot on your new grill. While offered more as a tongue-in-cheek rendition of women’s practices than a practical instruction manual, the skill-sharing and do-it-yourself ethos of Greenham is well captured here (as is the incessant making and drinking of tea). As women use pieces of the military base’s security fence to construct a cooking grill, the metal is simultaneously transformed as both object and symbol. From a signifier of militarism and enforced borders, the metal is transformed into a signifier of warmth and home. This transformation is not a rhetorical recoding, but the result of a specific technological engagement in which women’s refusal to accept the legitimacy of the fence as private military property enables them to re-imagine the possible uses of the metal that surrounds the base.

Colonialism & Cultural Borrowing

Whether discussing snakes, spiders, dragons or metal Goddesses, in their development of new languages for talking about technology, Greenham women employed symbols, iconographies and myths culled from a diversity of cultures, geographic locations and historical time periods. At times, when figures such as the Rainbow Dragon are taken up by Western feminists to do political work, the specificity of their meanings within particular socio-geographic contexts was disoriented. The question of whether or not such cultural borrowings are ethical and politically effective has been an issue of debate within activist and scholarly circles.

Written examples of such cultural borrowing can be found in the booklet for the Rainbow Dragon Festival:

A mythical message, carried to us by the Aborigines in Australia, holds majestic inspiration. For these people, with timeless knowledge, are protecting their mountain, rich in uranium, from the pressures of a government determined to buy it from them, at any cost. When one understands that uranium is a kaleidoscope of colour, then such resistance takes on huge proportions. For the Aborigine throughout centuries has been taught that when their mountain is disturbed, the rainbow serpent will rise and destroy the world. (*added in hand writing: Patriarchal world that is*).⁸⁶

In the same booklet anthropologist Chris Knight discusses the Aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent:

⁸⁶Io, *Rainbow Dragon Booklet* 1983 (London, England, Women's Library, Ephemera Collection).

It is uncannily fitting that the Greenham feminists should have rediscovered the Aborgines' own Rainbow Serpent (an image shared by North and South American Indians) as the symbol of feminine resistance to the patriarchal war-machine. For in Aboriginal Australia the Rainbow Serpent is essentially the solidarity of women ... Its logic is essentially lunar and relates to the synchronisation by women of their menstrual cycles.⁸⁷

The "essential" similarities Knight draws out between the serpent in Native American belief, the serpent in Aboriginal Australian belief, and the snakes of Greenham are constructed for the latter's political purposes. Here and elsewhere in Greenham women's writing, there is a universalization of 'other' cultures, in this case Native American and Aboriginal Australian. In her influential essay "Under Western Eyes," Chandra Mohanty comments on the prevalence of these colonizing discourses in feminists', and particularly feminist anthropologists', texts. While Mohanty's article is aimed at Western feminists' studies of 'Third World' women, her point about universalizations in scholarship is useful to think about here. Mohanty argues that Western feminists often presuppose that there are similarities across diverse cultures. She writes that "fragmented examples" from different countries can "add up to universal fact" (2003). These 'facts' are then mobilized to prove particular claims about the world. More specifically in relation to ecofeminist practices, Noël Sturgeon argues that a binary division underlies US ecofeminism that distinguishes Western from indigenous women, and by doing so

⁸⁷ Chris Knight. *Rainbow Dragon Booklet* 1983 (London, England, Women's Library, Ephemera Collection).

tends to treat ‘indigenous women’ as what Mohanty terms an already constituted, coherent group (Sturgeon 1997, 117; Mohanty 2003).

Sturgeon argues that categories of indigenous versus Western are continually re-constructed through references to three forms of ‘indigenous’ women: Native American women, Asian Indian women, and prehistoric European pagan women (1997, 117). I would suggest that women at Greenham mobilized both the category of Asian Indian women and of pagan women. However, rather than draw on American indigenous cultures, they drew from Australian indigenous cultures, as seen above.⁸⁸ Also of notable difference, the connections that English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish women at Greenham had to Pagan cultural histories is far more direct or proximate than that of white (European ancestry) women in the US. Pagan traditions, festivals, folklore and controversy still permeate life in these countries in a way that they do not in the United States. That said, Sturgeon’s critique of ecofeminists’ ‘nativizing’ or ‘tribalist’ discourse and practices are highly relevant. In this final section of the chapter, I look first at mobilizations of indigenous peoples in these Greenham women’s writing. I then turn briefly to a discussion of Pagan practices.

In her discussion of US ecofeminist appropriations of Native American culture in their 1980s activism, Sturgeon points out the following tendencies: (1) participation in a cultural imperialism based on “the idea that it is possible to

⁸⁸ One significant exception to this is the song “You Can’t Kill The Spirit” by Native American singer-songwriter, Naomi Littlebear Martinez that became a Greenham anthem. These words were often written across banners, newsletters, flyers and women’s personal correspondences. At one point Martinez was invited to perform at Greenham. However, the connections between Martinez, her song and Native American politics were rarely made. The majority of women singing the song or reading this title lyric would not have even known its author. This is most likely both a result of the cultural severing I discuss in this section of the chapter and of the invisibility of the author in Greenham’s protest songs and singing practices, as I will discuss in chapter five.

borrow from a Native American culture without practicing a Native American way of life”; (2) a revaluation of the nature/culture dualism that sees Native Americans as the “ultimate ecologists”; (3) perpetuation of “Noble Savage” stereotypes; (4) the mythologization and thereby ‘fixing’ of Native American culture, rather than learning about how these cultures change and have changing demands for their communities; and (5) the call for a return to nature that fails to mobilize people and denies the potential for ecofeminist practice and coalition-building in urban areas (1997, 124). Most of these tendencies can be found in the above excerpts and occasionally in other Greenham women’s writing. In particular, cultural borrowing is approached unproblematically. In fact, Greenham women’s “rediscovery” (Knight) of the rainbow dragon is a cause for celebration and the “timeless knowledge” (anon.) of the Aboriginal Australians—who are presented in both excerpts as a singular group of “ultimate ecologists” (Sturgeon)—is viewed as readily available for Western women’s use.

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva also saw spirituality in ecofeminist politics as a response to capitalist and imperialist destructions of ecological systems. Spiritualism offered a way of rejecting dominant techno-scientific rationales that legitimated neo-colonial expansion, particularly for those women living in imperial nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. They saw the spiritual feminisms emerging in the 1980s as related to materialist analyses:

Although the spirit is female, it was not apart from the material world, but seen as the life-force of everything and in every human being: it was indeed the connecting principle ... The ecological

relevance of this emphasis on ‘spirituality’ lies in the rediscovery of the sacredness of life, according to which life on earth can be preserved only if people again begin to perceive life forms as sacred and respect them as such (17-18).

For Mies and Shiva, problematic cultural borrowings corresponded with capitalism’s cooptation of spiritual feminism’s critiques of Marxist and socialist rationalism. The problem was not Western feminists’ desire for a spiritualism garnered from Eastern cultures, but the fact that these cultural fragments can be consumed without any regard for the socio-economic and political contexts of the places and people they come from.

Another ‘native’ that appears in feminist spirituality and ecofeminism is the European Pagan. Sturgeon argues, “Explorations into oppositional forms of spirituality that reject the patriarchal heritage of Judeo-Christianity are long-standing feminist projects, and are extremely diverse, ranging from a feminist revisioning of mainstream religions to the creation of new forms of spiritual practice (1997, 129-130). In Sturgeon’s analysis of the US, the appearance of the Pagan in ecofeminism (along with Pagan rituals, beliefs, myths and other practices), was due, in part, to critiques leveled at white women about their cultural appropriation practices. She argues that some white ecofeminists sought to “reconcile the usefulness of nature-based spirituality as an analysis and practice with their desire to combat racism ... [by] turning to their ‘own’ nature-based religions” (130). While Sturgeon questions whether the Pagan can really count as US women’s ‘own’, I would argue that in the context of the United Kingdom this looking back is a far more immediate question of ancestry. Likewise, the

suppression of traditional cultures by the incursion of the church, as well as the witch hunts that went on into the early 20th century, have kept the repression of Pagan beliefs and practices alive in the British cultural imaginary. At the same time, I think that in the UK, as in the US, these reclamations of Paganism glorify tribalism as they seek “to retain the connection between ‘indigenous women’ and the ‘ultimate ecofeminists’” (Sturgeon 1997, 131).

Barbara Epstein discusses feminist Pagan spirituality as having both “naïve” and “sophisticated” dimensions. While there were, at times, naive expectations that you could close a military base with magic, more often this magic involved a focus on “visionary collective action” that transformed consciousness and introduced new ideas to the broader public (2002, 183-184). Epstein notes in particular the political effectiveness of feminist witchcraft in community building. While not writing specifically on Greenham, she suggests that spiritualism in early 1980s direct action anti-nuclear movements contributed to the mobilization of women not yet familiar with feminist politics. Epstein writes, “It is the feminists, especially those with a Pagan/anarchist perspective, that have a sense of how to build an inclusive community, of how the movement can incorporate those outside its boundaries” (343). Epstein, like Sturgeon, argues against sectarian models of feminist politics that deem Goddess worshippers and Pagans to be in the “apolitical and atheoretical” camp of ecofeminists (Seager 2003). Rather, she argues that there are many different ways in which this perspective is constructed and articulated.

As some of the white British women involved in the Greenham protests had little previous knowledge of other people’s cultures, histories and struggles,

their statements often display an earnest desire to build relations of solidarity at the same time as they express an ignorance of differences in women's experiences. Mariana Ortega has recently termed this consciousness a 'knowing, loving ignorance,' which she argues is characteristic of feminists who are engaged in knowledge production about women of color, but who produce knowledge that inaccurately represents the experiences of women of color. These feminists tend to "theorize and make claims about women of color. However, they do not check whether in fact their claims about the experience of women of color are being described with attention to detail and with understanding of its subtleties" (2006, 62). Ortega specifically cites Haraway's work on cyborg writing as an example of loving, knowing ignorance. She argues that while Haraway has a strong political commitment to women of color, she mobilizes their work to put forward her own theorization of the cyborg. One result of this is that she misrepresents the figure of La Malinche by making it seem as if all Chicana and Latin American feminists are reclaiming its meaning (64). Ortega explains, "La Malinche or Malintzín, [is] the indigenous woman who was Hernán Cortés's lover and translator and who has come to symbolize treason in Latin American popular culture." Ortega sees Haraway's production of knowledge about and through the work of women of color as "loving and knowing." Yet she finds ignorance in Haraway's presentation of some Chicana feminists' revisionist myths of La Malinche. Ortega writes, "A reader who may not know anything about Latina or Latin American culture would, after reading Haraway's text, get the impression that this reconfiguration of the myth is the norm in the writings of Chicanas" (64). In the end, Ortega sees Haraway's manifesto as a form of cultural borrowing that reproduces an

imperialist notion that the cultures and resources of people of color are available to white Westerners. She argues, “Haraway effectively used the constructions of women of color for her own benefit, to enhance her theory of the cyborg and her brand of feminism” (65).

In an interview reflecting on her past work, Haraway notes her own hesitation to mobilize figures from other cultures. Here she discusses her use of the coyote figure:

My use of the coyote is marked by the middle-class, white feminist appropriation of Native American symbols, about which one must be very suspicious. There is a particular way in which feminist spirituality has operated in a rather colonial way to Native American religion. I have a certain criticism of my own use of the coyote figuration on this background. However, saying that I do not mean to dismiss or to forbid what I and others have been doing in terms of using Native American symbols... We do live in a world that is made up of complexly webbed layers of locals and globals, and who is to say that Native American symbols are to be less global than those produced by Anglo-Americans? (Ihde 2003, 53)

Anglo-American and European myths of imperialism travel with the most speed, authority and violent implications. For Haraway it is these “central origin myths of Western culture” that have come to colonize everyone (1991, 175). Yet while she is aware of a colonialist tendency, or perhaps lapse, in feminists’ appropriations of Native American (and other indigenous cultures), she is wary of demarcating boundaries around what or whose cultural symbols can be borrowed.

Many white Greenham participants were only beginning to make connections across race, class and geography. As a result of where or how they were raised, a number of white women at the camp had never encountered women from other countries or other cultures. As time went on at the camp, more international visitors and political groups came to Greenham. Likewise, women would fundraise to set up exchange programs, visit groups in other countries and bring over speakers from women's organizations. As these national and international exchanges increased, questions of racism, imperialism and difference were brought to the fore. A white woman from the Nottingham Women for Peace group related how she began to develop a broader consciousness. She told *Spare Rib* reporter Barbara Nordon:

Through being at Greenham and meeting with women from Chile, the Pacific, Nicaragua, Namibia, my global awareness of women's lives has broadened and changed. Locally the women from the Bildworth mining community have injected new views and experiences; we now support and share with each other; all of us have grown from exposure to other women's struggles. We all fight oppression at different levels, in our own ways but the network that has grown up has strengthened all of us as women, provided new and vital resources and is constantly enlarging our understandings (1985, 33-34).

While not explicitly spoken, the question of ignorance lies in the background of this woman's discussion. Without a "global awareness" fostered through dialogue with other women about their specific, localized struggles, it is difficult to

understand oppression beyond one's experience.⁸⁹ Consciousness is regarded here as something one develops collectively, in contact with others. It is seen as constantly in flux, as capable of expanding.

I would argue, alongside Sasha Roseneil, that transformations in consciousness were a defining feature of Greenham. I also agree with Roseneil that the kind of model of consciousness we need does not go from false (pre-feminist) to true (feminist) because this division cannot account for the many different analyses a so-called feminist consciousness can yield (1995, 141). Roseneil's approach to analyzing transformations of consciousness in the Greenham women she interviewed sees the telling of experience as mediated by available discourses. She expands on this view, popularized by Joan Scott, to argue that Greenham women were also engaged in the construction of new discourses to mediate their own experiences. It is this process of mediating experience through available and newly created languages that interests me.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ In her discussion of how "knowing, loving ignorance" can be overcome, Ortega turns to the ideas of Audre Lorde, Elizabeth Spelman and Maria Lugones. She argues that white women must engage in the hard work of political commitment and must "deal with flesh and blood people not just their theoretical constructions" (2006, 69).

⁹⁰ Roseneil's separation of areas of consciousness transformation evidences the dominant mode of feminist thinking which, perhaps without reflexive intent, sections off understandings of "women's oppression" from understandings of "environmental", "global issues" and "the state". It is difficult to imagine how any consciousness of women's oppression could not be at least coupled with a consciousness about the state. Furthermore, if only one consciousness appears visible, it is not because thoughts about these other areas don't exist, but because they are not connected through analysis. These absences are the site of anti-imperialist feminist debate.

Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, the polarization of the Goddess and the cyborg invites historicizations of ecofeminist praxis that distorts women's actual activist work. To dismiss Goddess reclamation as some archaic form of essentialist feminism obscures its political content and practice. Conversely, imagining the cyborg as a techno-zealot leaves only a vacuous shell of the feminist subjectivity Haraway imagined. Both ways of telling the story of the Goddess and the cyborg overlook women's creative, tactical experimentation with ideas about nature and technology.⁹¹ In order to write ecofeminist and women's anti-nuclear activism into our histories of struggle and resistance, we need flexible figurations of cyborgs, goddesses and cyborgGoddesses.

The figures I have addressed are each part mythic and part real, part human and part animal, part cyborg and part Goddess. As Greenham women turned these symbols of snakes, webs, dragons and metal goddesses into actions, and their actions into symbols, they developed new ways of engaging technological objects and environments. Greenham women's uses of spiritual symbolism and Goddess mythology gave their protests against technological warfare and environmental destruction a distinct political resonance. Many women, unfamiliar with feminist activism, were drawn to Greenham protests because of their rich, emotive culture and passionate energy. Reclaimed mythic figures offered visions of women as capable, empowered beings. They confronted the 'rational', scientific language of Left politics, carving a space for the creative,

⁹¹ Similar spiritual practices were found in US and Canadian groups. See Sturgeon (1997) and Epstein (1991).

spiritual dynamics of women's activism. Drawing from the extent to which Greenham women's practices mobilized, troubled and challenged people, it is worth thinking about how myths and symbols affect—and can be effective—in current Western ecological activisms. As flows of capital, militaries, weapons, contractors and policing strategies are exchanged across national borders, what kinds of symbolic borrowing and “trans-consciousness” are effective for constructing a transnational, anti-imperialist ecological struggle?⁹² What new cyborgGoddesses are waiting to be imagined?

⁹² This question is informed by Chandra Mohanty proposal, “The differences and borders of each of our identities connect us to each other, more than they sever ... our minds must be as ready to move as capital, to trace its paths and to imagine alternative destinations” (2003, 250-251).

If These Fences Could Talk: The Greenham Fence as Communication Technology

“Whether we cut, dig or magic away a fence, we are involved in meeting and transforming the fear that created it.”

-Tanya Myers, Greenham Camper

“Sometimes you can see a real affection for it on the faces of women as they weave or paint or snip away at it, or as they wander along it on sunny days, admiring each other’s handiwork.”

-Ann Snitow, Feminist Freelance Journalist

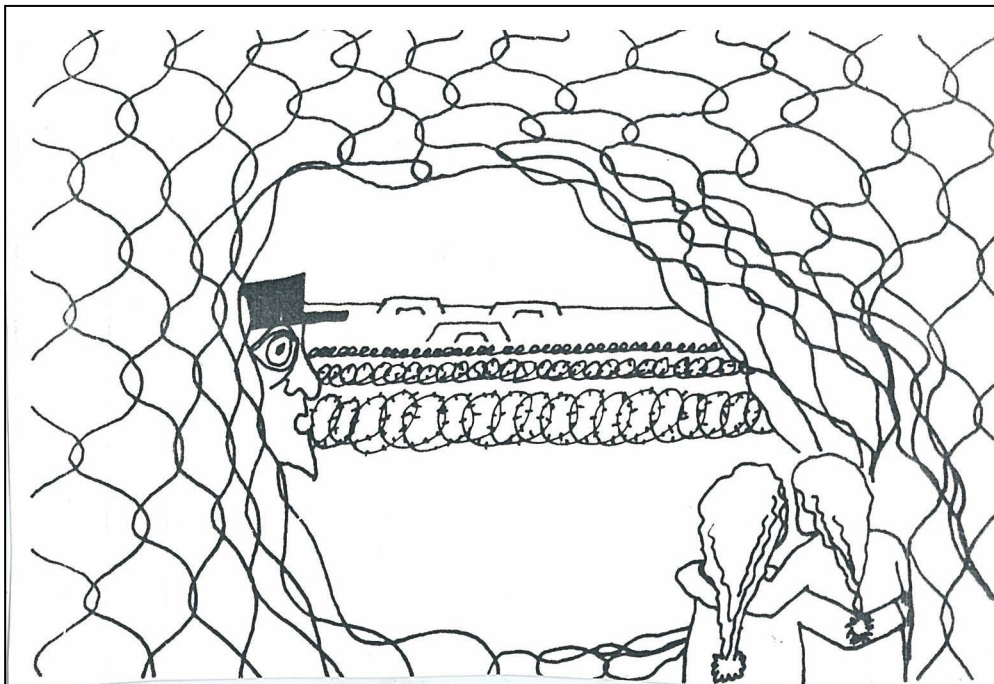


Figure 10_ Women at the Fence from Annie’s *Knitting and Picketing*

Anne Seller wrote in 1985, “The fence is the major symbol at Greenham ... At the fence you can see the immense might of the nuclear state: acres of coiled barbed wire, immense concrete structures, columns of armed men in pathways between the barbed wire” (1985, 27). The potency of the perimeter fence as both a symbol and a site was constructed in part through the circulation of media metaphors and images. Newspaper headlines constructed the fence as a marker of the place at which political action occurred. For example, British national newspapers ran headlines including, “Greenham – where you can’t sit on the fence,” “Fury at the Fence,” and “Cruise protesters attack fence.”⁹³ ‘Wire’ became synonymous with the fence, as the two terms were used interchangeably to fix the location of protest. Headlines included, “Women of Greenham” – ‘women at the wire,’ “Greenham: Countdown at the wire,” and “Linked hands circle wire at Greenham.”⁹⁴

At the same time, the perimeter fence marked the space of the protest encampment and the site of women’s protest actions. Former *Guardian* newspaper defence correspondent David Fairhall writes in his book on Greenham, “To a remarkable extent, it was the physical nature of [the fence] that determined the protest” (2006, 105). While the Ministry of Defence considered a number of proposals to further secure the military base—including, creating a land swamp, shrinking the perimeter and electrifying the wire—to ‘deter’ protesters, in the end extra guards and rows of barbed and razor wire were all that was added (107-108). As such, Fairhill writes that the fence formed “a sort of semi-permeable

⁹³ *Guardian* December 12, 1983.

⁹⁴ *Observer* December 12, 1982; *Guardian* November 6, 1983; *The Times* December 13, 1982.

membrane through which a limited amount of movement and communication was possible” (108). As women repeatedly decorated, climbed over and cut down the fence, they transformed its meanings and function. They disrupted its role as a site and symbol of security. Throughout these many engagements, the fence became a source of women’s frustration, inspiration, argument and intense discussion. Often women’s emotions were invested into the fence, making the fence itself into an archive of collective feelings (Cvetkovich 2003). As such, I argue that the fence can be productively thought of as a communication technology—an at once discursive and physical object that women communicated on, through and with.

To construct this argument I look at first-hand accounts of Greenham women’s material-symbolic engagements with the perimeter fence that were documented in anthologies, demonstration booklets, newsletters, photographs, radio broadcasts and documentary videos. I begin with a discussion of how the fence was situated both as an agent in women’s protest networks and as part of the military-state apparatus. I draw from Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory to discuss how interactions between human agents (protesters, police, soldiers) and non-human agents (the fence, bolt cutters, wool) shaped and reshaped the meanings and functions of the fence. I then turn to three particular sets of engagements.

First, I discuss women’s decoration of the fence, arguing that women’s practices of fence decoration turned the fence into a canvas and, as such, reshaped its significance in a variety of ways. I look in detail here at representations of fence decorating and how binaries of public/private, feminist/unfeminist functioned in relation to women’s crafting the fence. Second, I look at how

women communicated with soldiers through the fence. Here I discuss the fence as a barrier whose permeability made it also a communication technology—an apparatus through which women and soldiers could talk. I look at how differences manifested themselves through these exchanges and what they reveal about the function of nationality, class and race at the Greenham encampment. In the final section I look at women's fence-cutting actions and how the question of fence-cutting was situated in relation to broader debates over violence and nonviolence at the peace camp and in protest movements more generally. I expand on my discussion of race in the previous section, looking at how racialized forms of colonial violence figure in discussions of nonviolence as a protest tactic. Here I also look at the ways in which the fence itself becomes constructed and reconstructed as a material-symbolic object. As women sorted through their feelings and analyses about fence cutting, the fence becomes invested with emotion, revealing the complex relationships that exist between bodies and objects at the site of protest.

Securing the Perimeter

The maintenance (or semblance) of securing the perimeter fence required 'cooperation' between the police, magistrates, soldiers and military officials. It also required engagements between security officials and technologies. Many technology theorists have made the argument that 'technology' does not refer to self-contained technical objects, but to social, economic and cultural systems which physically construct and give meaning to what we think of as

‘technologies.’⁹⁵ One of the most influential of these is Actor-Network Theory. Science and Technology Studies scholars Bruno Latour and Michel Callon are generally credited with initially developing Actor-Network Theory in the early 1980s. Since then it has been taken up, critiqued and transformed by a number of theorists. As it is concerned with social relations between individuals, groups and objects, Actor-Network Theory is useful for analyses of ‘technology’ that address power and its potential transformation.

Actor-Network Theory provides a method for thinking about how interdependencies between people, groups, objects and other ‘networks’ emerge and function. It is particularly useful for thinking about how human and non-human agents are always enmeshed. Thierry Bardini offers this illustrative summary:

[Actor-Network Theory] describes the progressive constitution of a network in which both human and non-human actors assume identities according to prevailing strategies of interaction. Actors' identities and qualities are defined during negotiations between representatives of human and non-human actants ... The most important of these negotiations is "translation," a multifaceted interaction in which actors (1) construct common definitions and meanings, (2) define representatives, and (3) co-opt each other in the pursuit of individual and collective objectives (1997, ft 3).

Employing this notion of “translation,” the joining together of institutions described above can be read as a series of negotiations in which human actors

⁹⁵ See for example Ruth Cowan (1985) and Judy Wajcman (1991).

(police, soldiers, government officials) and non-human objects (wire mesh, fence posts, razor wire, guard towers) enter into particular relations with each other. Each human actor might have different objectives in restricting women from the land (following legal codes, maintaining a job or reputation, increasing the value of Newbury property), but through their construction of tasks needed to achieve a common goal they negotiate a way to function as a whole 'security network'.

Fran Bradshaw and Teresa Thornhill articulate well the ways in which institutional bodies and objects negotiate security in their discussion of the Easter blockade on March 31-April 1, 1983. During the first day of action there was a CND blockade of the base, followed the next day by a human chain linking the base and the Aldermaston weapons manufacturing plant. As these actions were coordinated with CND, many men participated and the events received a great deal of media attention. Fran Bradshaw and Teresa Thornhill write in an article for *Spare Rib*:

At Greenham we see two faces of militarism. During the Easter blockade, the police on the ground treated protesters as if we'd all come for a family outing; while in the sky, huge troop helicopters ferrying in soldiers from other bases reminded us of the sophisticated technology which is at the disposal of the army. In the background, there were mounted police and riot shields, and Holloway prison had cells prepared. These were scarcely used at Easter, but we should be under no illusions that they won't be used if 'necessary' (1983, 61).

Here Bradshaw and Thornhill describe how helicopters, mounted police, riot shields and prison cells comprise the “hardware and tactics” of militarism. The police, court system and soldiers are all seen as part of a security network which is capable of renegotiating how objects and bodies police the Greenham protests.

In a forty page pamphlet on Greenham called *At Least Cruise is Clean*, author Lynchcombe constructs a reading of the various people and groups that benefited from the establishment of the US base on Greenham Common. Among the beneficiaries are surveyors, bank managers, magistrates, landowners, engineers, shop owners and the *Newbury Weekly News* editor, Lou Cummins. Lynchcombe writes:

I’ve outlined ... the direct and indirect benefits of Cruise to these people: those construction contracts, the demand for accommodation from foot-sore Air Force personnel, and lastly the increasing demands on local shops. The question is, to what extent did our local business community see their common interest and what did they do to help it? (n.d., 37)

In the language of ANT, Lynchcombe’s discussion of a “common interest” can be seen as the motivation for various actors to come together in a network. This network is comprised of human and non-human actors—business owners, military officers, the *Newbury Weekly News* contracts, etc. And it is through the establishment of this network that human actors acquire power. In the final section of this pamphlet, Lynchcombe goes on to argue that Newbury’s Rotary Club was the primary site at which “translations” connecting actors into networks occurred. While the establishment of these networks created what Lynchcombe

refers to as an “oligarchy”, his analysis does not invest immutable or pre-determined power in individual agents. Rather, he reads the formation of this oligarchy in terms that appear almost identical to descriptions found in ANT:

This was no organised conspiracy, just a coming together of wise heads, a realization of their common interests. The men of the Rotary Club are not evil men. If they have a tiny fault, it’s their habit of identifying the interests of Newbury with their own (n.d., 40).

While the tone of Lynchcombe’s passionate description of the “Newbury mafia” does make it appear conspiratorial, the connections unraveled in its investigation reveal the ways in which individuals, groups and objects congeal around shared interests—particularly around interests in property which were intimately tied to legal and rhetorical justifications for repressing Greenham women’s protests. Greenham visitors Julia Emberely and Donna Landry recognized how these property interests created a common bond between state and military networks:

Legal coverage of Greenham court cases has tended ... to bury the direct political content of the women’s actions within the discourse of property offenses—trespassing, squatting, and so forth. Given that the coercive power of the state is generally established to protect private property, the military industrial complex can be read as an expansion of that coercive process ... armies develop into nuclear arsenals as a global extension of state coercive power in the interests of private property. On one level, the courts’ actions may seem to depoliticize the nuclear issue when, in fact, politics

folds back on itself, returning to and disclosing the basis of state coercive power (1989, 493).

In ANT terms, both human and non-human actors are vulnerable as the intended function of any person, device or object is never fully determined. In order for networks to continue working, human and non-human actors must repeatedly perform their tasks, maintain negotiations and communicate effectively. Human actors can “command connections”, but connections are not permanent; rather they are as permeable as Greenham women’s ruptures of the fence evidence. This is why Greenham women’s actions were able to make the system’s politics, in Emberey and Landry’s words, “fold back on itself.”

Reconstructing the Fence as Home

In contrast to the functions of the fence as the site of security, peace campers referenced the fence as home. Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins’ anthology of Greenham women’s writing *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* (1984) has cover art by Dee Schulman. Her image depicts women living and working outside the perimeter fence. Women in colorful coats are shown carrying fire wood, sitting around camp fires, washing dishes and transporting jugs of water. Bolt cutters, pots, pans, tents and clothes lines strung with trousers and women’s signs are scattered across the scene.

Artist Tabitha Salmon’s series of drawings and watercolors of life at Greenham similarly render the camp as home. In a review of her 1984 exhibition at the North Peckham Civic Centre, the critic writes, “Salmon’s Greenham is a rather mundane and domestic place with well-mannered scenes of hairdressing,

bender building and daily life on the front line of the peace movement. There is little crude caricature or any of the expected clichés here.” While the critic finds this “lack of ferocity” a bit boring, he quotes Salmon stating, “it’s very difficult to identify the so-called Greenham woman type.”⁹⁶ Without the clichés, or rather, the fabricated reports of a filthy, rat-infested, messy, diseased space full of aggressive, violent women, the scene of Greenham captures something beautiful but benign—a collective, outdoor space where women live together.

In a significant legal case concerning the fence as home, 21 Greenham women sought to change their electoral address to the address of the camp. A hearing was held in December 1982. Women went along to argue that the encampment was their home. During the proceedings opposition was raised on the grounds that the camp was not a residence as it did not have house structures (walls, windows, front doors, etc.). When the women were then called to the witness box, each described their benders, how they felt about Greenham and why they lived there. After hearing how the opposition was framing their case, one of the Greenham women, Abbie Jakubka, went to a local friend’s house to pick up the Oxford English Dictionary. In *Women at the Wire*, she recalls:

In the lunch recess I rushed over to Barbara’s to look up ‘home’ ...
Nowhere, in all the definitions, did it mention anything about there
being a structure where ‘home’ is concerned; it was much more to
do with feelings and associations with a particular place. The home
consisted of people rather than a house, and what you felt toward

⁹⁶London, England, Women’s Library, Archive Collection, “Press Cuttings” 5GCW/E.

people ... [So] I staggered into court with this whacking great dictionary under my arm ... Then I got up, plonked the OED on the desk and said I wanted to read from this book some definitions of the word 'home' (1984, 112).

Jakubská's description of the trial documents the ways in which women generated a place-based language about 'home' that challenged legalized, conventional conceptions. As with other dimensions of their protest, women brought feelings based on friendship, community and ecological systems into direct confrontation with normative views about what constitutes home. While the women won this case, objections from residents and local authorities were quickly raised.

This confrontation of value systems came to a head at the Newbury District Council Electoral Registration court on January 7, 1985. Local resident A.G. Meyer had lodged an objection to the inclusion of 13 named Greenham women on the draft register.⁹⁷ At the hearing, a number of these named women came to defend their own case. Meyer's lawyer, Mr. G. Mitchell, set out to formally prove that Greenham is not a residence through evidence submitted in the form of pictures and verbal testimonies. He stated to the court, "The picture of the camp which will emerge from the evidence is that life in its material circumstances is rudimentary in the extreme ... The campers do not live in any places designed or adapted for human habitation. They sleep where they can, in vehicles or under plastic sheets. They have no facilities for washing, cooking, or

⁹⁷ Electoral Registration Court held by The Electoral Registration Officer Mr. W. J. Turner, LL.B., Solicitor at The Council Offices, Newbury, England, January 7, 1985 (London, England, Women's Library, Archive Collection, "Proceedings" 5CCW/A/01/1).

going to the toilet” (5/F). Mr. Mitchell then pointed out that this “primitive and unsettled” lifestyle is adopted by choice rather than necessity (5/F).

Later in the case, during cross-examination, a witness for the objectors, Miss Helen Tucker, was asked to define a “permanent” structure. Her response of “bricks and mortar” (17/A) was later challenged by Greenham defendant, Mrs. Dennett, who argued that there were thousands of people in England that lived in caravans and had the right to vote (17/E-F). Another Greenham defendant, Miss Johnson, took a different approach to challenge normative ideas of permanence during her cross-examination of Mr. Bastable, an officer for the Department of Transport that was involved in previous evictions of Greenham campers. Miss Johnson had Mr. Bastable list eviction orders sent to Greenham women which spanned a time period from September 1982 to October 1984. She then thanked Mr. Bastable, stating, “Since you have had to take out so many eviction orders against us, I think that does constitute a considerable degree of permanence” (27/B-D).

As each Greenham woman adopted a different, dynamic approach to argue that a protest camp can be a home, the normative notion of a home as a building with an established address, with furniture and regular facilities, was challenged. The perspectives Greenham women provided made claims not only to their own residence being ‘home,’ but extended this understanding to others, arguing that one’s legal right to vote should not be dependent upon the structure (or lack of structure) in which they live. In sharp contrast to an architectural definition of permanence as firmly fixed objects, permanence is re-imagined in terms of commitment, of emotional investment, of care for others and for the land.

These kinds of arguments for ‘home’ were what secured the women the right to register in the 1982 hearing. However, the final objection brought up by Meyer and his lawyer Mitchell had not been presented before. Mr. Mitchell argued that while the Greenham women might subjectively feel the camp was their home, this could not “alter the reality” that they were illegally camping, and either were actually homeless or had proper homes elsewhere (60/C). Mitchell contended that women’s occupation of the land was carried out unlawfully, showing as evidence women’s criminal damage to the fence. He argued, “a person cannot rely upon unlawful residence so as to secure an advantage” citing a recent case as precedence. This precedent case followed provisions in the Immigration Act of 1971, which stated that one could not rely on an unlawful act, (living illegally in a country or place) to secure an advantage. Mitchell extended this to the present case, arguing that women’s illegal occupation could not serve as a residence which would confer them the right to vote (68/F-G).

In the end, the judge decided that it was not the question of what physically makes a home, but this issue of unlawful residency that required him to remove the women’s names from the electoral register. Interestingly, the question of home here had nothing to do with domestic or undomesticated space. What was at stake was largely a question of property. If there was no claim of propriety over the highways, or rules prohibiting residence on the Common Land, there would be no illegal occupation. The judge’s ruling here, along with his explicit statement that the trial, “Is not an occasion for party political speeches or expressions of agreement or disagreement with political decisions” (p1/B), supports Emberely and Landry’s argument that the courts buried “the direct political content of the

women's actions within the discourse of property offenses." The State and military's vested and corroborated interest in the protection of private property was fundamentally linked here to the protection of national borders, as the law literally moved from securing the protection of one to securing the protection of the other.

Greenham women's legal struggles over the question of home can be productively read in relation to broader, ongoing movements around issues of homelessness, squatter's rights and immigration. Treated as more than just a text for analysis, these proceedings can be viewed as a marker of a legal and political event that is significant to histories of social struggle. Moreover, like the tabloid papers I examined in chapter one, the proceedings serve as an archive that contains—in excess of its discursive content—values and emotions that manifest themselves in the dialogues, anecdotes, hesitations and stumbling stored in this transcript. In this sense, court transcripts of everyday struggles (rather than only those of grandiose events) can be seen as valuable and value-laden cultural artifacts. They are crucial resources not only for historians, but for communications scholars, as they contain a particular kind of conversation that reveals how law and policy are shaped through deliberative contestations over fundamental values.

Crafting the Greenham Fence

While the fence may not have been a legal home, women at Greenham did much to make the fence feel like home. At the first 'Embrace the Base' mass demonstration on December 12, 1982 women provided a powerful

reconfiguration of the perimeter fence, literally bringing objects from ‘home’ to the peace camp. An early piece of promotional material for the event in the *London Women’s Liberation Newsletter* called upon women to come to Greenham and “weave webs on the fence—bring pictures to peg up—banners—posters—photos—women+children’s clothes—nappies—etc. anything related to ‘real’ life—as opposed to the unreal world that the military base represents.”⁹⁸ On the weekend of the demonstration, thousands more women arrived than most campers predicted and they came with thousands of objects to affix to the fence ranging from family photos to socialist flyers. In an interview with Radio 4, a participant recalled:

One women brought a whole china tea service, a beautiful bone china and had just walked away and left it there pinned to the fence. Others put up their wedding dresses and baby clothes and things. I brought along two sacks full of daffodil bulbs which I planted which are still there.”⁹⁹

Upon seeing images of wedding dresses and nappies strung along the perimeter, some feminists questioned if this action simply reinforced stereotypes about women, motherhood and femininity. Barbara Norden, reflecting on her early experiences of Greenham, wrote:

Why did an event meant to empower women, involve pinning nappies and wedding photos to the fence as symbols of what would

⁹⁸ *London Women’s Liberation Newsletter* #288 (London, England, Women’s Library)

⁹⁹ “Greenham women, Greenham men,” n.d. *BBC Radio 4* (London, England, British Library Sound Collection, B8589/06).

be destroyed by nuclear war? Didn't all the woolen webs and songs with lyrics about women being 'the spirit' that saved the world reinforce ideals of feminine virtue that were pseudo-religious? (1985, 6)

However, not all of the items affixed to fence were symbols of motherhood. Jan remembered seeing objects placed on the fence including letters of support from the 'Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women', covers of *Spare Rib* and *Outwrite*, statements from the UN Declaration of Human Rights, a Code of Nursing Ethics and "hundreds of tampons dipped in red" (1983, 19). Many Greenham women discussed how affixing objects to the fence provided a sharp contrast to its bleak, metal surface.

It is not surprising that maternal and domestic decorations are evidenced in place of this diversity of objects in both journalists' and researchers' accounts of the Greenham demonstration. As Greenham women worked to make the camp outside the perimeter fence their home, the site became situated within much broader debates over the public and private sphere. As Susan Gal writes, the separate spheres doctrine emerged in the nineteenth century. Conventional politics, both conservative and liberal, have since opposed the two. They have categorized a number of other distinctions in relation to this dichotomy (i.e. rationality/sentiment) and formulated narratives "about the dangers of mutual contamination by public and private spheres" (2002, 77-78). Feminists have challenged these constructions, pointing out the fallacy of this dichotomy. They have revealed much about the ideological construction of public/private boundaries and the political interests it serves (i.e. re-classifying spousal abuse

and child care as public rather than private concerns to pressure for rights, recognition, policy and laws).

As I discussed in chapter one, in many journalists' early accounts of Greenham 'the housewife' served as the quintessential 'ordinary woman' who engaged an act of transgression by leaving the private sphere of her house to join the protest camp. One early media sound bite on Greenham perhaps best exemplifies this transgression, "In the past, men have left home to go to war. Now women are leaving home for peace." This line appeared in a number of press reports and television broadcasts as well as on a publicity publication for the camp called *The Greenham Factor*. Mobilized by media makers, supporters and campers themselves, this sound bite was used to mark the physical movement of women from the domestic space of the house to the protest space of the Greenham encampment. The figure of the housewife also appeared in fictionalized accounts of Greenham. The central female character in both Sarah Daniel's play on Greenham *The Devil's Gateway* and Gene Kemp's novel *I Can't Stand Losing* are also both housewives. Tony Biggin's *The Gates of Greenham* also focuses on the figure of the ordinary, self-sacrificing housewife. In the first part of this opera the narrator relates:

I was 44 and asleep like everybody else ... people are disillusioned with politics and rightly so, they've been betrayed ... they need something they can begin to believe in ... I felt I had the right to make the decision on my own ... I've been accused of being cruel and hard-hearted for leaving my children behind. But it's exactly

for my children that I'm doing this (Biggin, "The Gates of Greenham")

Within the ideological framework of public/private, the domesticated housewife serves as the emblematic symbol of women's relegation to the private sphere. By the early 1980s, the figure of the liberated housewife (and her unliberated counterpart) had gained much broader cultural saliency. While many Greenham protesters were housewives, narratives of their transgression (leaving home) are always told within the framework of a private/public dichotomy. Regardless of whether the story is sympathetic (Biggin, Daniels, *The Guardian*) or acrimonious (*The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*), moving from the privacy of home to the home outside the fence is seen as *the* transgression, the crossing of a clear, collectively understood boundary.

Susan Gal argues that people often "revert to cartographic metaphors of shifting and unstable boundaries" to explain private/public traversing. However, this imagery of shifting and boundaries, "is a result and not an explanation of the ideological processes we observe and use" (2002, 91). The cartographic descriptions Gal criticizes are found in many journalists' accounts, as well as in academic analyses of Greenham. For example, Cresswell discusses Greenham women's 'public' displays of 'private' acts—ranging from cooking and bathing to parenting and lesbianism—in terms of transgressing boundaries, providing "radical contrast" (1996, 100), and presenting "alternative aesthetics" to those of the surrounding military geography (124). Similarly, Margaret Laware, drawing on Cresswell, argues, "[Women's] protest strategies reflected efforts to redefine the boundaries between public and private, demonstrating that private nightmares,

private fears do indeed have a role in public discourse” (2004, 29). Also working with Cresswell’s analysis, Couldry writes that Greenham “turned inside out” the “regular patterns” separating domestic/non-domestic, public/non-public and mediated/non-mediated space (1999, 345). In each case, the ‘private’ or ‘public’ quality of spaces, objects and activities are seen as already ascribed to objects, rather than the result of self- and collectively-oriented communication practices going on in particular socio-historical contexts.

Susan Gal argues that this occurs because ‘public’ and ‘private’ are not only “co-constitutive cultural categories,” but also indexical signs (2002, 80). As indexical signs, they are used to categorize all different kinds of spaces, activities and bodies in relational ways (81). In the context of Greenham we see, for example, nappies, tampons, television crews and nuclear weapons all referred to as ‘public’ and ‘private’. The distinction between these indexical terms, as well as their ideological function, shifts according to how they are communicated, where and by whom (81). For example, commentators write that nuclear weapons were kept ‘private’ by the military and made ‘public’ by Greenham women (Seller, Couldry). Yet this statement is very different from how ‘private’ items like nappies and tampons entered into the ‘public’ space of the outdoor encampments (Cresswell). Gal argues that this is because such terms have a “fractal distinction” (81). This means that the public/private distinction “can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting onto narrower contexts or broader ones.” Likewise, public and private categories can be broken down into further public and private parts (81). So while the Greenham base is ‘private’ compared to a public road, in distinction

to women's domestic crafts it can be seen as 'public'. Gal suggests that such dichotomies function as "perspectives rather than fixed categories" (81).

Gal argues that this revised understanding of how the public/private dichotomy functions has a number of implications for social research, as well as for how we envision and enact social change. When we collapse a variety of objects, activities, practices, etc. into a public/private dichotomy, social contexts become conflated or erased (91). In other words, we can forget to ask why and how tampons, cooking, lesbianism, discourse and nuclear military bases become categorized within a public/private dichotomy. This is a crucial point in terms of my study. The failure to account for context and perspective distorts Greenham women's diverse activist practices. When we conflate women's different activities and relegate them within private/public (and, accordingly, domestic/undomestic, unfeminist/feminist) distinctions, we tend to overlook the processes of transformation itself. Rather than simply name or locate the act of transgression, I am interested in the emotional, affective and interpersonal communicative dynamics between people and objects that constitute these material-symbolic shifts. Perhaps put more simply, I am concerned with how people's perspectives toward others, objects and ideas change through protest engagements.

While different women had different perspectives about what were and were not appropriate items to affix to the fence, most agreed that the action had powerful effects. Women's hand-made crafts, china tea sets, children's nappies and feminist memorabilia laid claim to the fence, transforming it into a part of the peace encampment. One woman, walking past objects strung along the entire

length of the perimeter, spoke of it as a “nine mile work of art.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Ann Pettit wrote that the fence “became a canvas, a potent, powerful work of art eight feet high, nine miles long” (2006, 11-12). Pettit describes women’s ‘domestic’ crafting of the fence in her memoir:

There was a delightful irony here, for as ‘liberated’ women we disdained these cosy crafts, these emblems of conformist domesticity. But here they were to become something else, producing a military enraged by cross-stitch that impeded their view, driven to hysteria by embroidery (2006, 306-307).

While Pettit’s description is certainly not the only interpretation of this craftwork, her perspective raises a number of interesting questions. What does it mean for crafting to become a part of Greenham women’s political work? How does engaging this practice or tactic impact upon the women crafters? What does this “becom[ing] something else” reveal about the ways in which actions and objects are categorized (as private/public, domestic/political, unfeminist/feminist)?

Descriptions of decorating the Greenham fence share many similarities with how people describe practices of graffiti writing. In fact, Pettit directly compares Greenham women’s decoration of the fence to graffiti writing on the Berlin Wall. For Pettit, engaging the fence/wall as canvas expresses people’s “spiritual freedom” (2006, 11-12). Similar to most graffiti writing, the crafting of the fence produced a highly ephemeral work of art. Within days after the demonstration, fence decorations had been torn down by authorities and

¹⁰⁰ “Greenham women, Greenham men,” n.d. BBC Radio 4 (London, England, British Library Sound Collection, B8589/06).

unsupportive local residents. However, as graffiti writers often find, the cleansing wasn't complete. Akin to the faded traces of spray paint left on washed walls, bits of colored wool, torn fragments of family photos and crumbled scraps of paper remained on the fence at Greenham.¹⁰¹

In their recent work on the subject, Mark Halsey and Alison Young focus on the affective dimensions of graffiti writing. Based on extensive interviews with graffiti writers, they argue that graffiti writing is “an *affective* process that *does things* to writers’ bodies (and the bodies of onlookers) as much as to the bodies of metal, concrete and plastic” (2006, 276-277, emphasis in original). Here Halsey and Young work from Brian Massumi’s understanding of affect as “ways in which the body can connect with itself and with the world” to argue that the concept can help us think about how graffiti writing “forges connections” and generates “potentials” (277-278). A turn to affect allows them to consider the practice of graffiti writing beyond art/vandalism or good/bad binaries, focusing on intensity rather than identity (i.e the ‘graffiti vandal’, the ‘outraged citizen’).

Similarly, I would like to consider the affective dimension of women’s decorating the Greenham fence. Rather than debate the private/public, domestic/undomestic, unfeminist/feminist distinctions that dominate others’ analyses, I consider the fence as an active site of engagement where women forged connections with others and with their surroundings, often transforming conceptions of themselves as political subjects. However, for my analysis I employ Turid Markussen’s conception of affect rather than Brian Massumi’s. Markussen, drawing on Sara Ahmed, writes, “When I talk of affect or feeling I

¹⁰¹ Some decorations remain on the few fence posts left standing on the common.

mean not just the emotions, but also the less easily categorizable ways in which we, in embodied ways, interact perceptively with that which is beyond us” (2006, 293). This definition offers a way of talking about affect and emotion simultaneously. Likewise, it draws upon, rather than excludes, the vast body of feminist scholarship that has been produced on emotion. Moreover, as I am interested in how Greenham women made sense of feelings and articulated emotions, this definition is better suited to my task.¹⁰²

Sasha Roseneil describes fence decorating on December 12th, and the singing and dancing that followed, as an “unstructured, unplanned expression of women’s creativity and life” (2000, 196). The demonstration, she writes, provided “a moment of de-differentiation, when individuals experienced a collective effervescence, an extraordinary sense of solidarity, excitement and strength” (195). Participating in this “giant art installation” connected women to each other and to the site of protest. At the same time, the women’s actions served to remind those on the base “of the people outside and the reality of the lives threatened by the arms race” (196). As protesters, authorities and base personnel view the fence, they encounter objects invested with the passions and emotions of the protest. Throughout the event, these objects actively acquire meaning not only from the women bringing them to the fence, but from all those onlookers who encounter the objects from their own varied perspectives. These objects, in turn, affect onlookers in different ways, or with different “intensities”. This ‘diversity of

¹⁰² While Massumi’s thought on affect might provide conceptual uses for feminist theory, his work does not explicitly stem from (or credit) feminist scholarship on consciousness, feelings or emotions. This is the case with much of what is considered ‘affect theory’. While there are many feminist theorists working on affect, this work is often detached from past feminist theory (and practice) on consciousness and emotion.

meaning' exceeds the value or an evaluation of objects as static symbols (of femininity, of internationalism) or of individuals as fixed identities (the mother, the socialist, the outraged citizen).

The decoration of the Greenham fence not only expressed life and creativity, it also became a record of women's fears, anxieties and frustration with nuclear militarization. In her study of lesbian archives and lesbian public cultures, Ann Cvetkovich argues that memories of trauma are "embedded not just in narratives but in material artifacts" (2003, 7). Objects, such as photographs, invested with emotional and sentimental value, can be as much a document of trauma as a policy report or a personal memoir. While not the kind of archive Cvetkovich examines, I would suggest that, through women's actions, the Greenham fence became a sort of ephemeral archive—as well as an archive of ephemera. As women affixed objects to the fence, transforming it into a canvas, they became engaged in collective documentation. In the place of detailed social statistics or scientific studies, they offered objects that held their stories. In Ann Snitow's words, the fence became "an intense visual record" (1985, 45).

Margaretta Jolly's research on women's nightmares of nuclear warfare looks at the role Greenham played as site for confronting and countering trauma. At one point Jolly cites a voice-over from a Greenham documentary: "They came because of their nightmares, they stayed because of their dreams" (cited in Jolly 2006, 11). While this is a simplistic sound bite, its dramatic framing speaks toward the affective labor that women did at Greenham, changing or transforming how women 'felt'.

Sara Ahmed has recently described the process of changing feelings as “emotional conversions”. An emotional conversion refers to an active change in how we feel, or how we understand our feelings. Since both artifacts and bodies are invested with feelings, emotional conversions can be transformations in the way we feel about objects, as well as ourselves and others (Ahmed 2007). Likewise, if we begin to feel differently about objects, this changes their impact upon us. So, for example, we could say that an emotional conversion took place when the Greenham fence was transformed from an “ugly” wire mesh to a “beautiful” canvas (Snitow 1985, 47). This conversion simultaneously impacted and is impacted by a shift in feelings. Chris Mulvey’s description of being compelled to decorate the fence captures the interplay that occurs here between self, object and emotion:

There it was in front of me: the fence, three times as tall as I and stretching further than my eye could see. I wanted to decorate it. I wanted to fill its holes with colour and with life, to transform it, so that when I looked again I would see Life and Beauty not threat and cold sterility” (Harford and Hopkins 1984, 91).

In Mulvey’s anecdotal account, feelings are ascribed both to herself as the subject and to the fence as object. Yet these feelings reciprocate, or loop, between Mulvey and the fence. Through her active engagement with the fence she converts a ‘threat’ into a symbol of ‘life,’ which in turn, transforms fearful feelings into hopeful feelings.

As Teresa Brennan puts it, feelings are not “self-contained” (2004, 57). Rather they “preexist us” and are “outside as well as within us” (65). With this

claim Brennan proposes what she calls a “paradigmatic shift.” Instead of regarding differences in how people feel as a quality of personality or identity, she suggests “that we regard the human being as a receiver and interpreter of feelings, affects, attentive energy” (87). Because affect is transmitted through multiple senses and sensory encounters, feelings, she argues, are never generated solely within any one individual.

To situate Brennan’s analysis within the context of collective or group processes, I would propose a model that sees the individual within the collective as a “receiver and interpreter” of the feelings, affects, and energies that generate from collective processes. As women at Greenham engaged the fence as a site and object of protest, they were also engaged in listening to and interpreting each other’s feelings. Or, to return to my discussion of Seller in the introduction, they were developing an emotional intelligence which shaped, and was shaped by, their differences as they emerged through these communicative engagements.

Communicating Through the Fence

I move now from a consideration of the fence as an affective technology, to a discussion of the fence as a technology through which women communicated. As David Fairhill noted, the permeability of the fence allowed for communication between soldiers and protesters (2006, 108). One of the ways women transformed their feelings about the fence as a divide between soldiers and protesters was by envisioning the perimeter as a structure which trapped soldiers within the base. Women produced songs, cartoons, stories and poems that described the fence as a ‘prison’ keeping soldiers in. One poem written by Jane elaborates this:

How does it feel
 in your prison-camp soldiers?
 Manacled by Power
 against the defenceless
 You are the prisoners – we are free
 It is because of us
 you built your fences
 strung your barbed wire
 hammered in stakes
 we forced you to build
 your own wire cage
 and you are the prisoners – we are free
 How does it feel
 in your chicken-coop soldiers?
 little macho cockrells
 parading the wire,
 strutting in your dust bowl
 arid and treeless
 you obey orders

but we are free!¹⁰³

Jane's account of this security network has a sharp, ridiculing tone as she attaches
 or invests the fence and the soldiers with feelings of indignation. Other women's
 accounts bring out a sense of irony or humor found in imagining the fence as a

¹⁰³ London, England, Women's Library, Ephemera Collection.

trap for soldiers. In the glossy promotional pamphlet, *The Greenham Factor*, protester Laine recalls a woman with bolt cutters smiling at a soldier and shouting, “Don’t worry, we’ll soon get you out of there!” The differences between these recollections evidence the diversity of approaches and relations women had with the soldiers, who themselves had a diversity of approaches to dealing with the women across the wire.

For example, many women noted differences in how USAF and RAF soldiers related to the protesters. While all soldiers at Greenham were ‘under orders’, the USAF and RAF soldiers had different protocols and individual soldiers acted upon these orders in different ways. In the January 3, 1984 letters section of the *Guardian* Mrs. Saime Timms from Cambridge wrote in response to Jill Tweedie’s article on violence coming from soldiers:

I myself talked to a very young soldier, standing inside the fence behind the first line of barbed wire. I asked him if he was British or American. He was British and indeed seemed so offended to be mistaken for an American that I asked him how one can tell the difference. He gestured towards a second line of soldiers standing behind further coils of barbed wire and said: “They are the ones who carry pistols.” The real surprise came, however, when I asked him “What are you here for?” He again gestured towards that second line of soldiers and said: “We are here to protect you from

them!” Do we really need allies from whom we have to be protected by our own troops?¹⁰⁴

While differences in US and British soldiers orders are certainly significant, documents found in ‘liberal Left’ records of Greenham, such as in *CND* material and the *Guardian*, contribute to the image of the complicit British soldier whose duty is defensive rather than offensive. It is the US that is the violent, imperialist nation—Britain is the misguided, minor accomplice. The symbolic dimension of this construction goes back to representations of World War II and persists today in journalists’ accounts of the ‘War on Terror’. While there is, of course, a need to examine how different nations’ military policy authorizes soldiers’ violence, it is also important to raise questions about representations of the ‘benevolent British soldier.’ Particularly when contrasted to the ‘excessive US soldier,’ this can create a myopic or distorted account of Britain’s role in both foreign and domestic military operations.¹⁰⁵

Sasha Roseneil’s interviews with Greenham women also evidence the variability of women’s interactions with soldiers across the fence. From 1983, after the cruise missiles arrived at the base, British soldiers were positioned closest to the fence. Roseneil’s interviewees discuss how these soldiers interacted with women based upon women’s different gates, as well as soldiers’ different regiments and commanding officer. Roseneil writes that soldiers collectively invoked “low-levels of harassment” such as playing band instruments loudly

¹⁰⁴ *Guardian* January 3, 1984.

¹⁰⁵ In Iraq, British soldiers, unlike US soldiers, are not authorized to ‘shoot first’, as they follow the protocols of the Geneva convention. Soldiers often have different equipment, weapons and daily allocations of food and amenities.

throughout the night. “High-levels of harassment” came more from individual soldiers who often used verbal sexual abuse against the women. There were also occasions of physical abuse that involved concrete and spikes being thrown over and poked through the fence at women, often while they were asleep at night (2000, 237-240). Many of the interviewee’s accounts bring out both the brutality and the humanity of soldiers as individuals as well as part of a network. They also frequently draw attention to issues of class, age and masculinity:

They basically were young men who had been brutalized by a process deliberately intended to do that, and they were quite nice enough as individuals, but I had no illusions. They’d been trained to follow orders and it didn’t matter what those orders were (Katrina Allen in Roseneil 2000, 239)

It was really important to me to deal with the soldiers because I think that there are humungous issues of economic justice that come into play when you’re talking about the peace movement. I don’t think most people go into the army because they want to go into the army ... I was not going to be a person in the peace movement who sees the people in the army as enemies (Liz Galst in Roseneil 2000, 242)

They really are only human beings in uniform. And I know that they have the capacity to kill and maim, but so do we ... and they have that capacity not to kill, and not to maim, and if you’re going

to write them off, then you may as well go home anyhow (Carol Harwood in Roseneil 2000, 242).

Katrina, Liz and Carol each discuss why it is important for them to relate to soldiers as human beings capable of making decisions. While Katrina argues that military training erodes soldiers' autonomy and humanity, Liz highlights that the military (particularly the US military) is largely comprised of people coming from low income families. Joining the army, for many young people, is often the result of limited economic resources and job choices. Carol offers another perspective, aligning protesters with soldiers to argue that everyone has the capacity to harm others. If protesters dehumanize soldiers and police, they are giving up hope that social transformations are possible. For these women, talking to soldiers through the fence provided, at times, an opportunity to make conversation. Instead of approaching all soldiers as a uniform and uniformed body, they attempted to uncover connections.

The ways in which different women's bodies were marked was an important factor in how women were treated by soldiers as well as police. Anne Seller's article demonstrates how white, middle-class women's embodiment contributed to positive interactions with soldiers and bailiffs in her discussion of Greenham women communicating with 'the authorities':

One of the realities that Greenham continually demonstrates is this weakness of militarism: inside a uniform is a human being, often a young man who is bored silly by the task he has been set, to watch for women cutting a wire fence. Communication is not difficult. ... Militarism tries to train people not to see people, but reality tends

to break through, especially when the ‘enemy’ they are set to watch more easily fits the model of what they have been taught they are ‘defending’ (1985, 29).

While Greenham was comprised of many women who Seller describes as “fitting the model” of a good British citizen—middle-class, white and feminine, not all women shared this background, nor were their bodies marked in the same ways. Those who suffered more violence were often women of colour, women visibly coded as lesbian and women thought to be leaders. Eunice, a Greenham camper who participated in the original walk from Cardiff, voices this kind of discrimination commenting that “there was a lot of rough treatment of women. But I think because I’m small and I have white hair they thought I was a grandmother and they sort of treated me gently.”¹⁰⁶

Speaking toward modes of discrimination, one black feminist participant at a Greenham event, Amanda Hassan, documented her participation in the December 12, 1982 ‘Embrace the Base’ action:

I was holding on to the fence along with some other women, (all white) and from nowhere a big burly policeman gave me a chop on my arms and sent me reeling into the mud. None of the other women who were also holding onto the fence got this treatment. When I commented on this, a woman said: ‘Well, you’re only picked on because you’re so short’. (I’m under five foot). *Couldn’t they see it was because I was Black?* (1984, 7).

¹⁰⁶“Greenham women, Greenham men,” n.d. BBC Radio 4 (London, England, British Library Sound Collection, B8589/06).

Readings of institutionalized or systematic violence rightfully situate brutality as a problem at the level of the collective. However, manifestations of this violence are often carried out through individual people or small groups of people. In fact, I would suggest that it is when human actors exceed the amount of violence tolerably exercised (or negotiated) by the network that the violence of the network becomes most visible. Thinking of Amanda Hassan as part of a protest community raises questions about how Greenham, as a collective space, engaged differences between women.

In the incident Amanda recalls—and in other interactions at Greenham—acts of racialized violence were often either dismissed or seen as a problem for the individual protester rather than for the collective protest. When the ways in which bodies are differently marked and situated is not taken into proper consideration, this impacts other connections in the protest community and the function of the community as a whole. Another black feminist commentator similarly felt that black women supported Greenham, but were often unable to attend demonstrations both because of state violence, and for other political and economic reasons. She wrote, “There are problems I know for other Black friends of mine to go to Greenham—fears of deportation as they do not hold British passports, the racism and sexism of the police there, and of course the fact that it costs money to get to Greenham!” (1984, 19). In addition, black women engaged in social justice activism were often very busy doing political work around fascism, housing conditions, unemployment and in various solidarity campaigns. While many women at Greenham were outspoken on other forms of state violence, repression and injustice, its primary, public focus was on nuclear

weapons and militarism. As such, it was not a place where these other immediate concerns that more closely affected a large number of black women's lives were addressed.

Just as the broader women's movement of the time was struggling to both formulate and enact an anti-racist politics, as I have discussed elsewhere, Greenham as a protest community faced regular challenges in actualizing an anti-racist practice. These challenges were, and continue to be, largely centered on questions of how differences are collectively addressed and how they are given room to transform community practices.

Nonviolence and Fence-cutting

In this section I consider how differences in the ways women felt about cutting the fence were often oriented around, and shaped by, conceptions of what counted as violence. For women who were particularly committed to maintaining a practice of nonviolence at Greenham, many questions arose: Was fence cutting harmful? Was it an act of aggression and an expression of the wrong sort of anger? Was it only property damage? If so, did that make it acceptable? Statements by women who were reflexively engaged in debates about fence cutting speak toward the complexity of nonviolence and the many feelings at stake in making such action decisions.

Nonviolence was one of Greenham's few collectively shared commitments. However, Sasha Roseneil argues that while nonviolence was a political position or shared ethos for women at Greenham, the implications of what this meant were often subject to debate, particularly around actions. Roseneil

objects to critiques of Greenham that treat protesters' nonviolence as a 'feminine principle' or a quality naturally inherent in woman. Rather, she argues that nonviolence was for some "a general philosophical principle" and for others of "a specifically personal and feminist derivation" (2000, 127-128).

Nonviolence, as an abstract or abstracted philosophical principle, tends to universally condemn the use of violence on moral grounds. Those ascribing to this position often claim nonviolence is always the most effective, humane tactic of resistance. Thus the claim can carry with it value judgments that, whether explicitly or implicitly, dismiss libratory struggles which have engaged violence as a form of resistance. While this was not a position adopted by all women at Greenham, such arguments were present and were expressed in Greenham women's writing. For example, Lynne Jones writes in the February 1983 *Women's Peace Camp* magazine, "For me nonviolence is not simply a technique of struggle, but comes out of a belief that all life is worth love and respect. Whatever my anger, hatred and loathing for a system, it is evil itself which needs attacking, not the person who represents, supports or carries out that evil."¹⁰⁷ While Lynne Jones' is offering a personal view, this position clearly supports one form of intervention over others. It has an abstract target (i.e. "evil itself ... needs attacking"), rather than a concrete one (i.e. we should attack Michael Heseltine). And it adheres to an abstract ideal ("all life is worth love and respect"), rather than a specific goal (we should eliminate US military bases in England). Although this may not have been the prevailing view at Greenham, Jones wrote prolifically on the women's peace movement in the early 1980s, including an edited

¹⁰⁷ *Women's Peace Camp* February 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South)

collection, *Keeping the Peace: a women's peace handbook*, published by the Woman's Press in 1983. This espousal of nonviolence as an abstract principle was one of the most widely circulated perspectives both in regard to Greenham and the broader peace movement.

Later in the same Greenham magazine, camper Io offers a similar view of nonviolence as an abstract principle:

To me, nonviolence is not just about the way we as women approach direct action. We cannot 'fight' violence with violence; the end and the means must be the same to achieve Peace without Bloodshed. So many times groups and movements involved in political and social change have resorted to violence, usually in frustration. This time we must get it right.¹⁰⁸

While Io backs up her argument by speaking about the effectiveness of symbolic actions, she does not situate her analysis in any specific geographic or political economic context. It is not clear which movements have failed, only that they were morally and tactically wrong in their choice to engage in violent resistance. This perspective offended many people who were affiliated to or in affinity with liberation struggles. Io says nothing of the violent history of occupation and colonization in her dismissal of the "groups and movements" that "have resorted to violence."

Scholar and activist Ward Churchill argues that by the early 1980s an abstract, universal principle of nonviolence began to dominate political movements. In place of a contextual consideration of how militancy and direct

¹⁰⁸ *Women's Peace Camp* February 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South).

confrontation have been successful forms of struggle, the nonviolence position was often treated as the only truly revolutionary strategy. This kind of nonviolence position, he argues, distorts or entirely erases the role that violence has played in the liberation struggles of colonized people (2007). As critics like Churchill point out, these privileged positions are often blind to the oppression of colonized peoples. They fail to adequately acknowledge or account for State and Imperial violence at the same time as they tend to create a false view of historical struggles. These views often retroactively inscribe the possibility of nonviolence onto situations in which self-preservation might have required the use of physical force.

Another widely circulated and highly contested document on nonviolence was the 1983 pamphlet *Piecing It Together: Feminism and Nonviolence* by the Feminism and Nonviolence Study Group. This pamphlet offers a more situated and contextualized perspective, naming the various ways in which the State inflicts violence and pointing out how the media distort oppressed people's use of violence in struggles against the State:

Violence *against* the State is instantly portrayed as both unacceptable and illegitimate, and those people who struggle against violent injustice, as in Poland, South Africa or Northern Ireland, are labeled 'terrorists'. Might is right, and the weak are always wrong, especially if they fight back. One reason for this is that many people do not recognize any forms of violence other than physical violence, whereas for us violence includes conditions which themselves kill. Poverty, hunger and racism

degrade individuals and inflict suffering (“Piecing It Together” 1983).

The Feminism and Nonviolence Study Group’s pamphlet interrogates the meaning of violence and expands the definition to include forms of psychological violence (racism) and harm that incurs over time (lack of adequate food, shelter, health care). The authors also recognize that the ways in which media stories frame acts of resistance distorts questions surrounding oppressed groups’ use of violence in struggles against their oppressors. In these ways they offer a far more nuanced argument than the abstract principle found in Jones or Io’s conceptions.

Yet, as Liz Curtis argued in direct response to this pamphlet, the authors do not carefully consider—or make a connection between—the question of violence against women and the question of violence against colonized people. Curtis, speaking specifically of the situation in Northern Ireland, suggested that the legitimization of women’s self-defense found in the pamphlet should have been linked to a consideration of the self-defense of oppressed peoples (1983, 46). Another respondent, Nefertiti, provided a strong critique of nonviolence as a universal principle, arguing that only women from privileged backgrounds who had not experienced the brutalities of violence could support such a stance. She wrote:

Where has nonviolence got the aborigines of Australia, the native Americans of North and South America, the ‘tribes’ of India, the black man of Southern Africa? ... Your booklet has been thought through with care and concern, but you are ignorant, because you never suffered. How dare you assume that people in armed struggle

choose violence? What makes you think they didn't try peaceful ways? What do you know of the desperation that is the produce of hundreds of years of bitter resistance? Power does come from the barrel of a gun, or how else did you colonise me? When you dismiss the experience of millions of people as foolish failed violent ways, you are then colonizing them again, true to your tradition of imperialism. There is no instance in history where power has been redistributed without bloodshed (1983, 46).

Nefertiti draws attention here to both the historical problem of ascribing nonviolence to past struggles, and points toward the failure of those in privileged situations to take on the perspective of colonized peoples. This analysis can perhaps be usefully conceptualized in the language of feminist standpoint epistemology. Standpoint epistemology seeks to understand and describe how different social groups come to have different perspectives on the world that emerge out of a specific set of experiences. Whereas oppressed social groups have the potential to see the reality of social relations, for dominant groups these same social relations are hidden or mystified.

Applied to the question of nonviolence, the inability of privileged women (specifically here white, British women) to understand the experiences of colonized peoples can be seen as a result of social structures of oppression that do, in a sense, 'blind' or shield socially privileged women from the conditions of colonized people's lives. The fact that these experiences of oppression are mystified from the vantage point of the privileged is not meant to serve as an excuse, but rather as a way of accounting for how the best intentioned white,

British peace activists could fail to take account for differently situated women—whether those are South African black women or white women from Northern Ireland. As Nancy Hartsock argues, “There are some perspectives on society from which, despite one’s best intentions, the real relations of human beings ... with each other are not visible” (1983, 107).

In the terms of standpoint epistemology, oppressed peoples lack socio-economic privilege while they have access to a standpoint which is epistemically privileged. Their unique standpoint can yield better knowledge about social reality than those perspectives available to members of dominant social groups. This epistemic privilege does not guarantee that oppressed people will necessarily challenge the distorted vision of the socially privileged group. It is only when (in this case) an anti-imperialist standpoint is adopted and articulated that this privileged vision enacts its potential. In this case, it is through the process of formulating and sharing their critiques of the ‘Piecing it Together’ pamphlet that Nefertiti and Curtis’s standpoints emerge as coherent challenges to these women’s non-violent politics.

As Roseneil argues, many women active at Greenham offered a much more nuanced view on violence that situated Greenham women’s nonviolence in the particular national, political and economic context of the protest. These views often considered the privileged position of many Greenham participants. In an interview with Roseneil, Rowan Gwedhen said:

What I used to say at camp about nonviolence was if I was in Nicaragua I’d probably have a gun in my hand. But I believe that if it was absolutely totally right at Greenham ... Nonviolence is a

privilege; it was a privilege that we could choose to be non-violent.

But I'm not into self-sacrifice. If witch-hunts began again, and they were out for dykes I don't think I'd let myself be shot (in Roseneil 2000, 129).

Also offering a nuanced position, in an article for *Spare Rib* Fran Bradshaw and Teresa Thornhill related resistance at Greenham to resistance in Northern Ireland, citing "connections and contradictions" between the two. They described how they were exposed to "the brutal realities of militarism" on a trip through Northern Ireland, writing, "The army are there on the streets and nationalists suffer constant harassment. Their homes are raided in the middle of the night, people have to go through check-points and road blocks just to get to the shops. The signs of occupation are everywhere: Saracen cars, dogs, guns, helicopters" (1983, 61). Instead of making a universal claim to nonviolence, Bradshaw and Thornhill confronted the complexities of different struggles against oppression in relation to the use of violence. They attempted to understand pacifist feminists' positions while providing alternative analyses that acknowledged fundamental differences in people's situations:

We support the Irish people's right to self-determination and as British women we can't say how they should go about achieving it or whether or not they should use violence ... While imperialism in Northern Ireland has to be fought on many different levels, using non-violent resistance to oppose militarism at Greenham seems the way which most directly confronts the assumptions of military ideology ... Being committed not to express anger thru violence,

[women at Greenham] have to find other ways of using anger as a political force. Singing on blockades and laughing in court, for instance, have been more powerful than we might expect because of the intense anger they express (1983, 62).

Gwedhen, Bradshaw and Thornhill discuss the tactical effectiveness of violence and nonviolence, rather than offer it as a universal principle. For them, nonviolence was an effective political strategy for Greenham. It cultivated creativity in actions and generated uses of anger that do not lead to the physical harm of other people. In the context of this particular protest, nonviolence was seen to effectively undermine the ideology and function of the military base. However, its effectiveness in this context, they argued, cannot and should not be simply extended to debates over other sites of struggle.

This kind of situated, contextualized and effects-oriented perspective on violence/nonviolence is better able to respond to the constantly changing and often unpredictable elements of protest. Yet, this view cannot answer the question of what and who defines nonviolence. As Ward Churchill among others points out, the definition of nonviolence often changes in relation to individuals and groups comfort level. Churchill views pacifism in North America as a self-posturing position that attempts to cover the privileged classes' fear of leaving what he calls "the comfort zone" (2007, 61). He argues that thoughts of violence—and its repercussions—incite fear and anxiety. Thus, rather than confronting these emotions and risking repression, people ascribe to nonviolence as a way to remain safe. Under this view, the ambiguity over whether acts like property damage (i.e. fence-cutting) constitute an act of violence is the result of

people's different levels of comfort. If one is uncomfortable with fence-cutting she might claim the act is violent as a means of self-protection. In this way, the violence/nonviolence binary, like the private/public binary, expands and condenses to name, describe and categorize a variety of acts depending on the perspective of the speaker. These words are also indexes that have a fractal distinction. Just as interrogations of the public/private divide demand that one looks beyond moments of crossing and re-organization, when confronting violence/nonviolence it is crucial to look at how transformations in women's perspectives changed the ways in which these terms were employed and invested with meaning.

In addition, while I agree with Churchill that a principled pacifism is at times used to mask or evade issues around one's own fear and risk, I think it is important to take people's comfort zones seriously. As women at Greenham sorted through their own feelings and the feelings of others with whom they worked and lived, a concern about each other's "comfort zones" guided their interactions. Many women believed that resistant tactics had to be specific and situational, as well as flexible to different people's realities and capabilities. As such, questions around experience, collectivity, autonomy and trust surrounded women's considerations about cutting the Greenham fence. In the following excerpts that I have selected to look at, differences of age, political ideology, class and previous experiences are articulated in regard to cutting the fence. While each woman narrates her own story, she also positions herself as a participant in Greenham as a protest community. Each woman shares or frames her view in a way that anticipates other women's reactions.

Greenham Women's Accounts of Fence Cutting

One older camper, Mandy, expressed her doubts about cutting the fence at Greenham in the form of a poem. In the poem Mandy questions whether her association of cutting the fence with violence is sensible and whether or not such a view is welcomed at the camp. In her poem, Mandy ascribes various emotions to herself and the women around her, questioning if what she feels is accurate. The use of ellipses, quotation marks and parentheses throughout the poem further mark the ambivalence of her various thoughts and emotions:

i hate the images that come
 when women say "we cut the fence"
 and think of slashing/ripping/tearing
 gaping wound of phallic knife...
 [...]
 often i forget what lies behind that fence
 [...]
 and wonder if sabotage is
 "going too far"...
 and everytime i do not trust
 a woman...
 or question why shes here...
 or fear her violence...
 i doubt myself¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South).

Mandy's investments, those of other women and those of Greenham as a collective community are all at stake in the poem. The fence serves as both an object of and a setting for protest as the question of violence is voiced in regard to both people and actions. Mandy's view of fence cutting as an act of violence speaks toward the ways in which objects come to stand in for, or as, gendered relations. Tools for cutting are coded in the masculine (the 'phallic knife') and are attributed aggressive actions ('slashing/ripping/tearing'). Mandy's internalization of this gendered language, contributes, in part, to her reluctance to participate in fence cutting actions. The collapse of bodily and symbolic violence leads Mandy to read the fence's penetrability as a sign of weakness, rather than a site of possibility. Once trapped inside this discourse of technology, it becomes difficult to re-imagine relationships between bodies and objects. As I discussed in chapter three, feminist interventions into the militarization of technology (and with it, the masculinization of technology), require material-semiotic transformations that confront the myths and symbols we use to make sense of ourselves in relation to objects and environments. A cyborg writing practice must refuse the patriarchal logic of, for example, bolt cutters as phallic knives.

Mandy's concerns about her commitment to nonviolence and what nonviolence means is situated in regard to larger questions about how Greenham women feel and how women deal with different women's feelings. Parts of Mandy's doubts are articulated around the issue of age. Toward the end of the poem she writes of campers at Greenham, "they seem younger now, angry/and proud/their energy explodes into action.../what can I offer/this revolution." While Mandy expresses feelings of uncertainty around what she perceives as differences

between her disposition and that of younger women, she also maintains her place as part of the protest community. Near the conclusion of the poem she writes, “and sometimes i remember why/i came.../and that memory will hold me here/until the silos crumble.”¹¹⁰

Jane, also an older protester at Greenham, offered another perspective on fence cutting. Age is articulated here as well, though the relations it records and inspires are quite different. In a “Green and Common Newsletter” she recounts her story of deciding to engage in fence cutting actions:

I am 60 years of age, a war widow, a mother of 6, of CND, END and the labor party. I went to Greenham because I was disillusioned with all party politics ... When the question of cutting fences arose, I was filled with horror. I had been an antique dealer, and had a great respect for property. I felt cutting fences was criminal vandalism. I spent agonizing weeks, worrying about this. Then I got angry. I realized it was my right to cut the fence. It was my way of saying no ... We are challenging the establishment, threatening their authority over us, because they are threatening us with their war machine ... I tell you it's a very liberating experience even if you have to go to prison for it. Think how terrified all governments would be if this mentality caught on. TRY IT!¹¹¹

In Jane's description of how she went from condemning fence cutting to celebrating it, she cites “getting angry” as an emotion linked to the shift in her

¹¹⁰ *Greenham Women's Peace Camp Newsletter*, circa October 1983 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South).

¹¹¹ *Green and Common*, July 1984 (Bristol, England, Feminist Archive South).

views. As Bradshaw and Thornhill discussed in the article I quoted above, nonviolence at Greenham involved finding creative uses for anger. When women constructed analysis that viewed the fence as a symbol of illegitimate authority, cutting the fence could become, simultaneously, both an emotional release and an effective, direct demonstration of women's anger at the system. Like Mandy, Jane flags her age to mark a difference between herself and younger campers who did not share her hesitations or anxieties around cutting the fence. However, while Mandy marks a disconnect between herself and other camps, Jane's writing attempted to forge a connection between herself and other older women who might also be reluctant about fence cutting. For Jane, engaging in this action helped her form an analysis of the fence as part of the "war machine". She ended her piece with an invitation for other women to "TRY IT!"

Long term camper Rebecca Johnson's account of this debate speaks explicitly toward the ways in which the ideology of nonviolence itself must be flexible. She argued that it was important to consider fence cutting both as a tactic for achieving a political aim and as a symbolic act that would generate affect. She wrote in an essay that was reprinted in a number of Greenham-based and Greenham related publications:

At first I thought the division between violence and nonviolence was easily identifiable. Violence hurts or injures, so you don't do it if you believe in nonviolence. I felt good that we decided not to cut the fence on New Year's Day. But during that time we have talked and thought a lot about it and I began to realise it wasn't that simple. Cutting the wire and taking down the fence is damage to

property. Is that violence? Where do you draw the line? A carpenter takes a piece of wood and cuts and planes and shapes it into something else: a house, a bed or a child's toy. The wood is cut, but we don't call that violence. We do this all the time: cutting wheat to make bread, melting metal to reshape it, burning wood on our camp fire. We are transforming things for our purposes. That's what creativity is about ... With our own hands we pull down the fence, making a huge door to the base. Only a few people can climb up a ladder and over the barbed wire, but thousands of common people can walk into the base through the door we have made into the common land. Where is the violence? That whole fence and its purpose is violence, against us and against the land.

(Harford & Hopkins 1984, 41).

In this personal essay Johnson repeatedly discussed fence cutting as a collective issue, using "we" and "our" to situate the practice in relation to Greenham as a protest community. She wrote that dialogue and debate with other women transformed the ways in which she thought about cutting the fence. Johnson formulated her position, in part by reflecting on a previous protest event. At the 'silo action' women climbed over fences onto the base, ran up the silos built to store missiles, and danced and sang at dawn in front of an array of press cameras and bewildered authorities. For the silo action, women decided not to cut the fence. Whether women felt it was violent, were intimidated by the thought, believed it was tactically or symbolical ineffective, or feared legal repression, enough women were hesitant that a decision was made to climb over the fence

using carpets and ladders, rather than clip through it with bolt cutters. In conversations following the action, some women suggested that if the fence had been cut down for the silo action, it would have been possible for more than 40 women to take part. This possibility influenced Johnson's thinking about fence cutting as a future tactic.

Johnson constructed her argument in support of fence cutting by first acknowledging that, normatively, fence cutting is an act of property damage. Once the fence is cut, however, it becomes a "door" and the question of damage no longer even applies. This analysis shifts attention from the act of cutting to a question of what that cutting creates. As the cutting creates a situation in which more people are able to participate in an ethical, responsible protest against violence, it cannot, she says, be considered violent. Here both the ethical and tactical dimensions of the violence/nonviolence debate are contextualized in relation to Greenham as a particular protest community.

Johnson's argument is both analytically sophisticated and, in Seller's terms, emotionally intelligent. Moreover, Johnson's discussion highlights the many faces of the fence. As I have discussed throughout this chapter, the fence served as a physical barrier forming part of sophisticated security-network. It functioned as a symbol of state and military violence. It was legally regarded as a piece of property, protected by the interests of various authorities and officials. At the same time, the fence was a canvas, there to be creatively transformed by women's action. And perhaps most importantly, as Johnson described, it was a doorway into other imaginable worlds.

Conclusion

By considering the fence in relation to women's communication practices at Greenham we can better understand how and why physical objects and, in particular, physical perimeters, matter in protest communities.¹¹² Considerations of tactics and practices are always bound up in complicated, deeply entrenched arguments over ethics and effectiveness. It is, of course, possible to describe these debates without mention of emotion or affect. However, in order to understand how protesters' ideas and actions are transformed, an analysis of their personal and collective feelings is necessary. Such an analysis, as I have argued, must consider both the affective dimensions of dialogue and debate, as well as the affective dimension of objects, such as the Greenham fence, that comprise the geographic and symbolic space of Greenham's protest community. In the next chapter I look specifically at questions of community construction through an analysis of Greenham Women's songs and singing practices. I expand this analysis of affect and emotion through an examination of how protest songs create notions of belonging and collective identity.

¹¹² For an interesting contemporary discussion of the politics and legality around building fences in public space to quell protest, see Bruce D'Arcus' discussion of the perimeter fence constructed in Quebec City during the 2001 Summit of the Americas in *Boundaries of Dissent*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Singing for Our Lives: Constructing Community & Collective Identities in Greenham Women's Songs

"We've got to the point where lesbians singing songs about wimmin power are the cutting edge of the peace movement world-wide, which is weird, to say the least."

-Ruth Wallsgrove, Radical Feminist

"The songbook brought a lot of memories back to me, especially the sound of many many women singing 'You Can't Kill The Spirit' in the bible blackness of night while surrounded by a huge police force. I never forgot the strength of that sound. The police didn't know how to deal with them at all."

-Marc, Greenham Camper

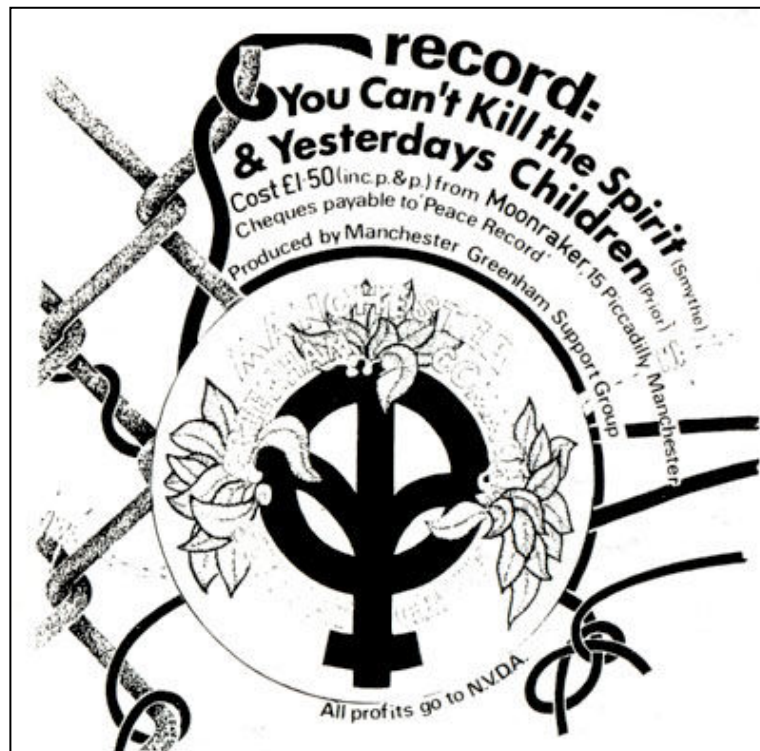


Figure 11_Cover of Fundraising Record

Singing and song writing are common and effective protest practices. Songs help build collective identity, keep spirits up and encourage creative exchange. As resistance tactics, songs are used to confront authority. Singing's ability to provoke deep emotional responses in both singers and listeners generates an affective resonance or reverberation that moves along with the vibrations of the sound itself. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison view songs as "channels of communication for activists" (1998, 161). They both circulate ideas, feelings and desires within movements, and carry collective memories of movements into the future (161). As songs emerge and re-emerge in different movement and broader cultural contexts, the meanings they carry travel and are transformed. For example, the song 'Which Side Are You On' has traveled through 1930s union strikes in the United States, onto the Civil Rights Movement's Freedom Riders buses and around the perimeter fence at Greenham. With every movement the lyrics have been changed and adapted in a variety of ways, tailored to capture the tensions and inspirations of each protest culture. As objects of cultural memory, songs remain in the memory of movement participants, in old record collections, on the pages of faded songbooks and on digitally remastered recordings. They remain available, Eyerman and Jamison argue, to be recalled at different times and places, drawing up both "situationally bound experiences" as well as "a more general commitment to common cause and to collective action" (162). The documentation of protest songs is at once both meaningful and practical. Songs and song-writing practices continue to shape culture, in explicit and residual ways.

In his recent work on singing in the Civil Rights Movement T. V. Reed argues, “Music becomes more deeply ingrained in memory than mere talk, and this quality made it a powerful organizing tool. It is one thing to hear a political speech and remember an idea or two. It is quite another to sing a song and have its politically charged verses become emblazoned on your memory” (2005, 28). In another analysis of ‘Freedom Songs,’ Kerran Sanger works with theories of communication as ritual, discussing how Freedom Songs were a tactical, affective mode of communication. She argues that Civil Rights activists’ choice of music as a mode of communication was consistent with their desire to act and their belief that song was essentially symbolic action (1995, 19). This understanding of song as both an organizing tool and a fundamental part of protest actions also resonates with Greenham women’s singing practices.

At Greenham and throughout the Greenham network, protest songs and singing played dynamic roles in women’s communication practices and community formation. Songs were sung at night around the camp fires, while huddled together through blockades, in courtrooms and while participating in protest events outside of the camp. The lyrics and tunes of Greenham songs ranged from simple to complex, serious to jovial, ironic to spiritual. Some songs were sung often, others rarely. The songs carried information about the camp, describing daily routines, significant actions, political positions and encounters women had with the police, soldiers and media makers. Greenham songs included parodied, re-imagined and updated songs from other social movements, as well as new songs that were written by Greenham women, often adapted from protest slogans and women’s poetry. The language all of these different kinds of songs

generated for processing emotions and difficult situations offered women a chance to express frustration, laugh away anxiety, and carry across their own messages in another form. As songs traveled through the larger Greenham network, they helped to create and shape a movement culture that spanned far beyond the military base.

I begin this chapter by situating Greenham women's singing and songwriting practices in relation to women's music. I discuss the significance of Greenham songs that were created by women active in women's music and folk communities, such as Peggy Seager and Judy Small. I follow this with a consideration of how songs moved through Greenham and its broader support networks. In the section that follows I move to discuss how collective identities were constructed through songs. I look first at how popular music parodies and generic structures were employed in Greenham songs in ways that radically reconfigure normative notions of marriage, motherhood, heterosexuality and female fandom. In this discussion I expand upon my analysis of the housewife offered in chapters one and four. I also examine the figure of the witch discussed in chapter three, to look at how songwriting practices produced counter-narratives of history, creating feminist legacies across time and place. Finally, in the last section of the chapter I look at how the records of songs and singing found in most Peace Movement publications and the majority of accounts of Greenham, marginalize or erase the existence of lesbian sexuality, desire and women's erotic friendships. In my analysis of this material—and its censoring—I build on Sasha Roseneil's extensive work on queer feminisms at Greenham. In doing so I suggest that there was a body of "queer songs" developed and performed at Greenham not

accounted for in the many peace songbooks and recordings that came out of the 1980s anti-nuclear movement.

In order to study Greenham songs and singing practices, I gathered archival materials including songsheets, songbooks, films and documented accounts of singing by Greenham women found in newsletters, anthologies, diary entries, websites and recorded interviews. The largest collection of Greenham songs is archived by Holger Terp, founder of the Dutch Peace Academy. Terp first learned about Greenham songbooks in 2005 and is currently working, with the help of Greenham women, to index every Greenham song he can find. As the only deposit focused specifically on Greenham songs, Terp's online archive offers the most extensive range of information on Greenham songs available. The archive provided the majority of source material for my research, making possible the breadth of analysis I offer in this chapter.

I also gathered secondary materials including journalistic accounts of songs and singing at Greenham. At times I corresponded with Greenham participants and researchers to supplement my analysis of archival and secondary materials. These interviews and correspondences allowed me to better situate my study of the material artifacts in terms of their everyday engagement and circulation. Throughout the chapter I offer a number of analyses of songs' lyrical content and structure. These are based on recordings of women singing found in the documentary *Carry Greenham Home*, in radio documentaries, and in other sound recordings available on Holger Terp's website. While any single act of creating or singing a Greenham song has a variety of meanings and effects, the goal of this analysis is to investigate more broadly the ways that songs functioned

as a means of communication, sustaining community and generating collective identities.

Women's Music

While a number of edited collections and manuscripts deal with gender, sexuality, feminism, politics and music, very little of this research accounts for how protest participants create, circulate and use songs in the context of place-based protests, demonstrations or encampments. Most relevant to my research on Greenham are analyses of women's music communities. Cynthia Lont's essay on the women's music community in the 1970s and 1980s directly situates women's music in relation to feminists' activist practices. In her discussion of the rise of feminist record labels and performers, she argues that the women's music community was a place for feminists, and particularly, lesbian-feminists, to organize every aspect of music production and performance apart from the dominant culture (1992, 242). As a networked infrastructure and an imagined community, the term "women's music" refers to a group of women musicians, producers and participatory fans that worked together to put on shows and tours, put out records and take part in women's protests and demonstrations. While there were a few prominent individual singer-songwriters who formed part of the women's music community, an emphasis was placed on collective practice. Those who hadn't played music in years and those new to music-making were encouraged to sing and play. Some bands had a number of members that came and went, creating an improvisational relationship to performance. There was also

a great deal of focus on do-it-yourself music-making, as women learned to how to take on the sound work and electrical setup.

Connections between Greenham and the women's music community are easy to draw. A number of women active in the women's music circuit sung at and about the Greenham protests. Australian folk singer Judy Small, whose recordings were distributed on the women's record label Redwood Records, visited and wrote songs about Greenham. UK folk singer Sandra Kerr also wrote songs about Greenham, as did American folk singer and songwriter Peggy Seager. Seager's song "Carry Greenham Home" was title track of the Greenham documentary that took its name. This phrase became a kind of shorthand throughout the support networks to speak about how women not at the physical site of the camp could share its collective spirit and participate by spreading information. In addition, Joan Baez visited Greenham in 1984. The Holly Near song 'Singing for Our Lives' was frequently sung at Greenham, with a few altered lyrics to link the song more directly to the protests. Naomi Littlebear Morena's "You Can't Kill the Spirit" was taken on as an anthem at Greenham. Its simple structure and powerful lyrics made both written and oral circulation of the song easy. Morena also visited Greenham and performed at the encampment.

Like other parts of the 1970s feminist movement, women's music was a separatist enterprise. Lont notes how funding pressures in the early 1980s forced women's music to reach out toward a broader audience and employ more commercial marketing strategies (1992, 247-248). During this time many lesbian and feminist musicians, such as Tracy Chapman, were having mainstream success. However this came at the expense of compromising the explicit lesbian

politics and desires found in the lyrical content of women's music (250). Although not directly connected to the women's music movement, as a women's-only space, Greenham served as a place-based site of women's autonomous musical production. Just as women's music communities provided opportunities for women—and particularly for lesbian-feminists—to engage in all aspects of music production, Greenham offered a space for creative experimentation and musical skill-sharing in the context of their activism.

While some Greenham songs were directly adapted from women's music, other songs produced at Greenham resemble those popular in women's music communities in a number of ways. Women's music expressed women-centred experiences and activist subjectivities. It portrayed women "as more than sexual objects for males," countering the 'symbolic annihilation' of women's autonomous experiences in the music of the 1950s and 1960s (Lont 1992, 243). Similarly, Greenham songs confronted the 'symbolic annihilation' of women, as well as the potential nuclear annihilation of the planet. These songs offered images of empowered women working collectively, housewives leaving home and amazons fighting for the health of the earth. Much of the lyrical content of Greenham songs catalogue women's friendships, community building and histories of resistance.

Greenham songs were written in different settings by a range of women with various affiliations to the protest camp. Some songs were made up by individual women documenting events. For example, long-term camper Rebecca Johnson wrote a number of songs at Greenham including the Silo Song that was a record of women's 1983 New Year's Day action. Women from an anti-nuclear

collective of musicians, The Fallout Marching Band, would play at major Greenham demonstrations such as the December Gatherings. There were also songs that were developed collectively by small groups of women at Greenham, with lines added and changed as time went on.

Singing around the fire at night was common at the different Greenham gates. An individual or small group of women would begin a song and others would choose to join in. Long term Greenham campers often had particular songs they liked and disliked because of their lyrical content or tune. There were songs they were sick of hearing, and others they would sing again and again. Often the songs visitors were most familiar with, either from attending previous actions at Greenham or from their affiliation in the larger Greenham network, were the ones that long term campers tried to avoid! As campfire gatherings were informal, with women joining and leaving the groups, songs would catch on and fade, bleed from one into another, or be stopped abruptly by interruption.

The majority of Greenham songs were and remain un-credited. This is in part because of women's collective writing practices, though more often it was because songs were shared and circulated orally. Even if at some point recorded in a songbook or newsletter, the name of a songwriter would quickly become detached from the song. Some songs have since been traced back to their original authors, but it was uncommon for songs to be viewed as the propriety of any individual woman. The disappearance or invisibility of the Greenham songwriter shares similarities with the dislocation of authorship that occurs in both folk and improvisational music genres. Viewed as a malleable cultural object, the protest song belongs both to its writer and to the movement. While the question of

ownership is of course at times contested, particularly around the recording and sale of music, within movement communities there was and remains a general ethos of collective use.

Recently, John Jordan used the term ‘dissolving’ in his discussions of how creativity does (and should) spread through the spaces of collective protest. Jordan discusses why the artist should dissolve or fade, giving up feelings of ownership over their work and instead putting their creative energies directly toward struggles for social change (2004). This concept captures well the way in which the Greenham songwriter became invisible. It is not that the ‘author is dead’ or cut-off from the song. Rather, the song dissolves into a crowd of singers, diffused among protesters who later carry it elsewhere. As it moves from its point of origin the author and the moment of its inception may fade, but its impact travels and is given new meanings.

While these parody songs would travel orally and were written down in songbooks produced by Women’s Peace Camps, copyright permissions generally prohibited them from being recorded or documented in more institutional ways. For example, *The Great Peace March* album discussed above was a fundraising cassette comprised of songs sung at the Great Peace March on October 2, 1986. In order to generate as much profit from sales as possible—to donate to feminism and peace groups—artists agreed to leave off cover songs and other tracks that would require copyright permission and the payment of royalties. Anne Feeney, the producer, recalls:

[The Wild Wimmin for Peace’s] performance of "Bridget Evans" was fantastic and I really wanted it on the recording. Ack! I was

crazy. How would I ever find this composer? How would I convince her to waive her royalties? I opened my most recent copy of SingOut! magazine -- I thought perhaps someone at the magazine might recognize the song. To my amazement, the issue I had randomly pulled from the shelf contained a feature on Australian songwriter Judy Small. SingOut! gave me the phone number of Redwood Records, Judy's US label. Someone at Redwood told me Judy was touring in the US and gave me a phone number where I could reach her ... I told [Judy] about our project. She was so enthusiastic that I played the tape to her over the phone. She arranged to have Wild Wimmin open for her in Philadelphia. (She also waived all royalties from the recording -- thanks, Judy!).¹¹³

Anne's story of how this album came together maps out the relationships between women's music (Redwood Records), the feminist peace movement, a DiY production ethos, and the ways in which women's peace songs traveled across English-speaking continents.

While much has been written on popular recordings of protest songs, this scholarship focuses on commercialization and the transformations of collective anthems that occur in 'star' performances. In contrast, Bridget Evans is a song written by a musician on a tiny women's label that is later performed by an even more obscure group (Wild Wimmin for Peace), recorded at a demonstration and

¹¹³ Anne Feeney's notes on the album taken from "The Great Peace March." 1986. *cdbaby.com*, www.cdbaby.com/cd/wildwimmin (accessed on April 14, 2008)

produced by a woman with no overhead. This song's circulation is emblematic of how cultural objects circulate within feminist and other political subculture communities. In a recent essay, Stevphen [sic] Shukaitis connects this idea of affect with the autonomist notion of composition forming a concept of 'affective composition.' He asks how performances "contribute[s] to the development of forms of self-organization" through their production of collective social relationships (2007). He draws from Hakim Bey's notion of 'immediatism' to argue that shared, unmediated collective performances and cultural productions foster connections that work against the relations of capital. Both women's music and Civil Rights music can be characterized by what Shukaitis calls an "affective composition."

Although songs generated at the Greenham encampment were generally passed along orally by campers, sometimes camp visitors would write down lyrics of songs they learnt while at Greenham to share with others outside the camp. Other times those organizing a newsletter or program would ask for songs to be written out. Songs that were written down were generally collected either on songsheets or in larger songbooks. Songsheets included a small number of songs on a few pages of paper. They were copied individually as well as contained in programs for demonstrations and events at Greenham. Songbooks were larger collections of songs gathered together by women in the Greenham support networks to hand out to women outside of the camp, in preparation for large actions, and as fundraising tools for the camp. Yet such written collections of songs were not common among the long-term campers. As Sasha Roseneil gestures,

long-term Greenham residents “wouldn’t be caught dead with a songbook.” They were more likely to have “collective songbooks in their heads.”¹¹⁴

Songbooks functioned as repositories of both new and old material. The songs collected in them were gathered together by women in the Greenham network. Thus the songbooks also serve a memory function, storing not only a printed version of the songs, but the act of remembering songs learnt orally. As those producing songsheets and songbooks often did not have the money to make copies for everyone, the copies would circulate among groups of women. As with newsletters and flyers for events, women would make copies of their copies of the songbooks to pass along to friends and other members of their political groups.

Peace campers also served as human archives, storing collections of songs learnt orally, as well as copies of songbooks gathered from protests, meeting and radical bookstores. Visitors from other parts of the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and North America would sometimes come and teach new songs to women at Greenham, and Greenham women would bring their songs when they went abroad. For example, the song “Revolution Talk” written at the Seneca Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice in New York by The Average Dyke Band made its way to Greenham, while Greenham songs such as “Now I’m a Happy Dyke” and “The River is Flowing” were sung at the Ravnstrup Women's Peace Camp in Denmark and recorded in their camp songbook.¹¹⁵ These were constantly reproducing their function as containers of experience as they traveled, touched by more and more people. In the next section

¹¹⁴ Sasha Roseneil, personal correspondence, January 22, 2007.

¹¹⁵“The Ravnstrup Women’s Peace Camp Songbook.” *Danish Peace Academy Greenham Collection*. <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/ravnstrup.pdf>. (accessed April 14, 2008).

of this chapter I look at how the content, structure and movement of Greenham songs created collective identities and activist subjectivities.

Constructing Collective Identities

As I argued in chapter one and chapter four, images of womanhood, femininity and feminism were evoked in various ways at Greenham and in journalistic and artistic portrayals of the encampment. In this section I look at how women's subjectivities were constructed and circulated in Greenham songs. I turn specifically to notions of the housewife and the witch to examine how subjectivities and histories were constituted both through the lyrical content and performance of Greenham songs, as well as in their travels through the broader transnational peace movement.

Similar to promotional material and other documentations of Greenham, the predominant image of an 'ordinary woman' turned 'activist' can be found in Greenham songs. For example, this can be seen in the Greenham rewrite of the Beatles' song "A Little Help From My Friends." The narrator relates:

What do I do with my family away?

Doesn't worry me I'm not alone.

How do I feel by the end of the day?

I'm shagged out but I'm not on my own.¹¹⁶

As Sasha Roseneil has argued, these nurturing or maternalist elements of Greenham were accompanied by many heterosexual women rethinking and reinterpreting the role of the(ir) nuclear family (2000). This can be seen in the

¹¹⁶ *Chantdown Greenham*, 11.

refrain of “A Little Help From My Friends” that moves the song from the individual to the collective, situating love outside of the heterosexual union:

Do you need anybody?

I need somebody to love.

Could it be anybody?

I want somebody to love. (Beatle’s original)

Are there more women needed?

The world needs plenty of love.

Can it be any woman?

The world needs all of our love. (Greenham version)¹¹⁷

While the plurality of love here certainly reflects the ‘nurturing’ womanhood that feminist critics of Greenham approached with wariness and sometimes hostility, they also offer narratives of consciousness-raising and images of activist motherhood.

In addition, Greenham women’s re-fashioning of Beatles’ songs to create stories about women’s collective lives outside of heterosexual romance narratives provides a sharp contrast to the many pages that have been written documenting the fanatic nature of young women’s adoration for the Beatles. If we take Barbara Ehrenreich et. al.’s argument about the pre-feminist elements of women’s Beatle fandom seriously, it is no surprise that Beatle’s songs figured so heavily in

¹¹⁷ *Chantdown Greenham*, 11.

Greenham women's protests. Ehrenreich et. al. view 'Beatlemania' as a response to women's relegation to the home and repressed sexuality. They write, "To abandon control—to scream, faint, dash about in mobs—was, in form if not in conscious intent, to protest the sexual repressiveness, the rigid double standard of female teen culture" (1992, 85). Positioned, or repositioned, as an uprising rather than simply a naïve mass hysteria, the authors see Beatlemania as prefigurative to the women's movement that would follow a few years later. In the Women's Liberation Movement, the screaming, shouting, aggression, joy and intent to take up public space that characterized the "mob mentality" of Beatlemania, were manifested in more politically directed forms. Similarly, protests, and particularly direct action protests such as the blockades and occupations common at Greenham, relied on a collective claim to take up space, to make noise and remain committed.

Like 'A Little Help from Our Friends,' 'Bridget Evans,' written by Australian folksinger Judy Small, features a woman whose left her husband and children to fight for peace, thereby departing from 'normal' British society to take up the cause of ending nuclear proliferation.¹¹⁸ In the lead up to the chorus, the song moves from the personal story of Bridget to tell a broader story about Greenham women:

There's a woman in Great Britain, Bridget Evans is her name

And she's out on Greenham Common and things will never be the same

¹¹⁸ Small's albums were distributed in North America through Redwood Records, the largest women's music label.

And this is not just Bridget's fight, there's women by the score
By the hundred, by the thousand, and there'll be ten thousand more.

(Chorus)

And they're fighting for their families
They're fighting for their friends
And they won't stop, no they won't stop
Till this Nuclear madness ends.
Till this Nuclear madness ends.

Bridget garners the strength she needs to carry through with her decision to leave home from the women around her. This support helps her withstand the vicious backlash against women who left their homes—husband and children—for Greenham. These women's actions were condemned by conservative factions of the public, lambasted in the tabloid press, and often criticized by people in their personal networks and communities.

And Bridget's left her husband and her kids at home in Wales
And she hears what people say of her, that she's gone off the rails
And she says that men have left their wives and marched off to their wars
And how can her fight for humankind be any lesser cause?

While this song portrays the 'good liberal' Greenham women constructed largely by the *Guardian* newspaper and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Bridget was a far from ordinary woman. In the liner notes to this song Judy Small wrote, "Bridget Evans is one or any of those women - she is indeed one of the

heroines of our time.”¹¹⁹ ‘Bridget Evans’ was the made-up name given to the police and in court when women wanted to withhold their real names. This code name was a common feature of women’s jokes and casual conversations. It became a collective title, at any single moment all the women and none of the women could be Bridget Evans. The character of ‘Bridget Evans’ functioned at the camp in a number of tactical ways. Seen as an amalgamation of various shared experiences, stories, and press stereotypes, ‘Bridget Evans’ was an identity that morphed to include different women at different points in time. She was able to persist through years at Greenham because other women ‘believed’ in her.

But Bridget was not only this part mythic/part real heroine of the Greenham protests, she was also a goddess in Celtic mythology that was later turned into a Saint by the Catholic church. In Celtic religions, Bridget is thought to have been worshipped as a fire-goddess. She is said to have spread poetry and healing practices, as well as to have invented whistling in order to call her friends and keening to mourn death (Monhagon 1990, 60). Keening, a low, long throaty wail, was common at Greenham demonstrations. As the goddess of Smithcraft, Bridget is also heralded for teaching smiths how to bend iron in fire (Stone 1984, 64), a reflection of Greenham women’s practices of cutting and molding pieces of the perimeter fence into useful and decorative objects such as cooking grills and necklaces.

‘Bridget Evans’ as song, spirit and icon, as part mythic and part real, captures or perhaps epitomizes the women’s music heroine. In this song, she forms a political identity through a process of self-discovery, political

¹¹⁹ From the *Judy Small Song Book*. Sydney: Orlando Press, 1986.

engagement, and the support of women around her. She becomes a figure around which a feminist project of historical recovery takes place, reclaiming the lost or sublimated figures and events of Bridget as goddess. Joan Scott argues that groups with suppressed histories, in this case women, often direct themselves toward the creation of historical lineages or genealogies that pick up on moments and figures across time and place in order to write their group into history. These patchworked narratives, Scott says, “have the quality of echoes, resonating incompletely and sporadically, though discernibly, in the appeal to women to identify as feminists” (2001, 289-293). Greenham women created such fantasy productions that rose out of women’s lost histories and resonated throughout Greenham’s broad support network. As Bridget’s chorus tells us, “her song is growing louder as it echoes off the sun.”

The Wild Wimmin for Peace’s recorded performance of ‘Bridget Evans’ on the fundraising album *The Great Peace March* displays this supportive affect of the song. In their a cappella rendition, the narrator of Bridget’s story sings alone, recounting Bridget’s tale. The chorus comes in supporting the narrator, validating Bridget’s journey by bearing witness to Bridget’s experiences. This performance resonates with the 1950s girl groups whose chart hits detailed stories of women’s loves and longings. I turn to an example of this next, looking specifically at how the chorus functions.

Greenham women’s version of the chart topping, Phil Spector classic, “Da do Ron Ron” re-written lyrics script then US President Ronald Reagan, ‘Ron Ron,’ as a warmongering cowboy, replacing the heartthrob character of the original song. In the Greenham songbook, Chantdown Greenham, a line drawing

of Ron accompanies this song. Reagan is depicted with long pointy features wearing a cowboy hat, sheriff's badge, and a holster containing two missiles marked 'USAF'. Cartoons depicting President Reagan as a cowboy were prevalent in the 1980s. Such images mobilized references to his past as an actor as well as to his frontier dreams of militarizing space.¹²⁰ The song's new lyrics detail President Ron's exploits as the chorus shifts from a lovelorn lament in the original, to a deplumation of Reagan's international policy in the Greenham:

Oh, my heart stood still!

Bad um bad um

Everybody else's will

Ba dum bad um

If we let him drop that bomb

The neutron bomb Ron, the neutron bomb.¹²¹

Barbara Bradby, citing Simon Frith, connects girl groups to the women's groups of the feminist movement, arguing that both were "a form for the development of talk" (1990, 345). However, diverging from Frith, Brady suggests that it is not the use of the female voice that makes girl groups or feminist music "dependent on the female response" (345). Rather, it is the different voices present within the girl-group that "between them produce a meaning for women" (345). Bradby argues that the chorus in girl group songs provides a "backdrop against which the lead singer must show her own strength and determination." We see this in the

¹²⁰ These images bare a striking resemblance to cartoons of George W. Bush. Bush is also commonly depicted as a cowboy with a zeal for arsenal. The two are also often given pointy features despite having quite rounded noses and chins in real life, perhaps connoting their shared propensity to lie to the public.

¹²¹ *Chantdown Greenham*, no. 9

song ‘Bridget Evans’ discussed above. In the re-writing of Da do Ron Ron a similar relation emerges between the lead and chorus as the narrator warns the other women of the threat Reagan poses to humanity.

The chorus’s ‘da do ron-ron-ron, da do ron-ron’ serves a function similar to the encouraging ‘amen’ of church-based social movement music in the Civil Rights era, or the ‘hear hear’ of parliamentary politicians. While in the original version of ‘Da do Ron Ron’ there is a pronoun switch from the passive he-me to an active I-him in the final verse (Bradby 1990, 350), the rewrite moves from ‘I’ to ‘we’ to ‘everyone.’ This movement maps the growth of protest from the individual to the collective to the broader public it intends to reach. Greenham women’s use of the girl group song structure, thus, both intervenes in critics’ dismissal of pop as a passive, feminine, entirely commodified musical form, as well as in the logic and language of the pop song itself.

Another way in which collective identities were produced through Greenham songs was in the appeal to a collective ancestry. As I discussed at length in chapter three, witches were celebrated at Greenham both as persecuted women, and as a mythic heroines whose pasts remain obscured. The song ‘Who are the Witches’ which appears in a number of Peace Camp and Pagan songbooks, explicitly linked Greenham women to their ‘witch’ ancestors when sung at the camp:

Who are the witches,

Where do they come from?

Maybe your great-great grandmother was one?

Witches are wild wise women they say

There's a lot of witch in every woman today.

The song 'We are the Witches' also positions Greenham women as contemporary witches who have inherited the spiritual energy and knowledge of their ancestors. This song draws on the tune of Jackie Wilson's "(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher" which first entered UK charts in the 1960s. It also combines imagery of the Phoenix, another mythic iconography common at Greenham, who self ignites and then rises from the ashes, symbolizing regeneration and immortality:

We will rise up from the flames, higher, higher and higher

Fires strength we will reclaim higher, higher and higher

We are the witches who will never be burned

We are the witches who have learned what it is to be free...¹²²

This was one of the songs written collectively at Greenham. Greenham camper Beatrice recalls the creation of 'We are the witches':

'We are the witches' was composed and written by myself, Beatrice, and Sue Popper and I believe the input of one or two other women during a night outside the main gate when we were

¹²² "Greenham Song Index" *Danish Peace Academy Greenham Collection*
<http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham/song38.htm> (accessed April 14, 2008).

waiting for a convoy of cruise missiles to be driven out of the base.

Sitting on an old sofa outside all night we wrote this song.¹²³

While also part of the action, tasks such as watching for cruise convoys were tempered by long periods of waiting. Women spent much of this time talking casually and getting acquainted. Here the collective task of imagining witches became part of women's connecting both to the past and to each other. Joan Scott argues that people direct themselves toward the creation of historical lineages or genealogies across time and place in order to write their group into history. Scott discusses this production of these fictional but highly functional narratives as a fantasy:

Fantasy can help account for the ways subjects are formed, internalizing and resisting social norms, taking on the terms of identity that endow them with agency ... The fantasies function as resources to be invoked. Indeed they might be said to have the quality of echoes, resonating incompletely and sporadically, though discernibly, in the appeal to women to identify as feminists (2001, 289-293).

Scott's conceptualization of a "fantasy echo" that links at the same time it reconfigures categories of women, provides a way to think through the effects of Greenham women's cultural production. It was in part through singing and songwriting practices that Greenham women generated narratives of themselves as individual and collective activist subjects.

¹²³ From an email to Holger Terp reprinted on <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham.htm>, accessed October 19, 2006.

Social movements also often utilize songs that are already familiar to participants. Throughout the Civil Rights movement many religious songs became adapted by movement participants, generating solidarity and ritualized, emotional ties between participants (Jaspers 1998, 418-419). In particular, scholars have discussed the civil rights anthem “We Shall Overcome.” Social Movement theorist Ron Eyerman traces how this song was adopted and adapted from its Protestants roots (“I Will Overcome”/“I’ll Be All Right”) by the black Food and Tobacco Workers Union in the 1930s–40s. Eyerman writes that “sung at rallies and marches, [the song] welded together a collective while linking it to a long historical tradition of dignity and struggle ... it became part of a more universalistic protest repertoire associated with labor struggles” (Eyerman 2002, 447).

Such transformation of religious, as well as Pagan, popular and older protest songs were common at Greenham. As with Greenham parody songs and songs explicitly about Greenham women, in these cases the collectivizing effect of a song was commonly produced through the use of the pronoun ‘we’. The employment of ‘we’ directly implicates the potential singer within the song, producing feelings of belonging. The changes in lyrics often moved the song from the individual to the collective, giving it a political bent in both narrative form and content. Lois Day’s journalistic account of singing during her participation in a mass blockade at Greenham discusses one such occasion:

The entrance to the [main] gate is now packed with women, who all seem to sing different songs with their own clusters. We consult our songsheets, and choose one which is more singable than most,

because it has a good tune, which we all know, *Frère Jacques*. *We are Women, we are women, We are strong, we are strong, We say No, We say No, To the bomb, to the bomb*. We slide uneasily over the ‘No’ to fill in the gap between words and tune. (Day 1984, 3)

As Day notes, the collective practice of singing created an affinity between women, some of whom were strangers to each other. Songsheets at larger Greenham actions were generally shared between small groups of women who functioned as temporary and often spontaneously assembled affinity groups. Immediate decisions, such as the one here about what song to sing, were made in these clusters. ‘Knowing the tune’ and the simple lyrics made it easy to follow such songs straightaway. Tapping into a shared cultural memory (of growing up singing *Frère Jacques* at home, of teaching it to one’s children, of being taught it at school, etc), singing becomes something these women can do together without much dialogue or need for familiarity with each other. The altered lyrics also help “weld together a collective,” using the ‘we’ to unify the voices of individual women singing. The declarations made in the song (we are women/we are strong/we say no) are general enough to incorporate the ethos of all participants. Additionally, as this song has only two verses and is sung in round, individuals and groups of women can come in at a number of different points within the song.

Another childhood song that provided the structure for a Greenham rewrite was ‘There’s a Hole in My Bucket’. This song has what linguists have termed an infinite-loop motif, or what is more commonly known as a ‘circular song’ in English and a ‘joke song’ (*hessian*) in German, its original language. The

song's narrative constantly comes around to the beginning, as Liza proposes more and more solutions to fix the hole in Henry's bucket:

There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza, dear Liza

There's a hole in the bucket, dear Liza, there's a hole.

Then fix it, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry

Then fix it, dear Henry, dear Henry, fix it.

With what shall I fix it, dear Liza, dear Liza

With what shall I fix it, dear Liza, with what?

With a straw, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry

With a straw, dear Henry, dear Henry, with a straw.

But the straw is too long... (original)

In the Greenham version of the song Henry's bucket is replaced by the Major's fence, and Liza is replaced by the Private:

There's a hole in your fence dear Major, dear Major

There's a hole in your fence dear Major, a hole.

Then fix it dear Private, dear Private, dear Private.

Then fix it dear Private, that hole in the fence.

But the women are cutting it dear Major, dear Major.

But the women are cutting it, they are cutting the fence.

Then arrest them dear Private, dear Private, dear Private.

Then arrest them dear Private, for breaking defence.

But that doesn't stop them... (Greenham version)¹²⁴

This re-make captures the 'infinite-loop' of fence cutting at Greenham. After women resolved that fence cutting would become part of their tactical repertoire (see discussion in chapter four) they began to cut the fence on a regular basis. In a cyclical fashion, women would cut through the fence with bolt cutters, and the MoD would patch the holes. For some women this was a large part of the point, as well as the pleasure, of cutting the fence. Feminist activist and author Ann Snitow wrote in 1985:

Of course the fence is constantly repaired, shored up, rebuilt, but at any time or place one can come on a group shaking it down again. Police rush over; the women rush away, laughing or ululating or singing, only to return the minute the police pass on. Nine miles is a long front of vulnerability and the police feel like fools as they sprint here and there, defending their barrier from women who never offer them much resistance, but who never desist, either (1985, 47).

¹²⁴ *Chantdown Greenham*, no. 23

While Snitow captures the pleasure of persistent fence cutting, for other women the infinite-loop at play between the police and Greenham women around cutting the fence was tiresome and led to questions about what the larger goals of the protest were. Also writing in 1985, Anne Seller describes her frustration with what she calls “games with the police”:

Increasingly, we seem to be engaged in games of strategy with the police, and some of us feel that this is not what we go for, as we dodge in and out of the bushes with our bolt cutters and pots of paint. It is not the police that we seek to confront, but the military complex ... [but] in confronting them, we confront it ... but what nonsense. We are there, not to say things, not to find more complicated ways of writing messages, but to prevent the deployment of Cruise missiles in England (Seller 1985, 27).

While Seller sees the police as an extension or necessary organ of the nuclear state, she argues there is a decreasing utility of fence cutting as a tactic for achieving the broader objectives of the Greenham protest. Many women inside and outside of the camp shared this instrumentalist analysis, while others wavered between this view of fence cutting and a belief that the tactic continued to show the vulnerability of base security. If the Greenham women could easily break in, time and time again, with only a pair of bolt cutters tucked beneath their sweaters, how could the MoD argue that the nuclear weapons held inside were well protected?

Also utilizing familiar music, two parodies of Sting’s ‘Every Breath You Take’ are included in the *Chantdown Greenham* songbook, one for the police and

the other for reporters and TV crews. While Sting's lyrics tell the story of a man watching (or arguably stalking) a woman, in the Greenham version the police and the media are being monitored by Greenham women. Here again there is a shift from the 'I' in the original to a 'We' in the Greenham songs:

(for the police)

Every breath you take

Every move you make

Every law you break

Every woman you take

We'll be watching you

(for the reporters and TV crews)

Every note you take

Every tale you make

Every film you fake

We'll be watching you¹²⁵

These songs speak toward women's activist media practices. As discussed at length in chapter one, women were keenly aware of the dominant images being constructed of them by the media and developed a wide array of resistant strategies. Singing such songs in the vicinity of reporters was a way for women to question the representational authority journalists have.

In addition to group singing, sometimes individual women would sing directly in the faces of media crews, police and soldiers. An adapted version of

¹²⁵ *Chantdown Greenham*, no. 6.

the old union song “Which Side Are You On” was one of the songs used in this kind of direct confrontation:

Which side are you on
 which side are you on
 are you on the other side from me
 which side are you on?

Are you on the side of suicide
 are you on the side of homicide
 are you on the side of genocide
 which side are you on?¹²⁶

This version of ‘Which Side Are You On’ played a different role in the context of Greenham than the song did in the context of union strikes or joining Civil Rights protests.¹²⁷ In both these cases the song is used to confront ‘fence-sitters’ that are already seen as part of the same network as the protesters (Reed 2005, 32). Union members were called upon to join the picket lines, and black community members were asked to commit to the movement. In contrast, police and soldiers do not share an immediate community or network with Greenham women. Rather, in this case there is a broader appeal to humanity and our collective belonging to a global community. While there was also an invitation (of sorts) being extended to the soldiers and police, at Greenham the song did not mobilize the same feelings

¹²⁶ *Chantdown Greenham*, no. 22.

¹²⁷ During the Civil Rights Movement James Farmer rewrote “Which Side Are You On” while in jail as a response to ‘fence-sitters’ trying to sort out their positions on the Freedom Rides. Len Chandler later updated the song, with a far more confrontational, direct version engaging dark humor. See Sanger (1995).

attached to abandoning a community that were at stake in a working-class union or black Civil Rights protest context.

In contrast to shouting or chanting, singing is harder to write-off as aggressive or violent, making it a useful in highly policed and surveyed situations. Yet, while singing could sometimes stay police violence or threats of arrest to quell protesters, its potency as a tactic often wore out as police became frustrated standing outside ‘monitoring’ demonstrations for hours on end. Whether individuals or groups of women were singing, responses from the police could quickly turn from bemused to apathetic to aggressive. In the same article discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Lois Day recollects an encounter her protest cluster had with the police while singing:

Suddenly the police leader bellows, ‘Jack! Jack! Where’s Jack?’ His authoritarian demand silences us, shocks.

A woman expresses what we all feel.

Mimicking the brutal voice, she shouts, ‘Jack! Where the hell is Jack?’ We burst out laughing, many of the police smile. A few minutes later, a man approaches through the gate.

‘There he is, there’s Jack!’ Where have you been, Jack?’ we yell.

‘That’s not Jack,’ a couple of nearby police inform us.

This companionability and shared humour fade, as we enter a different phase. We are singing loudly...” (1984, 3)

Here the “shared humour” and expression of “what we all feel” in Day’s accounts are broken when the police’s response shifts from mild amusement or apathy to aggression. In addition, although the charges did not often go through, women

were also arrested for singing. On October 5, 1982 long-term Greenham woman and future CND council member Rebecca Johnson was arrested “for standing on top a pile of stones and singing,” though the charge was later changed (Fairhall 2006, 37).

We’re Where Because We’re Queer?

There were also a number of songs developed and sung at Greenham that expressed the lesbian lives and desires of women at the camp. These songs were also sung around the campfire and during actions, particularly a few years into the camp when the population of younger, lesbian women substantially increased. As I briefly discussed in chapter one, Greenham was home to many lesbian women and women who were just beginning to express desires for other women. There were also a variety of different kinds of relationships people formed and sexual identities that were taken up, refused or reformulated. These shifting, unfixed aspects of both ‘lesbianism’ and ‘heterosexuality’ are a large part of what informs Sasha Roseneil’s conception of Greenham as a ‘queer’ space. Rather than only a ‘lesbian’ or ‘lesbian, straight and bisexual’ space, Greenham became a place for experimentation and expression outside of previously understood and predetermined sexual categories and their corresponding accepted behaviors:

No one who spent any length of time at Greenham stayed ‘straight’ in the sense of being firmly identified with sexual and gender ‘normality’. Women were queered by their involvement, by association, by the strength of their ties of affection, friendship and love for the women with whom they lived, whether or not they called themselves lesbians, whether they did sex with

women or men ... Being part of Greenham—accepting the identity of ‘Greenham woman’—involved taking on the mantle, in much of the world’s eyes, of gender and sexual rebel and deviant. Greenham women had to come to terms with this, albeit with varying degrees of internal conflict (Roseneil 2000, 290).

Much like the spaces created by the women’s music community and other feminist separatist enclaves, Greenham became a place for lesbian women to openly engage and express their sexuality. At the same time, women who did not identify as or ‘practice’ lesbianism prior to Greenham, experimented with sexual expression and new desires. Likewise, as I discussed in chapter one, any woman who chose to stay at Greenham had to face her own internalized homophobia.

In this final section of the chapter I look at Greenham songs that express women’s affection, erotic connections, sexual relationships and desires. In line with Roseneil’s explanation of Greenham as a queer feminist space, I broadly term these ‘queer songs.’ Many of the more explicit ‘queer songs’ that emerged a few years into the camp are not documented in Greenham songbooks or in other anti-nuclear songbooks released at the time, nor do they appear on the *Guardian*’s “Greenham Songbook” website put up in 2007 to mark the 25th anniversary of the march to Greenham.¹²⁸ A number of queer songs do, however, appear in the Ravnstrup Women's Peace Camp songbook digitally archived on Holger Terp’s

¹²⁸ This digital songbook is part of “Your Greenham,” *GuardianUnlimited*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/yourgreenham> (accessed April 14, 2008).

website. Others can be found on the Seneca Women's Camp for a Future of Peace and Justice online blog that is devoted to women's experiences of the camp.¹²⁹

There may be a number of reasons for the exclusion of queer songs that have to do with practical aspects of documentation and archiving. Some queer songs were written after the camp's peak years in the media spotlight. Some were also less likely to be recorded as they were sung more intimately in the day-to-day life of the camp rather than at mass demonstrations. Yet, while these and other factors may have contributed to the lack of documentation of queer songs, it is telling that this body of songs traveled between women's peace camps, but not into the songbooks created by support groups and now archived in major holdings, such as at The British Library in London, England.

The forward to the *The 'new' Anti-Nuclear Songbook*, published circa 1984 is one collection that contains a number of Greenham songs, none of which explicitly address Greenham's queer sexualities. In fact, in place of Greenham women's gyn-affection and lesbian sexual desire, the collection offers advice on how to make women's songs into songs suitable for mixed gender groups. The introduction to the songbook reads:

Many of the most powerful songs have emerged from the women's peace movement, written anonymously and spread by word of mouth. Some of the words are specific to women—but they can be easily adapted for mixed groups. We felt it was important to

¹²⁹ "Peace Camp Herstory Project" www.peacecampherstory.blogspot.com (accessed on April 14, 2008).

acknowledge the strength and inspiration women in the peace movement have given each other, and the world (n.d., 2).

There are two aspects of this acknowledgement that should raise concern. First, while many Greenham songs were written anonymously, other songs would dissolve into crowds and become detached from their author. This distinction is important as one set of songs has traceable authors that often did not desire anonymity, even if they were happy for their songs to travel without copyright or royalties. This songbook collection includes a number of songs that elsewhere have recorded authors including ‘Sarah’s Song’ by Beatrice and ‘Chantdown Greenham’ by Alana O’Kelly. The romanticization here of the anonymously written song functions to legitimate the absence of women’s song writing credits. This leads to the second aspect of this introduction that belies its celebration of women’s peace music. The compiler’s instruction to readers that the gendered symbolism, sentiments and stories of these songs “can be easily adapted for mixed groups” raises concern. Similar to the problems of cultural borrowing discussed in chapter three, the appropriation of women’s songs for mixed groups de-contextualizes and alters the political messages at stake in many of these songs. While lyrical adaptation is a common and often effective part of protest cultures, it is important to look at the nature and context of how these adaptations, borrowings and cultural transfers occur—as well as how they are legitimated and by whom. If women’s interventions into the peace movement are deemed historically significant enough for the compiler to acknowledge them, why, in the same gesture, would they disregard their specificity and dislodge them from the very social movement in which they arose? This songbook surely showcases

women's cultural productions, but it does so at the expense of preserving the gendered political economic context in which they emerged. The illustrations of women protesters in this songbook also contribute to this de-contextualization of Greenham songs. Drawn by Pat Gregory, the images exhibit de-sexualized scenes of happy woman singing and making music. The image that faces the introduction shows a line drawing of a women's peace march with a woman pushing a pram in front of two women carrying a banner that says "SONGS" (2). Later in the collection we see an image of three women in front of a barbed wire fence with a banner reading "MUSIC." One is playing a flute in a wheelchair, one is playing a



**Figure
12_ Illustration from
*The 'new' Anti-
nuclear Songbook***

guitar and one is sitting on a log and playing a bongo drum (21). In another illustration we see three women, framed by tree branches, in a sky speckled with

doves, frolicking in a circle holding balloons (44). While idealist and magical visions certainly populated Greenham's collective imaginary, few, if any looked like this. These 'quaint' images are not only devoid of Greenham's more unruly protesters and settings, but even of Greenham's more palpable symbols and figures. Rather than the flying doves, balloons and bongo drums pictured in this songbook, Greenham women's images and actions (as I discussed at length in chapter three) included metal bending goddesses, trespassing snakes and witch-weaving spinsters entangling police officers in brightly colored wool.

It is not only the visions of women captured in this songbook that are starkly at odds with the realities of the camp. The only two Greenham songs in this collection to speak toward women's affection and desire are both accompanied by images that oddly contrast with the song lyrics, creating a desexualized, and in one case, de-gendered, context for how the song is read. 'Sarah's Song,' written by Beatrice for other Greenham women during a stay in prison, recounts the collective strength and growing love of Greenham women. Yet rather than displayed with a picture of women resisting the police, or women in a prison cell, or women showing affection for each other, in this songbook the lyrics are accompanied by a picture of two snails standing together, tentacles leaning in affectionately. Why snails, I am unsure. But certainly the replacement of women with cuddling invertebrates points toward some kind of anxiety around depicting women's sexuality. Also forgoing an image of women's affection or desire for each other, the illustration paired with the song 'Bella Ciao' shows two men in a room holding up an "Anti-Sexist Men's Group" banner detailed with doves, flowers, a peace sign and an anarchy symbol (23). In English the title of

this song is gendered female, 'Hello Beautiful Woman,' and it begins, 'We are women, and we are marching.' One line somewhat ambiguously refers to women as lovers ('O we are lovers, and we are dreaming'). None explicitly address or include men. The decision, then, to pair this song with an image of 'anti-sexist men' holding a banner in a room, rather than with, for example, beautiful marching women who "want a revolution now," also alludes to a discomfort or avoidance of depicting women as sexual, independent people (23).

Rather than interrogate the nature of, and reasons for, their anxious and often hostile responses to women's separatism, many 'supportive' men attempted to bracket off the queer dimensions of Greenham women's protest. As I have suggested at points throughout my analysis, women's separatism produces fear, anxiety and hostility. I would suggest that it is, in part, this emotional response to women's separatism that leads to the erasure of lesbianism. It is this anxiety that eclipses women's queer sexual expressions and practices. Moreover, as such erasures often take the form of a re-writing (as in this songbook) instead of an overt hostility (as in the tabloid press), it remains insidious and largely invisible. Like the loving, knowing ignorance that speaks toward but does not really include the colonized 'other,' this form of anti-sexist practice recognizes, but fails to fully engage the complex nature of women's lives. At the same time, it is not surprising that men feel discomforted by women's separatism. As Marilyn Frye writes, "they can feel the threat that they might be next" (1983, 108).

There were a number of women who left their boyfriends, husbands and sometimes their children to come to Greenham. Yet, in the abundance of mainstream media narratives that relate this story of the ordinary housewife, few

suggest what happened after she encountered Greenham's queer community. In an illustration that starkly contrasts with those offered in *The 'new' Anti-Nuclear Songbook*, a comic from the feminist newspaper *Outwrite*, documents a queer



Figure 13_Comic of Queer Sexuality and Singing at Greenham from *Outwrite*

story of leaving home. In the first frame of a four panel comic strip, a new woman arrives at the camp. We see her peering through the perimeter fence at conjoined women symbols. The fence is ‘decorated’ in large letters that read, “I LOVE WOMEN.” In the second panel we see the new arrival has joined a group of women holding hands around a camp fire. In the corner there is a bender full of women bunched together.¹³⁰ Out of the campfire circle music notes arise to suggest that the women are singing. In the next frame the new arrival is pictured holding hands with another woman, each clutching a large bucket of water. A thought bubble tells the reader, “I don’t think I’ll go home yet.” Then, in the final panel, the two women embrace, as the text reads, “Not home to Johnny Anyway.”¹³¹ This comic contextualizes the collective spirit of singing at Greenham in relation to the formation of women’s affections and attractions

¹³⁰ This is most likely a depiction of the ‘Passion Bender,’ a bender (tent-like) space for women to retreat together.

¹³¹ *Outwrite*, March 1988. In the final panel we also see a cat in the corner thinking “Yeah” as the woman announces she will not be going home to Johnny. Many cats lived at Greenham. In illustrations they are commonly depicted speaking words or a short phrase. Almost like a chorus, their comments generally reflect and encourage the sentiments of the women in the illustration.

toward each other. Lesbian sexuality is foregrounded and shown as central to life at the camp.

The Greenham song, 'I'm A Dyke,' archived on Holger Terps's website and recorded on the album *Peace Camps Sing* tells a similar story of a Greenham woman's queer sexual awakening:

I kissed her and she kissed me

And we could see it was meant to be

Well I used to be a sad woman

Now I am a blissful dyke.

Went to Greenham, cut some fence

Hugged some woman and it all made sense

Well I used to be a Tory,

Now I am a radical, feminist, anarchist, vegan dyke.¹³²

This song uses a number of generic tropes to emphasis the juxtaposition of life before and after Greenham, as well as to speak broadly, capturing a wider aspect of points for identification. The song also takes on a playfully teasing tone, celebrating and mocking the 'anarchist vegan dyke.' Another song that explored the feelings of connection and affection that arose between women at Greenham was 'Lily of the Arc Lights'. In this song the lines between friendship, romance

¹³² Elsewhere titled 'Now I'm A Happy Dyke,' "Greenham Song Index" *Danish Peace Academy Greenham Collection* <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham/song66.htm> (accessed April 14, 2008). *Peace camps sing*. New York: Tallapoosa Music, 1987.

and sexual desire are blurred as the narrator in the song wonders what to make of her growing feelings for Lily:

Underneath the arc lights,
By the old green gate,
I took out my old boltcutter
My hands could hardly wait.
I snipped towards her, she snipped to me,
We both could see the common free,
Oh Lily of the arc lights,
A' snipping in the rain.
...

Closer to the silos
My heart began to quiver
Was it Lily, the fear, the cold,
the base or just a shiver?
I looked towards her, she looked to me
We both could see the common free
Oh Lilly of the arc lights
A' snipping in the rain.

Cutting up the silo fence
My knees they turned to jelly,
But standing strongly next to me
Was Lily in her wellies,

I snipped towards her, she snipped to me,
 We both could see the common free,
 Oh Lily of the arc lights,
 A' snipping in the rain (printed in Roseneil 2000, 277-278).

Sasha Roseneil begins a discussion on queer friendship and sexuality at Greenham with the excerpted lyrics to this song. While Roseneil does not directly take up the lyrics of the song, it stands at the background of her discussion of gyn-affection and Adrienne Rich's notion of the lesbian continuum.

Rich's controversial article "Compulsory Sexuality and Lesbian Existence" argues that women have a natural tendency and history of forming bonds with each other to resist male tyranny. Rich calls upon feminists, and particularly heterosexually-identified feminists, to rethink the category of 'lesbian' to include all different kinds of bonds between women that don't necessarily involve sexual intimacy (Rich 1980). Rich's re-conception of lesbianism as women-identification was criticized for constructing women and their relationships in essentialist terms, as well as for vacating sex from lesbianism. Noting these disputes, Roseneil argues:

An important element of the queerness of Greenham was the way in which it provided a space where the boundaries between friendship and sexual desire were readily and frequently destabilized and traversed, where intimacy and attraction could easily lead to sexual passion ... Women at Greenham tended to be physically affectionate with each other, hugging, kissing and

touching their friends far more than was common in British culture. Within this context affection, caring and love could easily cross over into sexual desire (2000, 282-283).

In contrast to Rich, Roseneil points toward a “messiness” rather than a “continuum” of women’s friendships and sexual desires. Slippages between friend and lover, public displays of affection and open flirtations were part of the queer community at Greenham. As the boundaries, routines and responsibilities of life in the outside world were destabilized at the camp, so too were the normative structures of sexuality that had governed, or at least, habituated many women’s lives.

Going back to the song ‘Lily of the Arc Lights’, I would suggest that the story told here evidences both the slippage between friendship and sexual desire, as well as the impact that the “lesbian possibility” can have on women’s lives. This concept, developed in Rich’s article, perhaps gets obscured or overlooked in the criticisms mentioned above. Rich argues that heterosexuality is made compulsory, in part, through the erasure of lesbian existence. By denying women the possibility of lesbianism, heterosexuality becomes the only possible option for women:

The assumption that ‘most women are innately heterosexual’ stands as a theoretical and political stumbling block for many women. It remains a tenable assumption, partly because lesbian existence has been written out of history or catalogued under disease; partly because it has been treated as exceptional rather than intrinsic; partly because to acknowledge that for women

heterosexuality may not be a ‘preference’ at all but something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force, is an immense step to take if you consider yourself freely and ‘innately’ heterosexual (Rich 1980, 79).

Roseneil’s interviews with Greenham women detail the feelings of surprise, excitement and at times, bewilderment that women had upon coming to Greenham and being around so many women, many of whom had sexual, erotic, romantic and intimate relationships with other women. There were women already identified as lesbians who had never been around “so many” before. There were women who always considered themselves heterosexual that pursued relationships or affairs with other women at Greenham. There were those who didn’t know what to make of their desires that had women lovers at Greenham. And there were others who never had a sexual relationship with another woman while at Greenham, but who left with very different views about lesbianism and heterosexuality (Roseneil 2000, 277-309).

The peace camp at Greenham Common became a space in which the lesbian possibility, or the possibility of lesbianism, transformed how women lived their lives. It offered a language with which to discuss feelings between women outside of the confines of heterosexuality. While repression, hesitation and confusion may always mark the “messiness” of sexual relations, the queer community at Greenham offered women the space to question, explore and celebrate lesbian sexuality. In sharp contrast to many journalists’ reductive deployment of the category ‘lesbian’, the experiences of women at the camp destabilized normative conceptions of sex and desire. While the lesbian

continuum may offer a flawed model for thinking about women-identification, I would suggest that Rich's conception of lesbian possibility offers an insightful way to think about queer sexualities at Greenham.

While 'Lily of the Arc Lights' explores the possibilities of lesbian desire, some songs were much more explicit in their celebrations of queer sexuality at Greenham. Included among these is the song that opens Roseneil's book on Greenham's queer feminisms: "We're here because we're queer because we're here because we're queer." This was a take on the words sung by British soldiers during the first world war ("We're here because we're here because we're here because we're here") sung to the tune of Auld Land Syne'. Like 'There's a Hole in Your Fence', this song has an infinite-loop motif. Perhaps here the infinite-loop captures the dual motivations of many Greenham campers who desired both to live in a feminist separatist community with groups of lesbians and to participate in political resistance to nuclear militarization.

The song 'My Old Mom's a Lesbo,' documented on the Seneca women's camp blog, also showcases lesbian identity and queer sexuality. This re-write of the cockney song 'My Old Man's a Dustman' both celebrates the working-class everyday heroism of the original and reinvents it through the figure of the 'lesbo Greenham mom.' Whereas in the original lyrics dad wears a "dustman's hat" and picks up people's bins, in the Greenham re-write "big dykie bootie" wearing Mom "joined in all the blockades and was dragged off by police."¹³³ Another song from

¹³³ "Peace Camp Herstory Project" www.peacecampherstory.blogspot.com (accessed on April 14, 2008).

the Ravnstrup songbook playfully rewrites 'Do the Hokey-Pokey' to teasingly capture women's non-monogamous relationships:

You put your feelers out, you don't have to doubt

Right on, right on, spread yourselves about

You do the non-monogamy with half a heart

And wait for the sparks to fly.

Chorus:

Oh it's an intellectual exercise

Oh it's an unrealistic compromise

Oh it's nothing but a pack of lies.

You're mine, I'm yours, fuck anyone else.

You put yourselves half in, yourselves half out

Dead cool, dead cool, don't let your feelings out.

You do the non-monogamy and swap around

And don't let your partner know,

...

Oh you are mine forever

Oh we must remain together

Oh never never never

Leave me or look at another

Woman as long as you live.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ 'The Non-Monogamy Song,' lyrics printed on "Greenham Song Index" *Danish Peace Academy Greenham Collection* <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham/song69.htm> (accessed April 14, 2008).

While it is doubtful this song was frequently performed, that it is written as a participatory group song or game, draws singers/readers into the messy friendships and sexual relationships of the Greenham camp. Both self-mocking and celebratory, the tone of the song undercuts any claim to the self-righteousness of non-monogamy's proponents. At the same time, the practice of non-monogamy is portrayed as complicated terrain, full of pleasures, failures, frustrations, joys and misunderstandings. As a document of women's experimentations with alternative forms of living, it captures the queering both of sexuality and of the very structures that guide relationships. Again, this points towards Sasha Roseneil's argument that Greenham became a space of queer normativity, where the deviant became not only a possibility, but a popular practice. Liz Galst's recollections of sexuality and relationships at Greenham echo this sentiment. Asked how she thought sexuality at Greenham related to current 'queer' practice, she said:

We didn't call [our relationships] queer then. We just called it 'hey this is what's going on.' There were big dramas about married women who sort of fell in love with women at the camp...There were big intense things happening. There was lots of woman-identification. .. Now we would probably call that queer. [But] I feel like people now are much more involved in defining themselves.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Liz Galst, Personal correspondence, June 29, 2007.

The terms ‘queer’ and ‘polyamory’ have become a common language in some grassroots activist communities—particularly those comprised of students and young people, influenced by radical feminism, queer theory and anarchist thought. While crises over labeling our sexuality identities may have proliferated as Liz suggests, these terms have also emerged out of people’s desire to articulate experiences that do not fit neatly into the homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman and monogamous/promiscuous binaries that structure and enforce relationships. As new vocabularies develop to discuss and debate alternative forms of relationships, we are perhaps both enabled to better communicate our complex selves and desires, while at the same time limited by a language system that simultaneously creates spaces of belonging and feelings of inclusion and exclusion. As I have argued throughout this study of Greenham, the daily, intimate communications within an activist community demand, at least momentarily, a common language. It is through the creation as well as the failures of this common language that our individual and collective subjectivities arise.¹³⁶

Conclusion

Through singing and songwriting practices, Greenham women generated narratives of themselves as individual and collective activist subjects. They created tactics for dealing with the intensity of highly policed demonstrations, as well as for coping with the frequently harsh conditions of everyday living at the camp (rain, dampness, mud, abuse from soldiers and local vigilante groups). More

¹³⁶ For a recent study of the complexities of articulating gender, sexuality and desire in personal relationships, see Heckert (2005).

broadly, Greenham women's songwriting and singing practices offer examples of both women's music community and of social movement music that can contribute to our understandings of fandom and subcultural or countercultural music economies. As active cultural agents, Greenham women were engaged in tactical reading practices that simultaneously celebrated and critiqued women's place in the symbolic order of popular music. Their cultural productions provide insight into how subverting or resisting State oppression need not involve a rejection of the pleasures of the popular. They show us that, on the contrary, the popular can be a powerful tool in the construction of social movement communities and collective identities. As Greenham women at times sang from their cells in Holloway prison, "They can forbid nearly everything...but they can't shut my mouth when I sing."

conclusion

One Man's Junk is another Woman's Artifact: Studying & Archiving Social Movement Culture

"Will protests ever be the same again after Greenham Common?"

-City Limits, Dec 16-29 1983

"The women of Greenham Common are remembered with special affection because of the stand they took and price they had to pay."

-Tony Benn, MP, 2005



Figure 13_“Why Are We Here?” Greenham Cartoon by Annie

On a late afternoon in Bristol, I arrived for the first time at the Feminist Archive South. I was immediately greeted by an older woman, Jane, who offered me tea (that I could drink inside the archive). Jane was the collection's volunteer archivist. She diligently drove in from her home over an hour away every Wednesday to accommodate visitors and sort through the piles of boxes and files that made up the collection. The archive contained over twenty years worth of feminist 'stuff'—flyers, badges, posters, photos, personal memoirs, letters, cassette tapes, newspapers and magazines. They were all stored in this little room at the very back of a very small public library, tucked away just outside the city centre.

Once I got settled with my pencils (and pens), Jane excitedly grabbed a large office box from the shelves behind the worktable that took up half the room. The lid came off and Jane reached in, pulling out a yarn construction made up of blacks and magentas and yellows. "This was made at Greenham Common!" She pronounced, unfolding the material and stretching it out so I could see (and touch) its lettering, its loosely woven stitches. Plopping the tapestry onto the table she reached again inside the box. This time she pulled out a mangled piece of wire with a dark green plastic coating. "And this," she said, clutching the metal tightly and holding it up to my eyes, "Is from the fence."

I conclude with this anecdote because it draws together a number of issues I have been working on throughout this study of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. First, it highlights some of the material aspects of doing archival research. It concerns itself with artifacts, the storage of artifacts and the

location of archives. In other words, it addresses the ‘stuff’ of history—where that stuff is and what it is. Secondly, and following from this, this story reveals some of the political dynamics around the storage of ‘stuff’. For example, why is it so hard to find this stuff about social movements? Why isn’t there more of it in national, university and other large institutional archives? Why is it that I am allowed to drink tea in the reading room? And why doesn’t Jane have a salary?¹³⁷

As I relate in the story, the first two Greenham things Jane pulls up—albeit, in part to reach the rest—were a hand-woven tapestry and a piece of the military base’s perimeter fence. As I discovered later, there were also news clippings, press releases, newsletters and promotional materials in this box. The kind of stuff one expects to find in an archive. The point is not to pronounce that one set of seemingly obscure, ephemeral objects is more worthy of study than another. Rather, the point here is to insist that, as the archive box said to me, “This stuff is history.” In other words, the pieces of cloth, the bits of fence, and the booklets of women’s poetry are not only legitimate but deeply meaningful artifacts. Along with all those ‘traditional documents’—the records and lists and transcripts—these objects have stories to tell us.

Social movements, approached as communicative phenomena, can function like prisms held up against the world around it. They can reflect a spectrum of alternative vantage points from which to gain insight about movement and dominant cultures. The December 1983 Greenham demonstration, *Reclaim Greenham*, symbolically captured part of this phenomenon. For the

¹³⁷ The archive is presently packed up in boxes awaiting transfer and cataloguing in the University of Bristol Library special collections.

action women brought mirrors to “turn the base inside out” and reflect the violence of the military back onto itself.¹³⁸ They sought to intervene in history, to reveal the militarization of their nation and to imagine other possible worlds. This demonstration formed just one small part of the many protest events and everyday practices of Greenham women’s creative resistance.

As I outlined in my Introduction, the archives of traditional history and the archives of cultural memory vary in significant respects. While like traditional history archives, archives of cultural memory include stories, images and documents of the past, they also contain ‘acts of transfer’ or what James Young termed ‘received history’ (cited in Hirsch and Smith, 9). Archives of cultural memory “include the addressee or cowitness as well as the witness. An act of telling and listening, performing and watching” (Hirsch and Smith, 9). Cultural memory is the product of individual and collective experiences “articulated through technologies and media that shape even as they transmit memory” (Hirsch and Smith, 5). As traditional archives often erase or ‘forget’ histories of the oppressed and struggles of resistance, a recuperation of social movements’ media and cultural objects can tell stories that intervene in “hegemonic cultural memory” (Hirsch and Smith, 11).

‘Received history’ is common in spaces like feminist, gay and lesbian archives and black history archives. Those linked to subordinated histories rely heavily on oral communication for the passing on of stories. However, these acts of oral transfer are not simply to be celebrated as culturally unique. They are

¹³⁸ *Women—Reclaim Greenham*, December 1983 (London, England, Women’s Library, Ephemera Collection).

always the result of those things which are denied—literacy, wages, publishing contracts. The acts of transfer that occur within and between social movement cultures are thus the result of “making do” with scarce resources. In other words, the reason that I got to drink tea in the library was not only because Jane wanted me to feel at home, but because there was no institution giving the archive space or money and thereby making rules that prohibit tea drinking in the reading room.

Chapter one of this study looked at how women challenged mainstream media practices using a variety of tactics ranging from parody to written critique. In letters to the editor, on live interviews and even in prison cafeterias, normative representations of Greenham women were confronted and transformed. I argued for the importance of studying processes of production, distribution and circulation in relation to media coverage, suggesting that this is of particular importance in an examination of social movements as different media offer very different documentation and analyses.

Chapter two then looked at grassroots activist news coverage of Greenham, as well as media produced from the camp itself. Grassroots media offers crucial insights into both the internal politics of protest communities, and to the kinds of media literacy that forms in response to dominant media institution’s representational systems. I argued that for these materials to be seen as part of a history of print culture, they must be considered as a form of media in their own right. Moreover, a focus only on these publications’ decontextualized content cannot provide the kind of analysis necessary for understanding Greenham as a place-based social movement. I suggested that Greenham women’s writings—and social movement writings more broadly—should be considered in their artifactual

form whenever possible. The formal elements of these objects, from how a booklet is bound to what typos have been corrected by hand, tell us things about the aesthetic as well as economic practices through which a media object is produced that a study of reproduced text cannot yield. Women's symbols written in by hand, snakes scribbled across a margin, attached notes or extra flyers stapled to the back of a newsletter are all tiny clues; they are traces of an object's 'received history'. While women's symbols and snakes offer insight on the symbol and myth-making practices of movement cultures, notes and extra flyers evidence the significance of how cultural objects change as they circulate. Through movement objects become physically transformed and are invested with feelings.

In chapter three I engaged Haraway's feminist cyborg theory, approaching women's use of symbols and myth-making as material-symbolic practices that involved engagement with a variety of technologies. These technological engagements were fundamental to the discourses that were produced around 'symbolic' events and actions such as the Rainbow Dragon Festival. I explored the distinction between cyborgs and goddesses, turning to Greenham women's metal goddesses and cyborgian practices. I discussed how women used pieces of the military base's security fence to construct cooking grills and ovens. In doing so, the metal itself was simultaneously transformed from one kind of technology into another. From an enforced border and signifier of militarism, the metal was turned into kitchen appliances and signifiers of warmth and home. I also situated Greenham women's craft-based activisms as evidence of how embodied engagements with technologies, whether pencils, paper maché, knitting needles or

scraps of wire form part of a genealogy of women's craft-based activism or 'craftivism.'

Chapter four looked at the Greenham perimeter fence as a physical and discursive site for women's protest activity. Here I argued that Greenham women, in (re)creating the fence as home, challenged constructions of what constitutes a home, while providing powerful reconfigurations of the fence as a militarized technology. Women's fence decorating, climbing over the fence and fence cutting all involved engagements between women, as well as between 'women and the wire.' I suggested that the fence, as a kind of container, became invested with feelings. In other words, women attributed feelings and functions to the fence based upon their protest practices and analyses, particularly in regard to the question of violence.

Finally, chapter five argued that protest songs played a significant role at Greenham, creating feelings of collective identification among Greenham women. I argued that Greenham songs imagined feminist legacies across time and place, linking protesters to proto-feminist figures including witch ancestors and Celtic heroines. I also looked at how notions of familiarity and commonality could be constructed through song, generating collective strength in confrontational situations. I then looked at Greenham's queer songs that were marginalized, misrepresented or entirely absent from the major albums and songbooks that came out of the 1980s peace movement. These Queer songs capture Greenham as space where women's many desires and sexualities played a major role in life at the camp, where being 'straight' no longer counted as being normal.

Disciplinary Interventions

The insights and methods I have generated through this study offer critical interventions into the fields of Communication Studies, Social Movement Studies and Feminist Theory. For my own field of communication studies, my research offers an analysis of previously unstudied media objects. I have shown how diverse artifacts ranging from scrapbooks to court transcripts to fences are often rich with cultural significance. Outside of my own discipline, my study offers the field of social movement studies an innovative interdisciplinary model for how to conduct research about social movements around their artifacts, media and communication practices. In doing so, I have contributed to a body of social movement literature already attuned to cultural studies approaches that resists binary divisions between emotion and reason. I further argued that the discernment of emotion is a collective act central to the formation of community and to issues that arise from the differences that matter. To the field of feminist theory, I have contributed a study that intervenes in the construction of master narratives, calling attention to the diverse strands of thought in women's activist practices. Throughout I have also sought to complicate and make whiteness visible, suggesting that we approach white majority movements as sites in which white supremacy is both perpetuated and contested. As these theoretical contributions show, a study of social movement culture has much to tell us about history. It has much to tell both about the history of a particular movement and about the history of all those cultures, institutions and practices in which those movements are situated.

Policy Implications

My study of Greenham also has implications for archival practices and policy-making. Here I approach policy as a constellation of laws, economic structures and social norms that mediate people's cultural production as well as their participation as 'cultural citizens.' This approach views the cultural field as a place where civic responsibility and questions of national and transnational belonging are negotiated through people's engagement with cultural ideas and artifacts. In relation to this, my study of Greenham produces two particular implications for policy-makers. Framed as proposals, I will end by offering up each for experimentation.

First, I propose that media objects be considered as container technologies that actively shape the content they store (Sofia and Sterne). As such, the structural and formal elements of these objects, as well as the importance of recording how and where they were circulated (when known) should be given consideration in reproductions of their text. For example, this is a concern when print based artifacts are made digital and when objects scattered among different collections are amassed into one collection.

Second, I propose that the technological objects protesters engage in the everyday life of their activism be considered as significant historical artifacts. These artifacts might include: craft objects such as banners, hand knit clothing and blankets; everyday technologies such as those used for cooking and cleaning; and tools for direct action such as ladders, locks and bolt cutters. As I have argued, these objects mediate social interaction and emotion as they become invested with protesters' feelings and ideas. The circulation, transfer and

transformation of these objects—as well as the objects themselves—yield insights into a social movement culture. As such, it is crucial that these materials are treated as significant and are preserved in a way that can retain some of their stories of movement, circulation and acts of transfer.

Yvonne Marshall suggests that it is the struggles of a society and the archaeologies of its resistance that form “an integral part of the processes which create, constitute and change apparatuses of societal control” (n.d., 2). However, it is not enough to construct or mark resistance as a monument. It is not enough to collect movement materials in a museum under a glass case. We need to find new ways to excavate and archive resistance, ways that do not erase their sense of place, of context, of acts of transfer and circulation (8). There will not always be a Jane (especially an unpaid Jane) to warmly welcome one into an archive. There will not always be a Jane to reach deep inside a cardboard box and pull out objects full of stories to relate. As I have argued, it is precisely these kinds of objects—the tapestries and mangled bits of fence—that can share with researchers the heart of a movement.

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