Spirituality and Social Change at Greenham Common Peace Camp

Christina Welch

Abstract

This paper explores the spirituality of, and experienced at, Greenham Common Peace Camp, Berkshire, Southern England (1981-2000); a camp established in protest against the sighting of nuclear weapons at Greenham air base. Although spirituality is alluded to in much of the discourse on the nuclear protest site at Greenham, it is at best marginalized in favour of socio-politics. However, there is evidence to suggest that spirituality played a significant role for a number of the Greenham protestors, informing their socio-political protests through poetry, song and prose, as well as visually - with eco-feminist thealogy a potent theme. Through examining existing discourse and by interviewing protestors, this paper concludes that spiritual action for social change at Greenham Peace Camp requires further attention in order to elucidate its significance.

Introduction

In this paper I begin to explore the spirituality of, and at, Greenham Common Peace camp (1981-2000); begin because the research is by necessity partial, and partial because there is only a very little written about this particular aspect of the camp. Although much has been produced about the peace camp at Greenham Common in books, journal articles and the media, the focus has predominantly been upon socio-political issues – perhaps unsurprisingly given the political and military climate in which the protest occurred; the 1980s marked the height of the second cold war (1979-1985), and was a period defined by an increase in militaristic activity by the US and the Soviet Union after the latter's invasion of Afghanistan.

Although a fair amount of material has been produced about the peace camp at Greenham Common and the protestors there (Blackwood 1984, Emberley & Landry 1989, Fairhall 2006, Finch 1986, Harford & Hopkins 1984, Jones 1983, Kidron 1983, Kippin 2001, Laware 2004, Liddington 1989, Pettitt 2006a, Roseneil 1995, 2000, Schofield & Anderton 2000, Sellers 1985), a notable gap in the discourse concerns spirituality and faith-based action for social change. In existing work tantalising glimpses of spirituality at the camp appear from the alleged personas of the protesting sites (the New Age Gate, the Religious Gate) through songs that sang of the spirit and mother earth, poetry and prose about witches and the Goddess (Jones 1983: 83, Pettitt 2006b, Jones K 2007), to odd tangential comments about 'growing spiritualization of the camp' as the years went by (Jolly Ud). Further, the standing stones memorial to the camp, which echoes Neolithic monuments such as

Stonehenge, indicates that spirituality was potentially a crucial aspect of Greenham Common Peace Camp. According to a press release by the Greenham Common women, the stones would 'endow the area with a spiritual and healing influence', whilst a text board sited there would provide historic information on the camp 'in a setting which encourages spiritual contemplation' (Schofield & Anderton 2000: 250). In addition, I have spoken with a number of camp protestors specifically about their experiences of spirituality at Greenham and their contributions have been invaluable in suggesting that spirituality was important for many women at the camp. However, before seeking to confirm the suggestion that spirituality was a significant part of the camp, if discursively marginalized in favour of socio-politics, a definition of spirituality is required. Spirituality herein then refers to the definition proposed by Elfie Hinterkopf (1998). Hinterkopf who, by drawing on psychotherapeutic models, defines spirituality as "a unique, personally meaningful experience [that] does not necessarily involve… adherence to the beliefs and practices of an organized church or religious institution". Further, the camp requires some historic contextualization.

Greenham Common Peace Camp: a brief history

Greenham Common in Berkshire, Southern England, as a piece of land had a not inconsiderable social and military history. Long a site of human use with artefacts dating to the Neolithic times (Anon 2003), it was used during WWII as a military air base by British and American forces, and made available in 1951 to the US. During the Cold War, the Greenham Common air base became home to ninety-six (plus five spares) American Tomahawk ground-launched, nuclear-tipped Cruise missiles that could be used in the event of a nuclear war (Schofield & Anderton 2000: 240). Each of these missiles had a nuclear yield of between fifty and one-hundred-and-fifty kilotons making them up to sixteen times more powerful than that which was dropped on Hiroshima; in effect there were enough cruise missiles sited at Greenham Common air base to destroy the world. The first of these missiles arrived on November 14th 1983 and was met by the Greenham Common Peace Camp protestors.

The protest camp at Greenham Common was established in September 1981 after thirty four women and four men arrived at the Berkshire site having marched one-hundred-and- twenty miles from Cardiff, Wales, in protest at an ever increasing nuclear threat. The *Women for Life on Earth* march took ten days and on their arrival, several of the women chained themselves, suffragette style, to the camps' perimeter fence. Despite there being no facilities, many of the marchers decided to set up camp; lighting a fire and sleeping rough, even into the winter (Pettitt 2006a).

Over time, and with publicity in the wake of further fence chainings, other peace protestors joined them, and Greenham Common Peace Camp as an entity came into being. In February 1982, not uncontentiously, men were asked to leave to leave the site and the camp became women only (F 2006, M 2006, Pettitt 2006: 273, Roseneil 2000: 145). This move fitted with contemporary feminist thought, where women often became wimmin to avoid patriarchal designations, and where men were, on the whole, the enemy – journalist and social commentator George Monbiot has recently written about the deliberate destruction of a male protestors' campsite by Greenham women in 1983 (Monbiot 2006a).

The peace camp at Greenham Common consisted of several sites, known as gates as it was initially by the main site entrance gate that the protestors camped. Yellow Gate, the only site with running water, was the first camp established and the last to go – remaining until September 5th 2000 (although the last of the missiles had all been removed by 1990 [anon 1993]). It was situated at the main gate of the camp where the USAF headquarters was positioned and bordered a potentially busy road; the A339 allowed for both supportive horn-hooting and verbal abuse to be levelled variously at the Greenham Common protestors by passing motorists. Initially called Main Gate, as more gates appeared, colours of the rainbow were used as designators to ensure none of the gates were prioritized over the others – a clear indication that Greenham Common Peace Camp set out to buck the trend of normative society by attempting to establish from the start a non-hierarchical protest camp. Green Gate (termed the camp of intellectuals in the book by protestor Caroline Blackwood [1984: 21]), was established in January 1983 and was sited close to Yellow Gate, and the missile silos on the south side of the airfield. Blue Gate (New Age Gate) and Orange Gate (Music Gate) appeared that summer on the north and the east of the site respectively – Orange Gate being close to Crookham Common. Red (Artists Gate), Indigo (Forgotten Gate), Violet (Religious Gate), and Turquoise Gates were set up by the end of the year. Emerald Gate was established in 1984, while Woad and Rainbow Gates, the last gates to sited, came into existence in 1985. The irony of these "beautiful and delicate" names was not lost on protestors, for as Caroline Blackwood has noted:

> nothing could be grimmer and less beautiful than these police-guarded gates
> which cut into the menacing grey of the steel perimeter fence with its nine-mile
> circumference and its concentration-camp coils of barbed wire (1984: 2).

Each gate developed its own flavour; Turquoise was vegan, while Violet Gate was known for its well-dressed carnivorous campers. Orange Gate, being well back from the road was deemed secure

for children and older women, while Green Gate became, 'seriously lesbian' (Fairhall 2006: 45-6). Green Gate was also perceived of as New Age and/or mystical. Ann Pettitt, a founder member of the camp and one of the Cardiff walk initiators, described Green Gate as a gate for, 'women who liked to commune with all sorts of sprites and spirits' (2006a: 145), others have termed it, 'Cosmic, where women interested in spirituality… clustered' (Cadden in Roseneil 1995: 80). Certainly then there were women overtly interested in spirituality at Greenham Common Peace Camp; there were some Neo-Pagan witches at the Yellow Gate (Glast in Roseneil 2000: 81-2) whilst Orange Gate was known as the religious gate and often peopled with Quakers. Blue Gate too had regular Quaker meetings, while at least one gate was 'taken over by a Catholic outfit for a day of ongoing communion' (M 2006). However, it must be noted that these perceptions were generalisations, not everyone at Green Gate was interested in spirituality (feminist or otherwise), although it must be said that they were particularly creative with their shit-pits, which were sometimes dug in the shape of a dove or women's symbols (Roseneil 1995: 81, 87).

Protest Action

The first major blockade at Greenham Common air base came in March 1982 when thousands of women tried to stop preparations for the development of the site. Arrests, court cases and prison sentences for the protestors brought large scale publicity; not just in Britain but worldwide. Thus, in December of that year, the *Embrace the Base* protest, which brought an estimated thirty-five-thousand women together to link arms and surround the base, had supporters from every continent. This became the largest women's demonstration in modern history and included support from politicians including Glynis Kinnock to celebrities such as Yoko Ono. Several years later in 1987 Ono donated sufficient money for the purchase of some land by the women, enabling a caravan to be permanently sited at Greenham Common Peace Camp (Laware 2004).

Many of the protestors sang as they blockaded the site. Popular protest songs included, *You Can't Kill the Spirit*, which notably appeared in the contemporary novel, *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*, by Sue Townsend. Published in 1984, the teenage protagonist's mother, after her divorce from his father, became a feminist and briefly joined the Greenham Common Peace campaigners (1984: 78). The inclusion of the protest camp, and arguably its most notable chant, in this widely read popular novel reflected the notoriety of Greenham Common Peace Camp in contemporary British society. Typically vilified by the press for its 'smelly lesbians…destructive witches…[and] a lot of silly [sex starved] women with nothing better to do', the protestors were often though to be 'in the pay of the Soviet Union' or just plain 'unsavoury' (Blackmoor 1984: 2-3), Townsend however, cast

Adrian's mother as a typical woman who found liberation and empowerment in the Greenham experience, an understanding often reflected in oral testimony (Blackmoor 1984, Cherrington 1984, Pettit 2006, Roseneil 1995, 2000).

You Can't Kill the Spirit was a particular favourite with the Greenham Common Peace Camp women, and was written by Naomi Littlebear Morena, a feminist North American Indian musician of Chicana descent (Nicholson 1982). Interestingly archived diary entries from Yellow Gate women indicate that both Aboriginal Australian and North American Indian spirituality informed the protest. The Rainbow Serpent myth appeared as an article in an undated Greenham Common newsletter. Linking both Aboriginal Australian and North American Indian spirituality, the article emphasized the Rainbow Serpent as a 'universally-respected divinity', a guardian of humanity, and a metaphor for menstrual cycles, and as such an important symbol for Greenham Common Peace Camp women (Knight Ud). Author Chris Knight, drawing on what she termed the 'Aboriginal Holocaust', stated that the Rainbow Serpent also represented 'the dragon [that was] slaughtered by some patriarchal hero who established the present world order from which we are still suffering' (Knight Ud). However, as a phoenix from the ashes, the dragon, she argued, is stirring from her sleep allowing, 'the Australian Aboriginals and the American Indians, together with traditional people and women everywhere [to have] the last word' (Knight Ud) – oppression in all forms, as will be evident throughout this paper, was not only deemed patriarchal, but legitimated a variety of spin-off protests.

1980s Feminisms at Greenham Common Peace Camp

At this point it might be helpful to give a brief overview of 1980s feminisms; movements which informed much of the activity at Greenham Common. Emerging in the 1960s, with a radical edge in the early 1970s (Graham 1995: 26-7) second wave feminism as it has been described by Linda Woodhead, a sociologist of religion, as 'a highly essentialist understanding of men and women [focused on] the liberation of women from male oppression, or "patriarchy"' (2001: 67). Perhaps one of the best examples of the brand of feminism can be seen from the following quote by Kat. Kat, a lesbian with a Quaker background, joined the Brighton Peace Camp, a short lived satellite camp established on February 15th 1983 in support of forty-four women arrested at Greenham Common for invading the airbase. The arrested women were part of a contingent of one-hundred-and-forty-four who on January 1st of that year had cut through the fence, linked hands and danced on top of a missile silo. Kat, in a recent interview, stated that her 'thoughts (at the time) were very linked with seeing weapons and nuclear bombs as ..[a] form of male violence' (cited in Carroll

2005: 5). For many of the Greenham Common Peace Camp women, nuclear missiles were as much a form of male oppression, as women's typical exclusion from positions of power (Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister of the time, being an obvious exception here although one where the allegation of patriarchy could arguably apply [Wilkinson 2001]).

One of the leading lights in radical feminism was the feminist philosopher Mary Daly, whose name and theology I found written in a letter to Yellow Gate women from Greenham Common Peace Camp supporters in Utrecht, Holland. Daly was notable for her outspoken critique of women's roles in the Christian Church, and for her far-reaching views on women in patriarchal Western society. Many aspects of the camp can be read through her brand of feminist meta-ethics. For example, her writings on the mythological connections between women and weaving can be seen in the four and a half mile long serpent that was sewn by over two thousand women in June 1983, and threaded around much of the perimeter fence. This action has been described as an attempt to 'unweave the prevailing dis-order [of patriarchy]' (Daly 1991: 417) and certainly echoed not just Daly's theology of the domestic but the understandings of Knight in her Rainbow Serpent article.

However, for Pettitt, the use of 'traditional female arts…[was more a secular then a spiritual protest and], produc[ed] a military enraged by cross-stitch that impeded their view, driving them to hysteria by embroidery' (2006: 306). However, the use of the 9 mile long fence as a canvas to indicate opposition to patriarchy regardless of whether the protestors understood their actions as spiritual or not, was a common feature of the camp. Attaching everyday and personal items to the fence, such as baby clothing, teddy bears, ribbons and family photographs, (Griffith 1995: 108, Sjoo Ud) acted as signifiers of women's ongoing everyday lived experience, in opposition to the destructive patriarchal threat within, and outside, the base (Dominelli 995; 139, Schofield & Anderton 2000: 244). Alongside the personal items attached to the fence, the Greenham women placed symbols such as peace doves and spider webs. These symbols resonated with creation and re-creation myths, notably Noah's Ark, and Indigenous Grandmother Spider legends such as that by the Dine Nation of North America. The later legend was one of several tales that feminist philosopher Melissa Raphael has drawn on in relation to her exposition of 1980s feminism, which noted the importance both of female domestic arts, and female deities, to feminism at this time (1996: 149).

Woodhead also notes the importance of the female deities to second wave feminists, and certainly the significance of the Goddess as a figure of opposition to the normative Christian God in regard to female empowerment. The court oaths sworn to the Goddess by some of the arrested Greenham

Common protest women underpin this assertion. After refusing to take the normal oath and in response to the magistrates, ‘You don’t wish to take the oath in the accepted form?’, the response by Sarah Green of, ‘It is acceptable to me if it is the Goddess’, was not untypical (cited in Harford & Hopkins 1984: 50). In addition figures of the Goddess were regularly brought into the courthouse by Greenham women to support those arrested for their protest action (F 2006).

The camp protest song *Reclaim the Night* can also be seen to link the notion of patriarchy with the normative Judaeo-Christian monotheistic male God. Although verses talk not of war, they address the topics of rape and exploitation simply because women are, ‘made from Adam’s rib’. As well as reemphasising adverse links between patriarchy and women via normative Western religion, this protest song and other examples of patriarchal oppression that will be touched on later, demonstrate that for some of the protestors, women’s issues were arguably as, if not more important than the nuclear threat (Monbiot 2006b). As such it is important to recognize that the camp meant different things to different women; there was no singular Greenham Common experience, and it must be stressed that whilst for some anti-patriarchy included taking an anti-Christian stance, this was by no means widespread. One woman I interviewed told me that as she cut through the wire fence to protest on the missile silos, she had a vision of Jesus emerging from the tomb. For her, protesting at Greenham Common, and this piece of protest action which resulted in arrest and a term in jail, were informed by her spirituality, and this particular vision gave her the strength to continue to protest at the camp after her release from Holloway women’s jail against what she understood as restrictive and life threatening patriarchal systems (H 2006).

As well as noting that religiosity at the camp was not uniform, it is also necessary to note that clear cut distinctions between what was socio-political protest and what was spiritual protest was often artificial and arbitrary – the spiritual was typical political and visa versa especially in regards the experience of community, or the ‘yeah, yeah’ moments as theologian Judith Plaskow terms them (1992: 202). Penni Bestic, a Greenham Common protestor echoed this understanding of community, noting that ‘there was something very magical about [Greenham Common]…if I’m honest, it wasn’t just about the politics, it was about the woman’s energy’ (cited in Roseneil 1995: 59).

Eco-feminism; the Goddess and/in/as the Land

A notable feminism that combined the political and spirituality was Goddess Spirituality. Deeply involved in this form of feminism were the European artist and writer Monica Sjoo (now sadly

departed), and Miriam Samos, otherwise known as Starhawk, a prominent North American neo-pagan Witch. Both women are mentioned in archived camp correspondence as feminist movers and shakers of the time who were actively involved in supporting the camp.

One piece of action taken by Starhawk and Sjoo (echoing the initial Cardiff protest) involved a walk across the military zone of Salisbury Plain to Stonehenge; probably one of the most famous Neolithic and bronze age megalithics in the world. According to the walkers, Stonehenge was fenced off from the general public in an act of patriarchal oppression and the walk was to highlight the need to free the stones. Around one-hundred Greenham Common protest women met at Silbury Hill, a man-made Neolithic mound on the Plain described in archived camp correspondence as the 'squatting goddess', close to the ancient ritual sites of Avebury and West Kennett. The walk was timed to coincide with the full-moon at Stonehenge, and began at Avebury on Beltane, a major Celtic and neo-pagan life-rite festival; both significant events to neo-pagan Witches. Significantly, the women slept 'on [the] belly' of the Goddess before embarking on their protest to liberate Stonehenge.

Starhawk regularly ritualized on the walk to magically empower both the women on this protest, and those encamped at Greenham Common (Sjoo Ud; 1992: 59-63). As well as the significance of magic as a force for change in neo-pagan Witchcraft, Starhawk's Goddess-based ritualizing tapped into thealogical conceptions of sacred power. Theologian Elizabeth Stuart has argued that for many thealogians, 'the universe pulsates with unseen forces', sacred energy that can be 'drawn on and focused' magically by women, and that Greenham Common was 'the most prominent recent manifestation of women's magical arts' (2004: 230). In addition, such ritualizing echoed the small gestures make a big difference culture that was prevalent at the time; a culture than enabled everyday women to take potentially revolutionary action for world peace.

In the protest action of Starhawk and Sjoo, notions of the Goddess, and patriarchal use and abuse of the land are clearly combined. The close links between the domination of nature and of women can be found in much feminist writing of the time, especially in eco-feminism. Theologians such as Ynestra King (1989) and Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) argued that the nature/culture, women/men, private/public dichotomies were related and that "the domination of women has provided a key link, both socially and symbolically, to the domination of earth" (Ruether, 1992: 3). Clearly linking patriarchal power relations with the normative oppression of women in society, and with man's [sic] dominion over nature, eco-feminists stood up for the subjugated. Described as

‘material and spiritual… about personal and planetary survival’ (Kirk 1997: 8), eco-feminism allowed:

> grassroots women, housewife activists and sisters [to] work voluntarily to sustain life and to fight the powers that put life in jeopardy… using models of caring relationships for sustainable living and as important sources of political empowerment (MacGregor 2004: 57).

This empowerment and sisterhood of women, and right to life approach of eco-feminism was common at Greenham Common Peace Camp but perhaps most clearly exemplified in one specific newsletter image. The front cover of the *Chant Down Greenham* songbook plainly shows the links between men, the mechanistic and division, and between women, the natural and unification. The women and child on the image hold hands and are surrounded by signifiers of peace and images of nature, including the Rainbow Serpent – a figure that also appeared on the Salisbury Plain Walk poster. The men meanwhile hold weapons and are surrounded by symbols of death and destruction.

To contextualize Greenham Common Peace Camp and second wave feminism further, it should be noted that one cannot ‘do justice to the nature of feminist awareness in the 1970s and 1980s without attending to the personal anxiety, doubt, fear and anger that the politics engendered’. Women were typically expected to be nurturing parents, yet in the wake of 1960s counter-culture, they should also be ‘sexually bold’, and even successful in the male-dominated workplace (Luhrmann 2001: 131-2). As such there should be little surprise that the role models many feminist choose were, in the words of anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann, ‘ugly goddesses’ – the dark goddesses, the powerful hags, strong women. It was, she argues, these Goddesses that spoke to the Greenham Common protest women; women who typically removed many of the markers of patriarchally-inscribed femininity; women who Sasha Roseneil, sociologist and camp activist, claims removed themselves from their private domestic sphere, to the public glare of the world’s media, and swapped their posh frocks and heels for the practical clothes of the outdoor life (1995: 170).

Carolyn Merchant’s 1980s work, *Death of Nature*, is an example of an eco-feminism that exemplified the ugly goddess route. Merchant linked the hierarchical mechanistic approach to the world that developed during the scientific revolution, to the long standing oppression of women, and notably highlighted the witchcraft trials as an example of this connection. This connection was also picked up by the Greenham Common protest women where the use of the term witch was common currency, appearing frequently in newsletter articles and used visually on the cover of

newsletters. Several protest songs that referred to witches included, *Witch* which claimed 'there's a lot of witch in every woman today' and also, *We are the Witches*. The line from this song, 'we… will never be burned' gives clear weight to Luhrmann and Merchant's concepts of a Witch as powerful ugly goddess oppressed by patriarchy, while, 'weave your power with the wind, we will change and we will spin' exemplifies the links highlighted earlier, made by Daly between women and weaving.

Another ugly eco-feminist Goddess in the Merchant mould was the Goddess of Metal who featured in an undated newsletter. Large in size with many arms, she is shown angry because of man's (and the word is used deliberately) attempt to dominate nature, but is also shown smiling at the thought of her revenge. In this innovative character the link between patriarchy, and the oppression of women and the land as Mother Earth, is overt and strengthens the case that eco-feminism was an important aspect of the camp.

I located another striking example of such eco-feminism in archived Greenham Common Peace Camp material in the form of a mounted photograph. The image was included amongst the personal correspondence of Yellow Gate and appears to have been a treasured possession alongside letters of support by peace campaigners worldwide. The photograph was of Caimpapple Hill, an ancient ritual site and burial mound dating back to at least 3,500 BCE, part of the Bathgate Hills in West Lothian, Scotland. What is significant is not the photograph particularly, although as an ancient ritual site it echoes those on Salisbury Plain, but the typed information on the reverse, which reads:

> Caimpapple Hill, West Lothian ~ originally an important site of matriarchal spirituality, whose structures trace the emergence, in stages, of patriarchal forms of worship. The tomb was raided in the 1940s.

Further evidence of the significance of eco-feminist matriarchal spirituality at Greenham Common Peace Camp was I suggest, also evident in the non-violent protests that took place on Robin Hood Ball, a Neolithic enclosed causeway and ritual site on Salisbury Plain. An undated newsletter article concerning one such event by Yellow Gate women on March 19th 1989, sheds much light on the politics of feminism of the day – the linking of the land with women, and the belief in an historic matriarchal religion; an attitude obvious in the Caimpopple quote.

Most notable in the article is that the author, Beth Junor, states that matriarchal times can be specifically dated (from about 4000 – 3500 BC) and that Robin is the god of the witches, with his

goddess Maerin being mother of the grove; the goddess or earth mother (Junor Ud: 63, 65). The not uncontroversial existence of an ancient matriarchal religion was, and still is, understood as important in reclaiming both the land, and the power of women, as well as the Goddess (Mother Earth) as a signifier for the importance of both.

Reclaiming and empowering women and the land

This reclaiming, which can be seen in the use of the term Witch at Greenham Common Peace Camp, arguably peaked in protest episodes that saw the use of menstrual blood-soaked cloths tied to, and menstrual blood rubbed onto, the fence at Greenham Common (Stuart 2004: 230). Blood is typically deemed profane within normative society (Douglas 2002:76), and as such was used as a shocking demonstration of women's life-giving nature that, it was hoped, would "defuse male sacral powers of destruction [and] bind together the fabric of the world that the missiles threatened to blow apart" (Raphael 1996: 149). Although this action once more tapped into the magical forces of thealogy, it has to be said that it was by no means common, nor uncontroversial, but served to demonstrate the power of women, nature and ugly-goddessness.

The life-giving properties of women to diffuse patriarchy was also used in less controversial ways, notably through plays. Kathy Jones, a Greenham Common peace protestor and Goddess worshipper from Glastonbury, wrote several plays around the subject of a liaison between a Greenham Common Peace Camp woman and a man from the other side of the fence that resulted in a child. Interestingly, a passage from the recent young adult fiction novel *Henry's Tumour* (McGowan 2006) gives a contemporary voice to this tension. However, while McGowan's novel simply exposes the conflicts between the two sides with teenager Henry on discovering his anti-nuclear protesting mother fell pregnant to a pilot of a nuclear bomber stating it, 'was all a bit like Luke finding out that Darth Vader was his dad' (McGowan 2006: 242), Jones places the relationship in a spiritual realm by drawing on the myth of the Sumerian Goddess of love and war, Inanna, who falls for and is betrayed by her lover Dumuzi. Unlucky in love, she journeys to the underworld, is turned into a corpse then eventually returns triumphant after trading her place there with her lover and his sister. In Jones' play the pregnant Greenham Common protest women also suffers for her love, but ultimately, like Inanna, is able to redeem both herself and her military lover; he, like Dumuzi, must face his own demons before receiving salvation (Jones Ud). Jones believed that the relationship between Inanna and Dumuzi echoed women's contemporary issues, and certainly it was performed many times around the country during the mid-1980s as a protest against patriarchal power.

Protest action against patriarchy by the Greenham Common Peace Camp women also took place at the church of St Giles, at Imber on Salisbury Plain. Although the action at Imber was held in protest at the villages' non-return after it was commandeered during WWII, and in protest over military action in Ireland, one of the occupiers was a staunch Christian and as such for her, the site of action had huge significance. The woman in question was Sarah Hipperson (one of the women who remained at Greenham Common until 2000) and an archived image of her showed her protesting whilst holding up a crucifix. Hipperson, a resident of Yellow Gate, was interviewed by the press on March 13th 1998. Asserting that the New Testament was her manifesto and that Greenham Common Peace Camp was 'a spiritual place, a retreat', she is quoted as saying 'We're like nuns. Nuns in a convent focus on prayer. We focus on confrontation to bring about change' (cited in Kee 1998). Hipperson, in her explicit linking of faith with protest at Greenham Common, exemplifies clearly my argument that religion should not continue to be marginalized in writings about the camp.

The nun theme that Hipperson utilized also had a very different understanding in another Greenham Common context which yet again drew on the link between religion and socio-politics. Pettitt has stated that the camp was probably the 'Monty Python' of the peace movement (2006b), and this playfulness is very evident in an April Fools Day protest in the late 1980s by the Sisters of St Orgasmic's Convent for Hyper-active Nuns. Despite the light-heartedness of these women entering the base without permission, then asking the Ministry of Defence (MOD) police to forgive trespasses (Sister Surreptitious Ud), the action had a serious theme and sought to highlight illegal byelaws, and the deployment of Cruise Missiles at Greenham Common air base despite the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty of 1988. By explicitly drawing on, and playing with religious symbolism and language, the women were utilising spirituality to empower their protest.

The Greenham Common protest women's non-conformity to, and playing with social mores, meant that there was deliberately no unchallenged hierarchy, no formal leaders or spokespeople, nor any strict organisation at the camp. This lack of leadership and authority was a deliberate attempt to overturn patriarchal ways of living, and give all women a voice, while enabling each woman to act according to her own conscious (Roseneil 1999: 167). In many ways this was achieved but it caused problems both during and now, some 25 years on, as divisions are still rife. Greenham Common Peace Camp was not some female Arcadia. In fact to quote one Greenham Common Peace Camp protestor 'it was absolute hell' (S 2007) and there are several reasons for this. Julia Emberly who visited Blue Gate in 1989, noted that the poor conditions at the camp were hardly conducive to coherent protest.

I had expected a "counterculture" of alternative women, organized for political action with coherent philosophies, manifestos, and so on. Instead I found a subculture, the forms of resistance symbolic…and directed most immediately, this day, to the wretched weather (Emberly & Landry 1989: 496).

The lack of organisation mentioned by Emberly, although as noted previously was deliberate, had its problems. One protestor I interviewed expressed her frustration at the random nature of the camp and the organisation of protests, suggesting that whilst a lack of clear leadership was undoubtedly a strength in some ways, communication was not always coherent and relationships between gates were not necessarily harmonious because of this (W 2006).

A clear demonstration of gate infighting can be seen in a newsletter article by Katrina Howser that draws directly on the alleged witchburnings of the 16th & 17th centuries to castigate the actions of women from other gates. Airing grievances about what she describes as racist attacks on two black women at Yellow Gate and efforts to undermine Yellow Gate's position in the camp, she suggest that Yellow Gate women are 'surviving … witchburning'. She states, 'many orange gate women have been witchburning yellow gate, trying to take women from [there]', and 'it is witchburning when Cruisewatch continuously undermines Greenham Common's women only stand .. when in the huge majority it is women only who take action…Men are constantly trying to erase us and witch burn us' (Howser 1987:18-21) – another clear indication that for some, such as Howser, the nuclear stance took second place to other contemporary social issues.

Such infighting demonstrates not only the competing feminisms at Greenham Common Peace Camp such as Black feminism, eco-feminism, and queer feminism (Carroll 2004, Roseneil 2000; 140-85) but also admirably illustrates the passion that the protest at Greenham Common Peace Camp invoked; one where women often abandoned their professions and left their families to live "like a beggar on the side of the road" (Blackmoor 1984: 8). Indeed, one of the popular protest camp songs was Holly Neal's *We are a Gentle Angry People*, which included the line, 'we are singing, singing for our lives'; there was a very strong sense that the Greenham Common Peace Camp was a matter of life and death. So strong was this feeling that Greenham Common protest women often endured terrible conditions to protest their cause/s. Blackwood, talking about her experience of Blue Gate noted that after an eviction the 'camp had been wiped out' leaving the women 'sitting in a circle in the mud… having a make-believe picnic… the food and the fire [gone]' (cited in Schofield & Anderton 2000: 243). Yet for the women, the land both in the sense of

the physical place and the empowering space it stood for, was understood 'in a very spiritual sense' (Junor 1995: 55). Greenham Common Peace Camp, as thealogian Melissa Raphael has argued, was a:

> new manifestation of female sacrality. A female sacral space was established at the very heart of patriarchal power. Here the feminist sacral will exposed patriarchal colonization of the mind and the land' (1996: 23).

The space that emerged at Greenham Common Peace Camp for female empowerment combined with a sense of spirituality to produce something that arguably unique, something extraordinary that like the woven decorations that graced the wire perimeter fence, united the everyday with the mythic, and the practical with the entertaining. Camp protestor Jill Liddington, summed this extraordinariness up by noting that:

> The pragmatism of the original Welsh women was overtaken by talk of witches and goddesses and being nice to trees… At first sight, such mumbo-jumbo might seem irrelevant to stopping cruise missiles. But extraordinary times call for extraordinary responses; and ritual, symbol and incantations soon assumed a vital role in sustaining such an unlikely being as a woman's peace camp outside a nuclear base (1989: 236).

Conclusion

Archaeologists John Schofield and Mike Anderton, suggest that Cold War sites are 'different from those of other wars…[as] their importance lies in what they represent' (2000: 237); Greenham Common Peace Camp as an excavation site being short in terms of material archaeology due to the multitude of transitory protestors and somewhat ephemeral nature of the camp. Certainly Greenham Common Peace Camp was different, but not just due to its Cold War status. Greenham Common Peace Camp included a new form of socio-politics, one with ordinary women at the forefront, yet it also represented the coming of age of second wave feminism, especially eco-feminism with its emphasis upon spirituality and social change. Thus, I suggest, Greenham Common Peace Camp needs to be thought of in terms of what it represents not only socio-politically, but also spiritually. The spirituality of, and experienced at, Greenham Common Peace Camp is there in existing discourse, lurking, implicit, under-represented but underlying the socio-political issues, the archaeological evidence and the testimonial retrospectives. However, I argue this spirituality warrants more than lurking, and that the spirituality of and at, Greenham Common Peace Camp requires a fuller examination in order to determine its significance within the socio-politics of the

protest.

Bibliography

Anon, 2003. 'The History of Greenham Common' http://www.greenham-common-trust.co.uk/history.htm

Blackwood, Caroline. 1984. *On the Perimeter: Caroline Blackwood at Greenham Common*. Flamingo: London.

Carroll, Sam. 2005 'Brighton Women's Peace Camp, 1983: Second Wave Feminism & the Women's Peace Movement'. University Of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History Vol. 8. http://www.sussex.ac.uk/history/documents/8._carroll._brighton_womens_peace_camp.pdf

Carroll, Sam. 2004. 'I was Arrested at Greenham in 1962: Investigating the Oral Narratives of Women in the Committee of 100'. *Oral History*. Vol. 32. www.samcarroll.org/C100_Oral_History_Sam-carroll.pdf

Cherrington, Clare. 1984. 'The Greenham Children'. *The Guardian*. 12/09/1984: 12.

Daly, Mary. 1991. *Gyn/Ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Beacon Press: Boston.

Danish Peace Academy. Undated. 'Documentation: Greenham Common Women Peace Camp Songbooks' http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/Greenham Common.htm

Dominelli, Lena. 1995. 'Women in the Community: Feminist Principles & Organising in Community Work'. *Community Development Journal* Vol. 30(2): 133-143.

Douglas, Mary. 2002. *Purity & Danger*. Routledge: London.

Emberley, Julia., & Landry, Donna. 1989 'Coverage of Greenham Common & Greenham Common as 'Coverage' ". *Feminist Studies* Vol. 15(3): 485-498.

Fairhall, David. 2006. Common Ground: *The Story of Greenham Common*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Finch, Sue. 1986. 'Socialist-Feminists & Greenham Common'. *Feminist Review* Vol. 23: 93-100.

Graham, Elaine. 1995. *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood & Theology*. Mowbray: London

Griffiths, Morwenna. 1995. F*eminisms & the Self: The Web of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Harford, Barbara & Hopkins, Sarah. 1984. *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*. London: Women's Press.

Hinterkopf, E. 1998. 'Defining the Spiritual Experience'. http://www.focusing.org/defining.htm

Hipperson, Sarah. 2001. 'Womens' Peace Camp 1981-2000'. In, Kippin John (ed.). *Cold War Pastoral: Greenham Common*. London: Black Dog: 19-32.

Howser, Katrina. 1987. 'Witch Burning'. *Spare Rib*. No. 181: 18-21.

Jolly, Margaretta. Undated (after 2000).'Writing the Web: Letters from the Women's Peace Movement'. www.feministseventies.net/Greenham Common.html

Jones, Kathy. Undated.'Inanna & Dumuzi' www.kathyjones.co.uk/treasure2.html

Jones, Lynne. 1983.'On Common Ground: The Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common '. In, Jones, Lynne (ed). *Keeping the Peace*. London: Women's Press: 79-97.

Junor, Beth. 1995. *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: a History of Non-Violent Resistance 1984-1995*. Working Press. London.

Junro, Bath. Undated (after 1989). 'Robin Hood Ball'. *Greenham Newsletter*: 61-66.

Kee, Cynthia. 1998. 'Spiritual Home' *The Times*. 11/03/1998.

Kidron, Beeban. 1983. *Carry Greenham Home*. National Film & Television School, London.

King, Ynestra. 1989. 'Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, & the Nature/Culture Dualism'. In, Bordo, Susan, R., & Jagger, Alison (eds). *Gender/Body/ Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being & Knowing*. Rutgers University Press: New Jersey: 115-141.

Kippin, John, 2001. *Cold War Pastoral: Greenham Common*. Black Dog: London.

Kirk, Gwyn. 1997. 'Ecofeminism & Environmental Justice: Bridges across Gender, Race & Class'. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. Vol. 18(2): 2-20.

Knight, Chris. Undated. 'Rainbow Serpent's Return'. *Greenham Newsletter*: 7.

Laware, Margaret, L. 2004. 'Circling the Missiles & Staining them Red: Feminist Rhetorical Invention & Strategies of Resistance at the Women's Peace Camp At Greenham Common'. *NWSA Journal* Vol. 16(3): 18-42.

Liddington, Jill. 1989. *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism & Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820*. Syracuse: University Press.

Luhrmann, Tanya, M. 2001. 'The Ugly Goddess: Reflections on the Role of Violent Images in Religious Experience'. *History of Religions*. Vol. 41(2): 114-141.

MacGregor, Sherilyn. 2004. 'From Care to Citizenship: Calling Ecofeminism back to Politics'. *Ethics & the Environment*. Vol. 9(1): 56-84.

McGowan, Anthony. 2006. *Henry's Tumour*. Doubleday: London.

Merchant, Carolyn. 1993. *Radical Ecology : the Search for a Livable World*. London: Routledge.

Monbiot, George. 2006a. 'Carry on Camping'. *Guardian Comments*. 7 September 2006. http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/george_monbiot/2006/09/post_347.html

Monbiot, George. 2006b. 'Women on Top'. *Guardian Comments*. 8 September 2006 http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/george_monbiot/2006/09/post_360.html

Nicholson, Annabel. 1982. *Greenham Common* http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/Greenham Common/song4.htm

Pettitt, Ann. 2006a. *Walking to Greenham: How the Peace-camp Began & the Cold War* Ended. Dinas Powys: Honno.

Pettitt, Ann. 2006b. 'Greenham: No failure like Success'. *Open Democracy* 19 Oct 06 www.opendemocracy.net/xml/xhtml/articles/4013.html

Plaskow, Judith. 1992. 'The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology'. In, Christ, Carol.P., & Plaskow, Judith. (eds). *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. New York: Harper San Francisco: 198-209.

Raphael, Melissa. 1996. *Thealogy & Embodiment: The Post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Roseneil, Sasha. 1995. *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism & Political Action at Greenham Common* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Roseneil, Sasha. 1999. 'Postmodern Feminist Politics: The Art of the (Im)Possible?' *The European Journal of Women's Studies* Vol.6: 161-182.

Roseneil, Sasha. 2000. *Common Women, Uncommon Practice*. London: Cassell.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1992. *Gaia & God: an Eco-Feminist Theology of Earth Healing*. Harper San Francisco: New York.

Schofield, John., & Anderton, Mike. 2000. 'The Queer Archaeology of Green Gate: Interpreting Contested Space at Greenham Common Airbase'. *World Archaeology* Vol. 32(2): 236-251.

Sellers, Anne. 1985. 'Greenham: A Concrete Reality'. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. Vol. 8(2): 26-31.

Sister Surreptitious. Undated. 'April Fools Day'. *Greenham Newsletter.*

Sjoo, Monica. 1992. *New Age and Armageddon: Goddess or the Gurus? - Towards a Feminist Vision of the Future*. The Woman's Press: London.

Sjoo, Monica. Undated. 'Monica Sjoo (1938-2005) Auto-biography'. www.monicasjoo.org/bio/autobiography4.htm

Stuart, Elizabeth. 2004. 'Exploding Mystery: Feminist Theology & the sacramental' *Feminist Theology* Vol. 12(2): 228-236.

Townsend, Sue. 1984. *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*. London: Methuen.

Wilkinson, Helen. 2001. 'The Thatcher Legacy, in, "On The Move: Feminism for a New Generation" '. *Margaret Thatcher – Was she Good for Feminism* http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2001/08/margaret_thatcher

Woodhead, Linda. 2001 'Feminism & the Sociology of Religion: from Gender-Blindness to Gendered Difference. In, Fenn, R.K. (ed.). *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell: 67-84.

Archive

The Women's Library, London - Greenham Common collection

Biographical Statement

Christina Welch received her PhD in 2005 and is currently a lecturer in Theology & Religious Studies at the University of Winchester (UK). Together with Adrian Harris, she convenes the *Faith, Spirituality & Social Change* Conferences and edits the *Journal for Faith, Spirituality & Social Change*.