

**FEMINIST  
PERSPECTIVES  
IN ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS  
AND THEORIES OF ART**

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Title

**PRE-EMPTIVE MOURNING AGAINST THE  
BOMB: THE ART AND VISUAL CULTURE OF  
FEMINIST ANTI-NUCLEAR ACTIVISMS**



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Art informed by 1970s feminism often casts domestic space as a site of ambivalence if not unhomeliness, inspired by gender-critical dissent. Installations including *Womanhouse* (1972) and the lesser known British *Women's Postal Art Event/Feminist: Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1975-77) mimicked domesticity through recreating home interiors with an unsettling difference. My text seeks to expand this repertoire by examining the art practices and visual cultures of feminist anti-nuclear activism, including die-in demonstrations, the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp and the recreations of its decorated fence by Margaret Harrison, among others, in which domesticity is thrown into crisis anew: here living space becomes untethered from the nuclear family home to retain its character as haven but is also transformed into the site of cruelly premature, violent death by total nuclear disaster. My contribution seeks to blur the line between artistic and activist interventions just as it challenges the distinction between private and public space. In their spatial mappings, the public and the private are neither directly opposed nor completely separate: if the personal is indeed political, domesticity needs to be considered as a microcosm of widespread ideological operations, a lab for world-making and, in this case, a feminist reclamation of the militarised commons.

Although the material and visual protest cultures of Greenham Common challenge patriarchal, bourgeois and heteronormative domestic ideals, they also sit awkwardly within some of the most dominant feminist discourses of their time. Women's pacifist activism often emphasizes its rhetorical and critical difference from the systems they are opposing (militarism, nuclear deterrence, etc.) by embracing the archetypal affinity between femininity, gentleness and nurturing, even while those same myths were challenged and deconstructed in feminist analyses. Nevertheless, such gendered gentleness was inflected and modified by the need to 'protest and survive'.<sup>1</sup> Teacher and CND press and publicity officer Alison Whyte describes this delicate balancing act and its positive impact in terms of allowing women a way into activism since 'some see themselves as having a very distinctive role to play in the peace movement', while also making note of the sexist deployment of gendered language by the conservative press in which 'the peace movement is stripped of masculinity — full of women, children, priests and long-haired youths — and embodies all the characteristics which hold no sway in our society'.<sup>2</sup> In this context, nuclear deterrence becomes more than a question of military defence to be cast in terms of castration anxiety; as Julian Critchley wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1981, "A neutral Europe would be the eunuch in the harem of great powers".<sup>3</sup>

The living arrangements at the peace camp at Greenham Common marked a clear departure from normative domesticity and a necessary reconfiguration of the domestic role of women in terms of their duties of care. A commitment to defending humanity's survival involved a break with the role of mother and, where applicable, partner, to different degrees. The visibility of non-heteronormative protesters, which scandalised the conservative press, added fuel to the condemnation of an already suspect and potentially subversive living situation. Even so, the stereotypically feminine characteristic of gentleness is often evoked in the campaigns and self-descriptions of the Greenham protesters, including in one of the most famous Greenham songs 'We are gentle angry women (Singing for our lives)'.<sup>4</sup> As the song title itself suggests, gentleness in women is not a pure category. Speaking of some of the more humorous interventions in the periphery of the Greenham base, including a teddy bears' picnic that saw protestors dress up in plush animal costumes, Jean Hutchinson makes note of the darker aspects of protest humour and its psychological effectiveness: 'We were able to do things, in an apparently gentle way, that were actually hard as nails. Teddy bears, snakes, splashing holy water on gates — it terrified the Americans'.<sup>5</sup> The Greenham Common Peace camp scandal was one of gender impropriety, emblematised in this 'successful experiment in anarchic feminist living' and, more generally, of the cross-contamination of categories such as humour and horror that were never truly separate to begin with.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Protest and Survive' was the title of a pamphlet from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation by E. P. Thompson, 1980, parodying the British government booklet *Protect and Survive*. Wilson Center Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113758>, accessed 25 April 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Alison Whyte, 'Thinking for Ourselves', in John Minnion and Philip Bolsover (eds), *The CND Story* (Allison & Busby: London, 1983), p. 85 and p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Whyte, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> Greenham Common Song Book, Words by Holly Near (altered lyrics by the women of Greenham Common) © 1979 Hereford Music, <http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/#homepage>, accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Fairhall, *Common Ground*, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> Fairhall, *Common Ground*, p. 187. Cf. Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference* (Routledge Classics:



The 'distinctive role' of women in the peace movement noted by Alison Whyte was most succinctly articulated in women's role as mothers, even if motherhood more often than not disrupted the contribution of those already involved in activism. This bind is addressed by Tamar Swade who describes the common experience of having a baby as both an interruption to her involvement in anti-nuclear activism, since demand feeding interfered with researching and writing her part of an anti-nuclear booklet she was co-authoring, and an opportunity for its revitalisation and reframing as a specifically maternal issue: 'Those of us who had been involved before often feel an added urgency to our desire for peace after having a child'.<sup>7</sup> Caring for an infant transformed Swade into 'a different kind of social being' with new social needs as well as a newly gained consciousness. Originally called 'Mother and baby anti-nuclear group', the name of her newly founded group was eventually shortened to the punchier and funnier 'Babies against the Bomb'. This new consciousness, which she admits is not necessarily nor exclusively feminist, is shaped by the joys of motherhood as well as personal grief over global crises, however remote they may be. Swade's statement is illustrated with a black and white photograph of three generations of protesters, the youngest of whom is nursing in their mother's arms; the older two are shown engaged in passionate conversation behind a misspelled hand-written sign reading 'Babies againts [sic] the BOMB' and piles of clothes with busy patterns in boxes and bags, probably destined for a charity collection. This unattributed photograph is compositionally accomplished: the nursing mother's bare leg forms a V with the stick on which the sign is nailed; her patterned dress drapes over and merges with the assembled donations. The three figures are shown in intimate and intense engagement with one another: breast-feeding and being breast-fed and absorbed in conversation.

More than the pleasures and challenges of caring for the young, maternal pacifist consciousness is shaped by an expansive investment in connections and connectivities, at home and crucially beyond, exemplified by the iconic woven webs of the Greenham Common protests.<sup>8</sup> Swade's grief is over the violent severing of the ties that bind and is shared by many others:

One woman told me that the mention of nuclear war conjures up the waking nightmare of her children burning. Another pictures kissing her children goodbye for the last time. A third said her particular nightmare was that the four-minute warning would come while she was at work and she wouldn't be able to cross town in time to get them.<sup>9</sup>

Swade's short statement exemplifies the dual tendencies of women's anti-nuclear activism. On the one hand, interventions at Greenham Common have been specifically described by both participants and their sympathisers as joyful, life-affirming and 'infectiously optimistic',<sup>10</sup> in contrast to the silent glumness of the RAF base. In visual terms, photographic documentation of protests and blockades shows motley congregations of women surrounded but barely contained by blue or black uniforms,<sup>11</sup> with the different gates of the base named after the colours of the rainbow and the rainbow flag adopted by the protesters. Conversely, visual and textual documentation from the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp is replete with evocations of violent death on a mass scale, which is simultaneously resisted and expected, paradoxically cast as an inevitability which however both allows for and demands urgent action. Striking in their frequency and affective weight, such evocations include the delivery of a child-sized coffin with the inscription 'HUMAN RACE' to a guarded gate of the base<sup>12</sup> and

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London, 2001), pp. 351-70. Admittedly, humour and horror haven't always been viewed as wholly distinct, notably not by psychoanalysis.

<sup>7</sup> Tamar Swade, 'Babies Against the Bomb', in Lynne Jones (ed), *Keeping the Peace* (Women's Press: London, 1983), p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Undated and unattributed photograph of the web at Greenham Common: <http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/images/archives/webbing/large/03.jpg> Accessed 18 November 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Swade, pp. 66-7.

<sup>10</sup> Fairhall, *Common Ground*, p. 187.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, photographs of the blockade at Greenham Common by protesters from the Peace Camp, such as <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham/sigrid.htm>, accessed 18 November 2016. Photograph by Sigrid Møller, c. 1982, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, slides scanned by Holger Terp, June 2006. The Danish Peace Academy Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp's Songbook.

<sup>12</sup> Undated and unattributed photograph: <http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/images/archives/policing/large/12.jpg> Accessed 18 November 2016.



songs such as 'Four minutes to midnight', written by Rebecca Johnson and the women of Greenham, a countdown to nuclear Armageddon in four stanzas.<sup>13</sup>

A series of die-in protests were also staged by peace camp protesters, both on the Common and in central London, the latter coinciding with official visits of political leaders. Originating around 1970 in environmental activism, die-ins are designed to 'elicit feelings of grief and shock, emotions that people want to experience alongside others', thus establishing the potential for connectivity not only among the protesters but also between the protesters and their witnesses, from passers-by to even possibly security and police forces.<sup>14</sup> In both anti-nuclear activism and subsequent movements in women's, LGBT+, ethnic minority and animal rights, die-ins have also been used to the opposite effect, as a way of attributing blame for murderous action or inaction to governments, law enforcement and other agencies of power. This effect is underlined by drawing chalk outlines around each other's bodies in emulation of the processing of crime scenes: 'these "living dead" protest their relegation to the hospice and the cemetery or to the silence that equals death. By moving "death" out into the public sphere, they resist the death sentences written by normative discourse and social indifference'.<sup>15</sup> In 'Dying to Live' Gillian Booth describes the preparations of a die-in in London by women from the camp to protest President Reagan's official visit, with the mostly inexperienced protesters like herself, fearing arrest or worse. Unillustrated yet full of vividly visual descriptions, this short text offers an insight into the relatively under-explored part of the visual culture of feminist activism in its poetic self-representation. As in craft, an identification as an amateur (maker or, in this case, protester) seems instrumental and inseparable from the ethos and aims of the protest. Preparing for their first die-in, the women in Booth's group are plagued by doubts, lack of confidence and fear of arrest. Upon hearing that they have been assigned to a side street leaving the major thoroughfares to more experienced protesters, relief is quickly replaced by terror as it dawns on them that they may be in the way of diverted traffic. In the hours before the die-in, the whole city turns strange and hostile, uncannily haunted by the horrors that the women are desperately trying to avert. As in a hallucination or a nightmare, time jumps forward, office wear is transformed into military uniforms, umbrellas into weapons, passers-by into aliens:

As we cross a street, suddenly we are engulfed by a huge grey wave of office workers, military provision of skirts and tailored trousers, and ah, those many pointed umbrellas. Dear god it was all this time a tyre crushing in my head I was fearing, not to be confronted by irate pedestrians with pointed missiles. For one moment I fear I shall throw up then the moment is over and I'm with a group of women striding through the early morning heat to a destination only one of us knows, getting looked at by 100 passers-by who could be inhabitants of another planet they seem that different but who I know will burn and shrivel up the same as me if the bomb fell in the clear light on such a Monday morning.<sup>16</sup>

In this nightmarish vision, 'war' metastasises uncontrollably like a tumour to infect familiar places and daily routines like the morning commute. The repressed yet imminent danger, the full acknowledgment of which would grind everydayness to a halt, threatens to make life such as it is unliveable. As the last section of this paper will explore, anti-nuclear struggle is vulnerable to a mental breakdown similar to the one that plagues nuclear deterrence, which psychoanalyst Franco Fornari described as 'paranoid elaboration of mourning'.<sup>17</sup> The challenge for the anti-nuclear war movement was to make this paranoid mourning authentic and hold on to the ability to distinguish between nightmare and reality.<sup>18</sup> Booth's narrative stops short of a psychotic break, as uncanny horror morphs into magical realism: 'The

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<sup>13</sup> Beeban Kidron, Lindsay Poulton and Guardian Films, [Greenham Common website] <http://www.youngreenham.co.uk/images/archives/fabric/large/06.jpg>; and Greenham Common Song Book, <http://www.youngreenham.co.uk/#homepage>, both accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Marina Koren, 'A Brief History of Die-In Protests', *CityLab*, 2014, <http://www.citylab.com/politics/2014/12/a-brief-history-of-die-in-protests/383439/>, accessed 26 April 2016.

<sup>15</sup> T. V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2005), p. 195.

<sup>16</sup> Gillian Booth, 'Dying to Live', in Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins (eds), *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire* (Women's Press: London, 1984), p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Franco Fornari, *The Psycho-Analysis of War*, trans. Alenka Plešter (Anchor Press/Doubleday: New York, 1974), p. xviii.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Fornari, p. xix.



camera crew was staged outside the gates so we stayed in view, sat down in a circle holding hands and were joined by a group of spiders of all sizes and colours.<sup>19</sup>

## The Art of Greenham Common

Greenham Common generated an impressive variety of artwork within and during the Women's Peace Camp and ever since, as a historical reference and a site with a concentrated potential of destruction, haunted by the projected fears of the public for what it represented. *The Greenham Common Print Portfolio* was conceived in 1984 as a way of supporting the women at Greenham by donating the proceeds of its sale to the camp and included a print by each of three artists, Jim Dine, Dieter Roth and Richard Hamilton.

Compositionally, the found photograph on which this print is based and Hamilton's reworkings of it bear all the conventions and flaws of the family snapshot: the accidental criss-crossing of shadows on the ground emphasise the disarmingly earnest centring of the child in the frame, while the mother, in a literally supporting role, is cut out of the frame with a familiar carelessness.<sup>20</sup> Dressed top to toe in pristine and gender-neutral white, with its features blurred by a fluidity typical of infant faces and the sunlight, the child could be any (white) child, almost an 'everybaby'. Taking into account Hamilton's motivation to support the women of the peace camp, another more narrowly contextual reading of the work emerges, one that homes in on a positive portrayal of the mother-child relationship and, specifically, of good enough mothering. This present to the Greenham women acknowledges the special mobilisation of mothering, as myth as well as experience, in the articulation of women's unique contribution to the anti-nuclear movement. The domestic quality of the living and care-giving arrangements at the peace camp were simultaneously exaggerated in their evocation of homeliness through craft, while these same arrangements were being misrepresented and condemned as aberrant and harmful to the institution of the nuclear family (and, by extension, society) in the conservative press. In 1983, *Daily Mail* reporter Stewart Payne published a piece on a baby delivered to a single-by-choice mother at the peace camp with the title 'The CND Baby Scandal'. Headlines wildly overestimating the percentage of lesbian women on the camp, alleging systematic 'conversion' of straight women to lesbianism, breakdown of marriages because of the occupation and straightforwardly accusing the women of 'manhating', were common and were supplemented by more serious allegations of violent tendencies beneath a misleading peacenik exterior and even of espionage for the communists.<sup>21</sup>

Vacillating between patriarchal myths of dangerous femininities and a paranoid defence of the family unit and government policy at once, age-old gendered slurs were re-entered into circulation and appropriated by the protesters, although it is not easy to determine which came first, their relaunch or the appropriation. While repurposing domestic crafts into making banners had a long history in British social movements from trade unionism to the Suffragettes, weaving loose colourful webs and attaching mementoes to the fence of the base could not be read in conventionally political terms, demanding a more archaic reference framework. 'The witches of Greenham', as they were vilified in the press, happily portrayed themselves as cartoon witches surrounded by spider webs in their DIY posters, proud to have invented protest practices with rich symbolic ramifications and practical possibilities.<sup>22</sup> In addition to a metaphorical challenge to linearity the web connoted the potential for a growing network of unexpected connections, which was important to the survival of the movement as the 'Carry Greenham Home' campaign indicated.<sup>23</sup> In practical terms, when used on the fence or over protesters in sit-ins and die-ins, untangling the web made surprisingly hard work for the police and military authorities faced with the task of removing it, and reduced them to 'the fiddly task of the kind women are traditionally required to do.'<sup>24</sup> Viewed as an intervention in this war in and of representation,

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<sup>19</sup> Booth, 'Dying to Live', p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Hamilton, *Mother and child*, collotype and screenprint on paper. From: Jim Dine, Richard Hamilton and Dieter Roth, *Greenham Common Print Portfolio*, 1984. <http://www.fate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-mother-and-child-p79809>, accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>21</sup> 'Headlines', <http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/#media>, accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Newspaper headline, The Fabric of Greenham video, <http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/#fabric>, accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Glossary: 'Carry Greenham Home', <http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/#homepage>; and

<sup>24</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The allegory of the human form* (Virago: London 1985), pp.58-59.



Hamilton's *Mother and Child* offered a supportive if not radical message: the wilful challenge to domesticity at Greenham is not at the expense of 'everybody' but in effort to ensure everyone has a future; the 'witches of Greenham' know how to take care of their own and could be trusted to do so.

Active between 1981 and 1984, the artists' collective Sister Seven produced a series of consciousness-raising events, posters and performances, including notably the performance *Premature Endings* in Huddersfield in 1984.<sup>25</sup> The collective originally consisted of seven women but eventually came down to six (Evelyn Silver, Mary Michaels, Liz Hibbard, Shirley Cameron, Gillian Allnutt and Monica Ross) and eventually five members. Their work is inflected by the paradox of much pacifist and particularly anti-nuclear activism, in which a pre-emptively mournful sense of impending doom by complete nuclear annihilation invites urgent action. John Timberlake describes visions of nuclear catastrophes as collective 'false memories': not only did a nuclear world war never take place but its multiple evocations and representations, including visual ones, are in themselves an effect of the traumatic fallout of the cold war.<sup>26</sup> Rather than false memories, however, which suggest a mass delusion sparked by real trauma, anti-nuclear art practice seems motivated by pre-emptive mourning for premature, abrupt and violent death on a mass scale, death which is entertained and to which diverse visual and other forms are given, while politically campaigning against it. Shirley Cameron's contribution to Sister Seven's anti-nuclear exhibition, which toured over sixty venues, is haunted by the spectre of her dead loved ones.<sup>27</sup> She vividly describes her prematurely born children sleeping peacefully in their beds, whose premature deaths she cannot bear to imagine. A Sister Seven poster offers guidance for a simple DIY performance using a single prop in the shape of a nuclear missile, the 'end-of-the-book mark':

#### How to use End-of-the-Book-Marks

1. Choose a book (a novel or story book)
2. Place bookmark in any page near the centre of the book
3. Read from beginning of book to the bookmark and STOP!
4. THROW THE BOOK AWAY
5. And think about premature endings — the nuclear weapons exploding at any time — just when we had done the shopping or maybe when we were in the middle of reading a good book ...<sup>28</sup>

The final bullet point, which retroactively sets the scene of sudden and unjustified killing in treacherously familiar, ordinary and even relaxed circumstances (just after the shopping, or 'in the middle of reading a good book'), reveals a fundamental dimension of anti-nuclear feminist practice and forms an accented addition to feminist dystopian domesticities: the nuclear version of uncanny domesticity does not stem from a critique of a patriarchal division of labour but from the recognition that no place is safe from total war.

Originally created in 1989 during a one-month residency at New York's New Museum Margaret Harrison's installation *Common Land Greenham* was 'a reconstruction and reinterpretation' of the perimeter fence of the Greenham Common base bearing the protesters' personal and largely domestic additions, including photographs, children's clothing and toys, and kitchen implements.<sup>29</sup> The installation includes a mural, an empty pram, and a quotation from Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*: 'We can best help you prevent war not by repeating your words and following your methods but by finding new words and creating new methods.' Harrison's installation was recreated for her

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.monicaross.org/artworks/SisterSeven.html>, accessed 18 November 2016.

<sup>26</sup> John Timberlake, 'Nuclear War as False Memory', *Open Arts Journal*, no. 3 (Summer 2014), pp. 157-163.

<sup>27</sup> Shirley Cameron, artist's statement (2014), <http://shirleycameron.org/index.php>, accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Sister Seven poster (1981), Monica Ross archive, Phoenix Studios, Brighton.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Harrison, *Common Land/Greenham* (1989), New Museum Digital Archive, [http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/0ccurrence/Show/occurrence\\_id/181](http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/0ccurrence/Show/occurrence_id/181), accessed 18 November 2016.



solo exhibition *Preoccupy*, Silberkuppe, Berlin (2012), with the initiative of the gallery curators who saw in it and, by extension, in the original perimeter fence of the base itself, an influential precedent for contemporary activism. In 2013 the fence became *Common Reflections* with the inclusion of mirrors, which had multiple meanings and effects. Harrison's exhibition for the Northern Art Prize exploited reflection literally and metaphorically, reflecting on the politics and aesthetics of looking and being looked at as stock feminist concerns, while also exploiting the disorienting effect of differently angled mirrors on the viewer. Just as importantly, she references one of the biggest demonstrations at Greenham, 'Reflect the Base' in December 1983, which involved 50,000 women and resulted in a record number of arrests. 'Surrounding the base, we faced thousands of armed soldiers and police as we held up our mirrors so that they could see their own faces, guarding these nuclear weapons of mass suffering.'<sup>30</sup>

The disorientation of the gallery viewer is not merely visual but extends to Harrison's approach to the history of feminist activism. By recreating the fence anew, Harrison revisits earlier work on the same topic in 1989 but also invites the viewer to reflect on the meanings of repetition, return and history of and within feminism. This is no commemoration, nor a straightforward attempt to preserve something unchanged for future generations: 'if women have been obliterated by history, then we can obliterate history by ignoring it'.<sup>31</sup> Ignoring history does not amount to an indifference towards past events, lives, and achievements but rather a recognition that 'formal and conceptual strateg[ies] of fracturing chronologies'<sup>32</sup> are often at play in art informed by feminism. Feminist accounts of the past first emerged as feminist responses to gaps in historical narratives and historiographical failures to identify (let alone appreciate) either the labour or the oeuvre of women artists. The results often bear the scars of their past marginalisation and repression: thoroughly dismissive of chronologies, wilfully fractured, implacably disorienting. Unnervingly, the fence continues to mutate through and beyond its recreations.

As I was working through an early version of this paper in June 2015, an American-owned factory on the outskirts of the city of Lyon became the target of a terrorist attack.<sup>33</sup> Following multiple small-scale explosions (larger ones were planned as it transpired but didn't pan out), reports emerged of a decapitated body found on the scene and a severed human head 'stuck' on the fence of the Air Products facility. Before forensic investigators were able to identify the head as belonging to a manager at the factory, there was speculation that the head may have belonged to one of the attackers and may have been severed and caught on the fence by accident as the result of an explosion. The exact meaning of the French verb 's'accrocher' was debated: it means to hang from, to hook on but also to catch.<sup>34</sup> Also, accrochement or more commonly accrochage is the French term for attachment in psychoanalytic language. Early reports were open to the suggestion that the head may have been caught by the fence after a fatal explosion. I made a concerted effort to avoid seeing visual documentation of the factory fence. While I was writing I couldn't take the image of the severed head on the fence out of my mind, not seen but imagined; it stuck. Looking at Harrison's fence again, I blanked out the pegs holding up the assorted objects. The object placement could be accidental, the result of extreme force; unlike what has been often repeated, they consist of both precious mementoes *and* everyday objects, essential to the business of living but not precious, such as pots and pans — the contents of a home, not memento boxes. *Common Reflections* joins a canon of works relating to Greenham Common but also offers the flickering suggestion of something that no other work does: a literally exploded view of the alternative domesticities of the peace camp.<sup>35</sup>

Like the subversively decorated perimeter fence of the Greenham Common RAF base, Margaret Harrison's recreations demand an embodied approach from the viewer. The fence becomes 'sticky', a term proposed (or rather repurposed) by Mieke Bal to describe contemporary

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<sup>30</sup> Dr Rebecca Johnson cited in Sarah Graham, 'Reflections on Greenham, 11 December 1983', *Feminist Times* (2003), <http://www.feministtimes.com/reflections-greenham-11-december-1983/>, accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy Spero cited in Joanna S. Walker, *Nancy Spero, Encounters* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup> BBC, 'France Attack as it happened', 26 June 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/world-europe-33287095>, accessed 25 April 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Oxford Dictionaries: French, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/translate/french-english/accrocher>, accessed 30 June 2015.

<sup>35</sup> I am referencing the subtitle of Cornelia Parker's installation *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991). Tempting though it may be to include this work in the discussion, Parker, whose work was made with the help of the army, views explosions as a culturally iconic, 'from the violence of the comic strip, through action films, in documentaries about Super Novas and the Big Bang, and least of all on the news in never ending reports of war.' (<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/cold-dark-matter/explosion>, accessed 20 April 2016).



works of art that promote an enhanced experience of time in the act of viewing, without deploying time-based media but by manipulating the experience of the viewer through an engagement of her senses and sensibilities. To be precise, sticky images do not so much engage as they transfix the viewer, thus conveying something of the trauma that informs their making.

They slow down to the extreme; they make you dizzy from the back-and-forthness between microscopic and macroscopic looking where no eyeglasses or contact lenses will quite do the job. Looking itself becomes tortuous, almost tortuous. [...] these surfaces, whose structure of microscopic detail conjures up such massive violence as to make it impossible for any historical or journalistic account to encompass it, so foreshorten time as to enter the viewer's life-time, breaking its linearity and regularity. They stick to you, long after the intense experience of time has faded back into everyday life.<sup>36</sup>

In *The Psychoanalysis of War*, originally published in 1966, Italian psychoanalyst Franco Fornari reviews psychoanalytic approaches to conflict to make a special case for nuclear war and its prevention with the help of psychoanalysis. Fornari's proposals, which are fairly specific and involve the foundation of the Omega Institution, a global defensive and judicial organisation whose purpose would be to prevent all future wars, never came to fruition and are less important than his analysis of the problem of war in its nuclear mutation.<sup>37</sup> Defending the role of psychoanalysis in the examination of war phenomena, he notes a series of 'symbolic peculiarities' through which 'the emergence of an all-destructive reality is associated with the symbols of procreation and preservation of the species, through a primary love relationship such as that between mother and child'. For instance, the bomber of Hiroshima named his B-52 after his mother, Enola Gay; and the 'father' of the atomic bomb General Leslie Groves, on completion of the first successful experiment with the bomb, messaged President Truman that 'Baby is born'.<sup>38</sup>

With such familial symbolism in mind, the cover of the Doubleday/Anchor 1974 edition of the English translation of Fornari's book seems particularly well-chosen. A seemingly purpose-made Ralph Steadman cartoon shows a disturbing mother and child scene in a barren interior space.<sup>39</sup> A demented skeletal female figure feeds a stiff baby from a missile filled with blood. As Freud proposes in 'The Theme of the Three Caskets', woman is culturally coded as the giver of life, love and death.<sup>40</sup> That the scene is set in an interior, albeit one with no visible walls, is also significant: in the context of 'pantoclastic' nuclear warfare, any distinction between the war front and the home front melts away.<sup>41</sup> The stock psychoanalytic explanation of war as defence of the love object against destruction no longer applies when war would result in total destruction. Fornari agrees with Freud that war involves an 'outward deflection of the death instinct', not a defence against an external enemy but the *invention* of an enemy, in 'an unconscious security maneuver [sic] against terrifying fantasy entities which are not flesh and blood but represent an absolute danger [...] the "Terrifier"'.<sup>42</sup> Jacqueline Rose makes a similar argument in her discussion of death, the ultimate 'Terrifier':

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<sup>36</sup> Mieke Bal, 'Sticky Images: The Foreshortening of time in an art of duration', in Carolyn Bailey Gill (ed), *Time and the Image* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2000), p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> Fornari, pp. 199-236.

<sup>38</sup> Fornari, p. ix.

<sup>39</sup> The book credit reads simply 'Cover Design by Ralph Steadman'. Steadman made a series of anti-war cartoons and posters, including for the Stop the War Coalition against the war in Iraq in 2003 (<http://huckcdn.lwies.com/admin/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/steadman.jpg>) and for the front page of Nuclear Times (Summer 1978) (<http://hqinfo.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/nuclear-news-i-can-nuclear-power-save-us.html>). Accessed 20 April 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Theme of the Three Caskets' (1913), in *Art and Literature*, *Penguin Freud Library*, vol. 14, pp. 233-47.

<sup>41</sup> Adjective signifying 'total destruction'. Fornari, p. xxvii, n.6.

<sup>42</sup> Fornari, p. xvii and p. xvi respectively.





Death is a problem, not because we cannot surmount its loss or imagine our own death, but because it forces us to acknowledge that what belongs to us most intimately is also a stranger or enemy, a type of foreign body in the mind.<sup>43</sup>

Mourning is therefore psychologically challenging due to an 'estrangement' between conscious and unconscious thinking, leaving the affected party with 'a form of thinking unable [...] to own or possess itself'.<sup>44</sup> Fornari names 'paranoid elaboration of mourning' the elision of real mourning, the refusal to acknowledge the 'Terrifier' within and to instead project it outwards: 'we imagine that the love object has died not because of our own fantasy sadistic attacks against it, but because of the evil magic of the enemy'.<sup>45</sup> The eradication of one's own ambivalence therefore results in a real risk of violence on a mass scale. Short of founding a global organisation for universal justice and personal responsibility, what can psychoanalysis do? Reflecting on the clinical situation of patients presenting with anxiety and depression over the nuclear threat, Lowell Rubin admits that acknowledging the validity of the analysand's concerns will be helpful, and goes so far as to indicate that empowering analysands to take some form of action against the source of their fears can be a significant part of the treatment.<sup>46</sup> In other words, activism is the cure.

The artist-protesters at Greenham Common exploded the symbolism of the fences of the base by wrapping them into their knitted webs and tearing into them, as if they were made of yarn. Challenged, transformed, materially and affectively invested, the fences marked the line between everyday life and the perpetually deferred but menacingly imminent moment where both life and time would melt down. On the grounds of Greenham and its artistic evocations and recreations, feminist anti-nuclear pacifists waged war against 'a costly and tragic system of security'.<sup>47</sup> Pre-emptive mourning, in its visual and material elaborations, fended off the paranoid elaboration of mourning and, in a small but meaningful way, presented a vital counterpoint to the destructive capabilities of the 'Terrifier'. The Greenham women's choice of methods and materials was far from accidental, even though it was also practical: craft's baggage, its ambiguous ambivalence and ambivalent ambiguity, its home-made character and its adaptability to alternative living situations, its whiff of amateurism and lowly status sustained their actions, fed their practice and embodied their values. In this respect, Margaret Harrison's citation of Virginia Woolf signposts a profound affinity that is not exhausted in their shared women's pacifism across the decades but is also philosophically and psychoanalytically founded on a revalidation of that which is usually devalued.

Virginia Woolf proposes ridicule, censure, and contempt as the great antidotes to vanity, egotism, and megalomania, and then poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties (all mostly imposed on the female sex) as the conditions for women's entry into a world of professionalism which, without them, will inevitably lead to war.<sup>48</sup> Hang on to failure, hang on to derision — a failure and derision that would not invite a reactive triumphalism but pre-empt it — if you want to avoid going to war.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Return to Melanie Klein* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1993), p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> Fornari, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Fornari, p. xviii.

<sup>46</sup> Lowell Rubin, 'Melancholia, Mourning, and the Nuclear Threat', in Howard Levine, Daniel Jacobs and Lowell Rubin (eds.), *Psychoanalysis and the Nuclear Threat* (Analytic Press: London, 1988), pp. 245-57.

<sup>47</sup> Fornari, p. xviii.

<sup>48</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 90, paraphrased in Jacqueline Rose, 'Why War?', *Why War* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1993), p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

