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Disrupting the media frame at Greenham Common: a new chapter in the history of mediations?

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**DISRUPTING THE MEDIA FRAME AT GREENHAM COMMON:
A NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF MEDIATIONS?**

‘She [Greenham woman] was a woman who transgressed boundaries between the public and private spheres; she made her home in public, in the full glare of the world’s media, under the surveillance of the state’
Sasha Roseneil, 1995: 155-6 (emphasis added)

‘We have to get to people on our own terms and we have to give out information and we have to be the source of that information , not the media.’

Aniko Jones, Yellow Gate (interview with the author)

There is an important distinction between the history of media and the history of ‘mediations’, the complex and changing processes by which social action is mediated (Martin-Barbero, 1993). While we must study the technical and institutional forms of specific media, we must also investigate those media’s impact within a broader context, ‘placing the media in the field of mediations’ (ibid: 139). Recent important work on the social implications of the electronic media has pursued this wider question.¹ John Thompson in particular has written of the ‘non-localized , non-dialogical , open-ended space of the visible’ in which symbolic forms are mediated and ‘struggles for [mediated] visibility’ occur (1995: 246-47). This article argues that an important, relatively neglected dimension of the disruptive power of the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp (1981-) has been its challenge to the terms of the ‘media frame’, the ‘struggle for visibility’ it represented.²

This article is structured as follows. In two preliminary sections, I review briefly issues regarding the actual media coverage of the Camp (section (1)) and then some further theoretical background (section (2)). Then in section (3) Greenham’s ‘struggle for visibility’ is discussed in two stages. In relation to the early years of the Camp when it

received intense media coverage, the discussion focuses particularly on the challenge represented by 'ordinary women' - women not normally involved in public, mediated action - contesting the silence surrounding nuclear weapons. In relation to the later years, my interest is in the strategies for countering the media silence which descended on the Camp, particularly those of Yellow Gate. In the concluding section, I open up connections between Greenham and recent, more obviously 'mediated' forms of protest action.

Taking seriously the study of 'media' as forms of social 'mediation' requires addressing the relationship between what McKenzie Wark (1994) has recently called the 'virtual geography' of media space, and the material geography of the social world. Meyrowitz's (1985) adaptation of Goffman's situation analysis to the mediated audience situation raised crucial issues in this area. Another implication, much less developed, is the need to consider in detail the material geography of the media production process itself. As Scannell remarks, Meyrowitz gives no account of the 'institutional locales' of television (studios, for instance) and how people interact with them (1996: 141) - a significant omission. In fact, Meyrowitz largely ignores the locales of media production, whether institutional or otherwise, except from the viewpoint of particular media actors such as politicians. Yet, it is precisely here - where the media production process interacts with the spatial forms of social life - that Greenham is a pivotal example. The Peace Camp at Greenham Common USAF base mattered both as a public site where women gathered away from their private homes and as a place visited by national and international media. This article will use a broadly phenomenological approach to explore aspects of how events at Greenham were understood by the women involved. It aims to offer a more nuanced account of the relation between physical and mediated space than would flow from simply adopting popular theories of the 'collapse' of 'postmodern space' in the electronically mediated age (e.g. Baudrillard, 1983).

Greenham of course , quite apart from any media aspects, was a major public conflict on the global issue of nuclear weapons between women of a wide range of social backgrounds and the British state. It focussed social and political organisation among women, generating new channels of information and mobilisation. It was also a site of great 'discursive dissonance' (Roseneil, 1995: 143), disruptive on many levels at once. In immediate spatial terms, the camp was established at a boundary of both physical and imaginary importance. The fence surrounding Greenham base was a physical barrier that represented also the imaginary boundary between the world of 'ordinary life' and the barely known world in which nuclear weapons move (Wilson, 1992: 274-5). In social terms, many divisions were at stake: formal divisions within social space (woman versus man, 'ordinary' person versus government) as well as the mass of petty distinctions mobilised when 'others' are marked off as threatening 'outsiders' . The Greenham women were stigmatised by locals and press as smelly, filthy, cruel to children, and sexually deviant (Young , 1990; Cresswell, 1996). As the cultural geographer David Sibley has argued, the maintenance of spatial and social boundaries involve imaginary forms that are interrelated (Sibley, 1995): at Greenham, the mutual reinforcement of the social and spatial was clear . Greenham was a 'liminal' space in Victor Turner's sense, where social norms were suspended (Roseneil, 1995: 143, Turner, 1974) and contested (Rothenbuhler, 1988) : both the 'normal' domestic relations between women, their male partners and children, and the norms of compulsory heterosexuality. But the very transferal of domestic life into public space at Greenham was itself of liminal significance . Greenham women disrupted the gendered geography of public and private spheres - first, by being women displaced from the private space of the home, and then by being women (and private persons) living beside the masculine, public emphatically non-domestic space of a nuclear weapons base (Cresswell, 1996: 97-100). The peace camp was a transgression of a symbolic and

spatial order of considerable ideological significance (ibid.; Stallybrass and White, 1986: 23-25; Young, 1990: 34-40).

All these conflicts were amplified by intense media coverage. Indeed, as Alison Young has shown (1990), the media were themselves an important site of conflict. The vilification in much of the mainstream media of women who opposed the British state at Greenham has political implications in itself. However, the argument of this article is that, quite apart from considering the details of media coverage as such, there is value in considering Greenham in the light of the wider issues of 'mediation' and 'visibility' already mentioned . In the quotation at the beginning of this article, Sasha Roseneil eloquently summarised the notion of woman which Greenham forged 'in the full glare of the world's media'. As she suggests, media exposure was not an incidental aspect of events at Greenham. Indeed, it was a further dimension along which they were disruptive. They challenged the 'common sense' expectation that 'ordinary women' ('ordinary people' in general) are not involved in the domain where 'public affairs', state policy, above all military policy are conducted . This disruption, traceable in the language of protesters, implied a challenge to an important, effectively 'geographical' assumption on which the national media operate: that the right place for 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 (cf Roseneil, 1995: 115).

I trace below in more detail these disruptions in the 'field of mediations'. Clearly, any attempt to analyse issues of 'mediation' implicitly involves questions of geography - physical, social, symbolic, and 'virtual'. Events at Greenham disrupted not only a general spatial order but also the specific spatial order implicit in media production. Greenham effectively was a space for mediated debate on national issues that was

situated firmly outside the 'centre'. In attempting to understand these issues, media studies draws close to developments within geography. Closer connections between media/cultural studies and geography have already been suggested (Burgess and Gold, 1985; Jackson, 1989; Moores, 1993). Recently, a more integrated spatial theory has emerged (Sibley, 1995; Cresswell, 1996), which draws on geography, anthropology, cultural studies and psychoanalysis, in an attempt to formulate the very difficult issues that arise when we explore how social and spatial orders interact. David Sibley (1995), in particular, has called for a 'post-disciplinary perspective on social and spatial problems'. Strikingly this multi-disciplinary approach is matched in recent work in media studies (Silverstone, 1994). We need of course to add the problems of 'mediation' to Sibley's definition of the task. This article explores this relatively uncharted territory, while illuminating some less familiar aspects of the Greenham Common events themselves.

Section 1 Media Coverage of Greenham - some brief comments

Media coverage of Greenham, particularly the stigmatisation of Greenham women, has been extensively analysed (Young, 1990; Cresswell, 1996). Since my concern is with broader issues of mediation, my discussion will be brief.

A word is necessary first about the history of the Peace Camp and my sources. Initially there was only one camp, situated outside the base's main gate. As numbers grew during 1983, other camps (or 'gates') were set up around the base and all were given names from the colours of the rainbow (ironically, uranium when exposed to light has rainbow colours). This act of renaming the gates itself represented a discursive struggle with the military who continually refused to acknowledge those names. The camp at the base's main gate was named 'Yellow Gate'. Complex struggles developed between the other gates and Yellow Gate over resources, media attention and so on

(Roseneil, 1995: 75-82). These struggles continued until Yellow Gate and the other gates separated from each other in 1987 at the other gates' initiation (for different accounts, see Roseneil, 1995: 96; Junor, 1996: 98). Apart from Yellow Gate, Blue Gate was by 1994 the only gate remaining ; it closed that February, the same year that the Greenham base itself closed.

Yellow Gate, however, remains active against militarism, particularly the nearby nuclear weapons establishment at Aldermaston and RAF Burghfield. This article covers both the earlier period when many gates existed - drawing on testimony in published accounts (Cook and Kirk, 1983; Harford and Hopkins, 1984; Liddington, 1989; Roseneil, 1995) - and the later period when Yellow Gate acted independently. For this later period, I will draw on my interviews with members of Yellow Gate in September 1996, ³ and Beth Junor's history of Yellow Gate, which includes testimony from herself and other Yellow Gate residents (Junor, 1996). To discuss this latter period is to intervene , however unwillingly, in a dispute about the camp's history: between those who regard Yellow Gate as marginal, so that the camp effectively ended when Blue Gate closed (Roseneil, 1995: 95-6, 165) and the women at Yellow Gate who regard themselves as keeping the Greenham Camp open (Junor, 1996: 268). I cannot resolve this difference, nor is this necessary for my argument. It is not claimed here that the later material on Yellow Gate is representative of Greenham as a whole (there were important differences in character between the gates: Roseneil, 1995: 78-82), only that this testimony should not be ignored, offering as it does interesting comparisons with material from the earlier period of intense media coverage .

The first point about Greenham's media coverage is that simply by being outside an otherwise little known military base, the camp publicised the base's existence (Roseneil, 1995: 169). Going to Greenham involved seeing something that few people

ever see (a store for nuclear weapons). Any media publicity was therefore automatically significant, since it extended this breach of secrecy to a wider audience. For existing residents of the area, the camp publicised a disturbing aspect of their immediate environment that had been naturalised.⁴ More generally, the national media coverage, however hostile, extended the scale on which the 'discursive dissonance' of Greenham had impact, an effect amplified by international television coverage. Greenham still receives visitors from abroad (Junor, 1996).

While the generally hostile coverage ensured that Greenham women were ambivalent towards the media, media planning was an aspect of their actions, even if there was no formal 'media strategy' ('Greenham did not formulate strategies', Roseneil, 1995: 97). The march which began the protest (the 'Women For Life On Earth Peace March' from Cardiff to Greenham in August 1981) was advertised in national newspapers and magazines as well as peace movement publications (ibid.: 33). Given the lack of media response to the march a small encampment at Greenham began in September 1981 (ibid.: 38, Liddington, 1989: 230). Significant media coverage only came in late 1982 and early 1983 with the Embrace The Base demonstration (December) and the entry of the base (1 January) when women danced on a missile silo at dawn. The media were summoned to these events (Harford and Hopkins, 1984: 99-101). Moreover, many women went to Greenham, having heard of it through media coverage (Roseneil, 1995: 33, 46). The momentum from intense media publicity was well understood. As one woman, met by television cameras on her release from Holloway late in 1982, said: 'all we had to say at the prison gates was, "if we can go to prison for this, you can go to Greenham, even if it's snowing, even if it's cold. Come and surround Greenham"' (Liddington, 1989: 243). The fact that many women went to Greenham, having formed a favourable image of it against the grain of hostile media coverage, fits well with theories of oppositional decoding in audience studies (Hall,

1980, Eco, 1994).

It would be misleading, however, to ignore the important part in mobilizing support played by informal media - meetings, chain letters, leaflets, music and video cassettes, and direct personal contact with those at Greenham (Liddington, 1989: 260; Roseneil, 1995: 51). For many women, this was a vital part of the context in which 'official' media coverage was received. Informal contacts, for instance, led to cooperation between the Greenham camp and women active in the 1984-85 Miners Strike (Seddon, 1986). At a more detailed level, Greenham's high media profile and its informal networks inspired actions outside Greenham which drew on its symbolism: for example, the 600 actions held across Britain on 24 May 1983 alone (Liddington, 1989: 262).

The media's impact on Greenham's later history has been very different. After the major events of 1982-3, the camp's continuation has been largely ignored by mainstream media and, as numbers at the camp fell, the base for informal media was reduced also. This 'media silence' has been felt acutely by those who have remained longest, the women at Yellow Gate. Beth Junor's book begins in 1984, the year she regards as the start of that silence, when widely publicised evictions at Greenham created an impression that the camp had ended (Junor, 1996: 27). In her preface Junor describes the events her book records: 'these are things you will not have read about in the papers, seen on television or heard on the radio' (ibid: xii-xiii, my emphasis). When Blue Gate announced its closure in 1994, this was reported as the final end of the Camp, although Yellow Gate remained (ibid.: 268). There was a subsequent brief revival in national press interest (Morton, 1996, Craig, 1996), but the Guardian (29 March 1997) reported the sale of most of the former base's land to Newbury Council without reference to Yellow Gate.

The women at Yellow Gate face an extreme example of a 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Noelle-Neumann argued that people adjust their opinions in line with the opinion which in their assessment is most commonly shared. Rarely expressed opinions are less likely to be reproduced than commonly expressed ones. If the general opinion is that something has ceased (as with Greenham), there is a disincentive against saying it continues. In fact (Noelle-Neumann's wider point), if most people derive their information from current media which have ceased to cover an event, a spiral of silence is in place even before anyone considers what their opinion should be. Greenham has ceased to be a current reference point. Yet resistance at Yellow Gate continues.

Section 2 - Contesting the Media Frame: Theoretical Issues

At this point some further theoretical discussion is necessary on the relation between the constitution of the media frame and issues of geography. I am using 'media frame' here in an inclusive sense to cover both the objective limits or 'frame' through which the media represent the social world and people's socially embedded expectations and beliefs about how that objective frame works. This very general usage is justified by the fact that it is issues about how people orientate themselves to the media, as a general phenomenon, that are this article's concern.⁵

The first point concerns the impact of the media frame on the spatial organisation of social life. Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) argued that the media frame collapses what were previously segregated sets of face-to-face encounters (in politics, the family, and so on) into multi-local electronically mediated situations (for example, the political broadcast). Ready access to such situations gives us new types of information about

others that alter social relations (cf Altheide and Snow, 1979). But, as already suggested, Meyrowitz, by concentrating on the implicit geography of the standard viewing situation, does not deal adequately with the impact of being televised. He discusses regular public performers, such as politicians, and how they have adjusted their performance to intense media coverage, but what is the impact on people who are normally 'only' viewers of their actions being televised? Alfred Schutz's concept of multiple realities in social interaction is useful here (Schutz, 1973). When an event at a particular site is broadcast, say, on national television, its details become available for comparison with events in other national narratives not otherwise readily comparable with it. The scale of its significance changes: interpretations by myriad others not directly involved become relevant, and all of them can be imagined by those at the original site as part of the same vast 'event-frame'. Far from a collapse of social space (as Meyrowitz suggests), we see here a proliferation of interconnected spaces and meanings: 'multiple realities' all focussed on the same event. The resulting 'phenomenal complexity' (Scannell, 1996: 76, cf Becker, 1995, 640-43) may be something most people only rarely experience for themselves, but the capacity to imagine it can be shared by everyone in a media age.

The second point concerns the spatial organisation of the media production process itself. An account of the electronic media as social mediations must focus not only on their history as social forms (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991) but on their geography. There is space only for a very schematic account here. Media production generally occurs in particular spaces (such as studios) to which access is restricted and which are quite separate from the usual places of media consumption. Production outside the studio occurs more often in certain places (typical sites of outdoor broadcasts: political centres, sports venues) than in others (homes, shopping centres, workplaces, military bases). There is a regularity to where media production occurs and

where it does not . Might not this regularity affect how people imagine the broader collectivities to which they belong ('region' or nation') and the local spaces where they live ('city', 'suburb', 'ordinary' town or village, home)? At least we can say that people's 'localities' (unlike spaces of 'national' importance) are where they do not expect the media to be; their homes are where they expect to consume the media, not to be filmed. Home in this sense lies beyond the 'media frame'. At this level of background expectation, events at Greenham were profoundly disruptive. The Peace Camp was at the same time a 'domestic' , 'local' space where women lived, and a public, mediated space of 'national' significance. The mock television set which women at Blue Gate constructed can be read as a humorous reflection on the same issue: 'we had a television made out of a cardboard box, with a piece of wire for the aerial' (Jenny List, quoted Roseneil (1995: 79)). The normal domestic presence of the television set was mockingly repeated in a new domestic space that not only lacked television but was itself 'in the full glare of the world's media'.⁶

A third point concerns the relation between media representations of national geography and the actual geography of social life. As Brunson and Morley suggested, drawing on the particular example of the BBC programme Nationwide , national news and current affairs involve a far from neutral geographical perspective : the 'regions' tend to be subordinate to the 'centre' with 'regional issues' subordinated to 'national' ones (1978: 81ff, cf Dominick (1977), Brooker-Gross (1983)). More broadly, Stuart Hall and others argued that there is a 'common sense' understanding about how political 'consensus' is articulated for possible challenge within the national media , and by whom (Hall et al, 1981). Such 'common sense' (Hall, 1977, Brunson and Morley, 1978: 87ff) involves issues not just about the representation of space , but the status of people: for example, the difference in status between 'experts' and 'ordinary people' when they appear on current affairs television (ibid: 65ff). It is 'common sense' that 'ordinary

people' - 'ordinary people who watch television' as one interviewee of Livingstone and Lunt put it: 1994, 114) - do not generally 'get involved' in the 'nation's affairs' (cf Dahlgren, 1981) ; when they do, it is either implicitly less important ('human interest' stories) or exceptional ('a crisis of public opinion') (cf Edelman, 1988: 35-37, 97-99). This 'common sense' framework reflects wider discontinuities (of class, gender, race, education, and so on) but adds to them a further, naturalised level of discrimination - against the mythical 'ordinary person' who 'only' watches television . This (generalising Dahlgren's (1981) argument on television news) is one way in which television contributes to the socialization of its audiences. Given the previous point about the implicit geography of media production, we can see that there is a spatial dimension to this process: the separation of the 'ordinary person' from the space of actions within the 'media frame'. Yet this 'common sense' framework can be challenged, as at Greenham.

These theoretical points are of a general nature. Taken together, they form a basis for considering how the social authority of the electronic media in contemporary Britain is reproduced, precisely as a form of 'mediation', of mediated 'socialization'. This article, and the wider project of which it forms part, aim to explore these issues by considering not television's discourse as such, but how the social process of 'mediation' works in specific cases. While one article cannot by itself definitively validate this approach, my aim here is to show how it can provide fresh insights into already published testimony on the events of Greenham's early years and also help us understand more recent, little-known actions at Greenham.

Section 3 - Contesting the Media Frame - Testimony from Greenham

(A) The Early Years : 'ordinary women' in the media frame

As Sasha Roseneil has put it, 'the location of the camp directly outside the site of US

nuclear weapons made concrete the physical presence of the weapons in the Berkshire countryside and of the US military which controlled them. It challenged the abstractions which usually surround discussions of military policy, by directing the public's gaze at the actuality of nuclear militarism, at one concrete example of the Cold War' (Roseneil, 1995: 115). In other words, by insisting on making their point from where the weapons were, rather than where their existence is normally seen to be debated (Westminster, television studios), Greenham women challenged the assumption that effective national debate was possible without experiencing the weapons' physical presence. They therefore challenged the 'geographical' assumption implicit in all media debates: that audiences can adequately participate by watching studio discussions, interviews, reports, and so on, while remaining in their own homes. In addition, by transferring their domestic life into mediated public space, the women who lived at Greenham turned inside out not only a domestic order (Cresswell, 1996) but also the regular pattern whereby domestic, public, non-mediated space (the place you watch from) and non-domestic, public, mediated space (places you watch) are separate spheres.

Moreover, Greenham disrupted the 'common sense' understanding, which the media help reproduce, that 'ordinary people' act within a frame that is separate from 'national' matters. It introduced 'ordinary' women into an extraordinary 'place': the place of 'public affairs, of 'national events'. To go to Greenham Common was to cross over into the frame of national events.⁷ Crucially, this was disruptive not because Greenham women were 'merely' ordinary (they showed themselves exceptional), but because they had been placed within the constructed category of 'ordinary women', 'ordinary people'. It was the basis of this categorization that their actions challenged. How was this disruption reflected in what Greenham women said and did?

The sense of entering a national frame of action is vivid in Pat Paris' account. She

was a mother living in rural Wales who later stayed at Greenham regularly:

'I can remember quite clearly. I think it was four o'clock that they finally linked all around the base. And the point that happened, I was sitting in almost darkness in this kitchen, breast-feeding this baby, with this other woman sitting opposite me breast-feeding her baby and the pair of us streaming tears because we could hear women singing behind the news report, and we weren't there . . . I can remember that being a real emotional thing, the frustration of not being able to do anything because you were stuck with these kids and there were all these thousands of women miles away.' (quoted, Roseneil, 1995: 46).

She describes her absence from Greenham within the time-frame of the nation's news . Actual physical distance seems less important than imagined distance (a substantial actual distance from Greenham is spoken of as only 'miles away'). The immediacy of the Greenham action redefines the domestic scene in Wales as an absence : not being 'there' at Greenham. Temporal and spatial aspects of the mediated national frame interconnect, an example of the 'phenomenal complexity' discussed in the previous section.

The language with which women were mobilised for Greenham is significant. Leaflets were frequently addressed to 'ordinary people', 'ordinary women'. A note delivered to the base commander said, 'We represent thousands of ordinary people who are opposed to these weapons' (quoted, Young, 1990: 16). The press release for the 1981 March to Greenham summoned 'ordinary women' and continued: 'some of them [the women on the march] [are] already known to the media, most [are] just the unknown women who will be coming on the march to tell the world what they think of our society's priorities' (quoted, Roseneil, 1995:35, my emphasis). 'Ordinary women' , it implied, are not 'known to the media'. This reflected how the march's organiser, Ann Pettit, regarded herself:

'Everybody had gone there [the starting-point] feeling sure that what they would find would be female experts of some variety or other . . . And it was such a revelation. We were such a revelation to each other. Because I looked around and my first thought was, "Oh, my God, they really do all look so ordinary". And all those young single politicoes that I'd expected to come on it . . . I don't think there was any one in that category at all.' (quoted, Liddington , 1989: 228, my emphasis).

The revelation, paradoxically, was that the marchers were 'ordinary people' doing something extraordinary for them: taking public action. They were not the people 'normally' involved in public action : 'experts' or , more negatively, 'young, single politicoes', feminist 'fanatics'. The surprise that 'ordinary people' are publicly involved suggests the wider stereotype that generally they are not. It was this 'common sense' that Greenham challenged.⁸

The accounts of women who did not go, or hesitated about going, to Greenham reinforce the suggestion made earlier that this 'common sense' notion is not simply reflected in, but itself reproduced by, media coverage . One woman explained that she had heard of Greenham through the media but was daunted from going initially: 'I couldn't fit myself into that picture because I was so normal' (quoted, Roseneil, 1995: 52, my emphasis). Another said: 'I had all these images of all these women . Yes, I was in awe, I think . . . I was in awe of these women . . . And what could I do? What was my measly contribution to all this wonderful work that was going on?' (quoted, Liddington, 1989: 269, my emphasis). Certainly the negative stereotypes of Greenham women, which confirmed them as not 'ordinary', had some impact, but there is also the awe-struck feeling of the person who regards herself as 'too ordinary', 'too normal' to take part in a media event. As Sarah Hopkins put it:

'Many of us who felt as strongly and deeply as those at the camp were kept from that experience by distance, other people's needs, no money . . . Most of us felt torn . . . We were attracted but at the same time scared of something that seemed so spectacular' (Harford and Hopkins, 1984: 21).

Given these testimonies, it is plausible that one reason (and of course only one reason among many others) why the symbolic actions at Greenham had such an intense impact on those involved was this sense of acting, perhaps for the first time, within the media-sustained frame of 'national' events. Guy Brett, discussing art at Greenham, especially the objects of personal value which women attached to the perimeter fence, describes this art as 'signs capable of acting directly on events' (Brett, 1986: 133). 'Acting directly on events' is a phrase generally used of politicians acting on events in the public eye, certainly not of 'ordinary people' who merely 'watch' events or are 'affected' by them. But, if we recall the discussion in Section Two of the impact that an event's being televised has on the action-frame of those involved (because of the connections with other events and places that it implies), then the expression 'acting directly on events' makes good sense.

Acting in the 'arena' of Greenham (Roseneil, 1995: 155) mattered also, I suggest, because it breached the implied boundary between 'ordinary people' and actions in the 'media frame'. Roger Silverstone (drawing on Mary Douglas's work) has written about television in terms of a 'ritual frame' or 'boundary' through which we gain access to the sacred or extraordinary (1981: 75-77), but we can equally (and more appropriately in the case of Greenham) see this frame not in terms of access, but as an implicit constraint on action. If so, acting at Greenham had a complex resonance. The sustained media coverage of Greenham contributed to a national and global frame within which actions there mattered. But that assured media significance was itself striking by contrast with the limited place which the acts of 'ordinary people' (in particular, 'ordinary women')

generally have within the media frame. Breaching that boundary was of general, representative significance. This, I suggest, is part (again of course, only part) of the context for Mary Brewer's moving description of attaching a pincushion made by her grandchild to the Greenham fence:

'I'll never forget that feeling . . . the lovely feeling of pinning things on It was even better than holding your baby for the first time, after giving birth . . . [holding your baby] is a self-thing - a selfish thing between you and your husband, isn't it? The baby. Whereas Greenham - it was for women; it was for peace; it was for the world; it was for Britain; it was for us; it was for more' (quoted, Liddington, 1989: 244).

(B) *Yellow Gate*

Living with Media Silence

Since 1984 when Greenham has received virtually no media attention, in effect, a 'spiral of silence' (see above). What are the consequences of knowing that, after earlier media attention, you are at the centre of such a 'spiral'? How can a challenge to the 'media frame' be sustained when, in effect, you are told: 'whatever you do, we will not take notice, we will not take account, you have been silenced out and nobody's going to know that you're going through this' (interview with Katrina Howse)?

We have seen how actions at Greenham could make sense as actions within a wider frame, perhaps even a global frame. Nuclear weapons are intrinsically weapons of global significance, an example of how each individual is affected by global concerns

within the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). That global context was a major reason why women went to Greenham originally. Through international media coverage, as well as through international informal networks, the Greenham Common Peace Camp became a reference point for these global concerns. But it is striking how in testimonies from Yellow Gate this global frame is sustained by continuous flows of media information about world events, just as national media coverage helps sustain the sense of a national 'action-frame' (Anderson, 1983 : 27-40, cf Scannell, 1988). That global frame informed the detail of many protest actions, most explicitly, the 'Ten Million Women for Ten Days' action (September 1984) when women worldwide were encouraged to come to the camp, 'inspired by the belief that at least 10 million women all over the world were with the women at Greenham Common in spirit against the base' (Junor, 1996: 30). It was reflected also in actions in 1989 in solidarity with the protesters in Tiananmen Square (ibid: 151, 154-5, 179-80, 284). The relationship between that global frame and media news emerges vividly in Sarah Hipperson's account :

'On Sunday afternoon of June the 4th [1989] I was at Yellow Gate with Helen Thomas when the news of the massacre in Tiananmen Square came over the radio. We were stunned by the news - for weeks the women of Yellow Gate had kept tuned to the radio to keep in touch with events in China. . . . Helen and I both felt the need to do something immediately. We took a blanket and with strong black pens wrote the message, "Non-violent women of Yellow Gate Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp deplore the slaughter of our Chinese sisters and brothers." We hung the blanket where it could be seen by passing motorists and all who entered the base.' (Sarah Hipperson in Junor, 1996 : 154, emphasis added)

A sense of the need to act in direct response to world events is also clear from Sarah Hipperson's description of how Yellow Gate's 1986 actions against the USAF base at Upper Heyford started :

'I recall waking up to the news on my radio that the American military had bombed Libya and that the planes had left Upper Heyford. I had never been there before but I knew that before the day was over I would visit there.' (quoted *ibid*: 58, emphasis added)

This sense of acting within a global frame has then various sources including continuous access to world news. Such a sense of connection is particularly important when there is virtually no media interest in Yellow Gate's actions as such.

Women living at Yellow Gate have long been aware of the media silence about their actions. They believe there is a 'censorship' or 'state erasure' of the camp (Junor, 1996: 81, 107, 154). As Aniko Jones put it to me: 'it was a deliberate policy, suddenly Greenham was not news any more. If we're not in the news we don't exist.' At various times the Yellow Gate women have sought to resist this silence directly : the 'visibility action' in 1984 soon after the mass eviction (Junor, 1996: 27) and actions against the BBC and The Sun (*ibid*: 192, 225) for misreporting . But they know that the silence's social effects run deep. As Rosy Bremer put it to me:

'Interestingly I think there's more support for us internationally than there is in this country, but . . . women in other countries can afford to have a bit more interest in us than say women in this country who are very much taken up in the media silence and then manipulation about the camp.'

From their occasional breaks away from Greenham, the women know well the impact which 'ordinary' domestic life, including media consumption , could have on the will to protest:

' . . . by the end of the two weeks . . . there are things on that television, especially the news and the way information is portrayed and I get very angry and frustrated and feel I have to come back to Greenham to

be part of the resistance . . . which the media is betraying, the media is giving a false impression of what's happening.' (Aniko Jones, interview with the author)

In this situation of media silence, actions at Yellow Gate cannot be motivated by the desire for media coverage. Katrina Howse expressed the principle of non-violent direct action in quite different terms:

'There's always been a core of women who feel it as a moral imperative to take action, to take non-violent direct action, because the situation is intolerable , on a mental level the situation of having nuclear weaponry. . . And they [the state] have never broken that core . . . of belief that, for a small minority of women, taking non-violent direct action in a consistent solid way is always better than acceptance. . . [Resisting action is] actually a daily commitment and it reflects our way of seeing the world which is not negotiable . . . it's not negotiable with the state or the state's media nor with anyone else . . . It's a resisting women's way of seeing the world.' (interview with the author)

Yellow Gate's actions constitute a consistent practice of direct confrontation with representatives of the British state . This practice is, however, as already noted, conceived within a global action-frame, as a 'way of seeing the world'.

'Counter-writing' and the resistance of forgetting

Women at Yellow Gate do of course want what they do to be known. A crucial question therefore is how they conceive of their communicative practice, their particular way of 'putting information out' (Rosy Bremer). While to some extent Yellow Gate continues the form of earlier Greenham actions (entering defence establishments, cutting fences , following weapons convoys), other actions, while not necessarily new in themselves, only make full sense , I would argue, if they are understood in part as responses to the media silence: in effect, as counter-statements against that silence.

Such actions therefore, while not determined by the media frame (quite the opposite), can only be fully understood against its background.

I am thinking here first of the regular use of court cases (mainly criminal actions against them, but sometimes their own civil cases, such as those challenging the legality of bye-laws regulating the Greenham base) as fora for statements about the nuclear arms industry. As Sarah Hipperson (herself a former magistrate) explained: 'I've always seen the court as the forum where you actually get right up to the establishment in terms of the policy makers' (interview with the author). The symbolic significance of Greenham court actions certainly goes back to the early years, when a contestation of court rituals challenged state and authority in one of its most privileged sites (Roseneil, 1995: 108-10), but the court forum acquired a special significance as a site of communication in the context of the media silence of later years.

Also important are many actions involving writing inside the base, for example:

'On May 26-27th 1989 six women from Yellow Gate went into the USAF/RAF base at Greenham Common, to expose the INF Treaty as a betrayal of people worldwide . . . We painted the exterior of three hangars which house the cruise missile convoy, and the runway. At any time we could have been spotted and arrested but we were only found when all our paint had been used up in expressing our message. We wrote "The Treaty is a con - stop your killing" and finished up writing other messages which we felt needed to be written.' (text by the late Helen Thomas, in Junor, 1996: 153-4)

These actions seem paradoxical at first. They are acts of communication, yet since they occur in media silence, few people know of them. They seem to leave the 'media silence' and its causes unchallenged. Yellow Gate women deny legitimacy to the media apparatus which they regard as maintaining this silence, but they lack the technology -

word processing, fax, an office - to function as full scale alternative media. The late Helen Thomas's comment on painting inside the Greenham base however suggests a wider significance:

'This action was done in an atmosphere of continued censorship by the peace movement and the media in general, which makes us vulnerable to the police, military and other threats to our safety.' (in Junor, 1996: 154, emphasis added)

This suggests that the writing in the base mattered both as a specific act of communication to Ministry of Defence staff and at a general level as a communication that resisted the silence about Greenham and what Yellow Gate saw as the real nature of the INF Treaty. By the act of writing, the women showed to the state's own representatives the incompleteness of the silence which the state sought to maintain. Yellow Gate contests media silence through a practice of resistance , which works symbolically through acts of communication with representative significance, such as the acts of writing inside the base.

James Young , writing about art commissioned to commemorate the Holocaust, has developed the concept of the 'counter-monument' : a work of art that works on two levels at once, both as a specific act of remembrance and as an attempt at a general level to articulate, and thereby breach, the forgetting which made the work of art necessary (Young, 1992) . The writing actions and court statements of Yellow Gate women work , I suggest, in an analogous way as 'counter-writing', working on both specific and representative levels. How might this second, representative level of communication work? Roman Jakobson's analysis of communication is helpful here:

'In any act of verbal communication . . . [t]he ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE. To be

operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to , seizable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a CODE . . . ; and, finally, a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication.' (Jakobson, 1972: 89)

To work as representative acts of communication , the Yellow Gate actions must involve 'code', 'contact' and 'context'. I will concentrate here on the latter two.

They achieve 'contact' (what Jakobson calls the 'phatic' aspect of communication) in two ways. First, because the writing and the speaking is directed at agents of the British state. Second, because the very act of making contact breaches the closure of communication channels about its nuclear weapons that the state seeks to maintain. Yellow Gate assert that channels of communication are open, a claim of general, representative importance. Analogously, Sarah Hipperson often says in court : 'I stand here to represent all the people who are treated as if they don't matter' (interview with author) . This recalls the way in which earlier Greenham actions disrupted assumptions about whether 'ordinary people' can speak and act in 'public affairs'. Because it is a representative act, the assertion works at a phatic level whether or not it reaches a wider media audience.

The requirement for 'context' is, I suggest, an underlying reason why Yellow Gate insisted on retaining their Greenham camp as the base for actions against Aldermaston and RAF Burghfield, once the Greenham weapons base closed. The continuous history of resistance at Greenham provides a context or shared reference-point for protesters, state representatives, and any one who learns of the actions. The importance of that continuing context was sensed by Katrina Howse when Yellow Gate began more intensive actions against Aldermaston:

'one of the MOD who I knew . . . he ran out of Aldermaston in a total panic and started shouting, speaking to me and saying "You come here to do what you did to Greenham, you come to close Aldermaston down" . . . And I thought that was very interesting because they actually knew after getting them out of here we were on to them there. But it was very much the power of knowing that it was the same women . . . and it was the same source . . . and it was the Greenham power.' (interview with author)

The land matters not only as a place but, semantically, as a reference-point which helps to sustain the communicative acts central to the practice of Yellow Gate. Remaining at Greenham is also continuous with the disruption of media geography made in Greenham's early years. But this disruption now has to be maintained in the context not of media attention but virtual media silence. It is worked out through a communicative practice that is in direct opposition to the very principle of media representation, as Aniko Jones' comment quoted at the beginning of this article makes clear: 'we have to be the source of that information, not the media'.

Yellow Gate's actions both maintain the resistance to the media frame from Greenham's earlier years and show one form such resistance might take if forced to act, in effect, outside the media frame. Although Yellow Gate do not use media resources directly and therefore fall outside any history of the media (mainstream or alternative), their actions are nonetheless the result of a particular orientation to the media frame: they therefore fall within the wider history of 'mediations'. Throughout Greenham's history, Greenham women's actions can be understood as 'tactics' of resistance within the 'strategic' context of the British media frame (de Certeau, 1984). In fact, it is useful to recall here Michel de Certeau's concept of 'writing' as 'the concrete activity that consists in constructing on its own, blank space . . . a text that has power over the exteriority from which it has first been isolated' (ibid.: 134). The women of the Yellow

Gate camp , by maintaining their isolation from the spaces of national discourse (and its usual media channels) yet at the same time continuing their practice of breaching the silence about Britain's nuclear arsenal, might be understood as developing a form of 'writing' in this extended sense. In spite of the pressures under which they operate, Yellow Gate continues a coherent communicative practice. A 'writing', or 'strategic' form of communication (in de Certeau's sense), that emerges not from the usual centres of media production but from the 'blank' spaces on the media's map of the 'nation', where the state's weapons are 'housed'.

Conclusion

We have explored in various forms the relation between questions of geography and the constitution of the media frame . First, the way in which media coverage transforms the 'phenomenal complexity' (Scannell) of events in a particular place, changing the scale on which they (and the actions that contribute to them) matter. This applied particularly to Greenham's early years of intense media coverage , but a media-sustained global frame was important also to Yellow Gate's actions during the later media silence. Second, we saw how the implicit geography of media production (and its relationship, generally mutually exclusive, with domestic space) was, and continues to be, challenged at Greenham. Third, we saw how abstract, but still partly geographical assumptions about the place of 'ordinary people' in the 'media frame' were also challenged there. In recent years of media silence, this challenge has necessarily taken a different form. In addition, then, to all the other ways in which it disrupted an assumed order (political, social, spatial, sexual, symbolic, ethical), the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common challenged the implicit terms of the 'media frame': the background assumptions through which people understand the relationship of media to social life.

In pursuing these ideas, we have built upon two fundamental insights: Martin-

Barbero's insistence on analysing the media as complex processes of social 'mediation' and Scannell's insistence on grasping the phenomenal complexity of the media frame and how people interact with it. While Scannell's work has particularly foregrounded the dimension of time (especially, 1988), he has also drawn attention to the material geography of media production (for example, 1996: 141). In developing the issue of geography here, a broadly phenomenological type of analysis has been pursued, but in relation to situations which were conflictual rather than consensual. There were many dimensions of conflict at Greenham Common, which had no connection with the media frame, although they were represented through it. This article has argued, however, that one neglected dimension of events at Greenham was their disruption of the 'common sense' separation between 'ordinary people' ('ordinary women') and events in mediated, public space. Although the implications of the term 'ordinary person' are indeed complex, and extend to social issues well beyond viewer-media relations, I have argued that the position of the 'ordinary person' is a construction, in part, of media practice itself, a construction that was contested at Greenham. It cannot therefore be relied upon as an unproblematic category in analysing how media and 'lifeworld' interrelate. To this extent my analysis diverges from Scannell's treatment of the issues of 'ordinariness' and 'ordinary life' (1996: especially chapters 1, 5, 7).

Notwithstanding that difference, the general value of the phenomenological approach to the media's social effects remains, in particular its openness to questions of how individual actors make sense of their interactions with the media frame in particular locales (cf Scannell, 1996: 141). This case study has, it is hoped, shown the value which detailed phenomenological analysis could have in addressing wider issues of 'mediation', a possibility which needs to be followed up in further case studies. As suggested earlier, this is a more fruitful way of introducing space into media theory than drawing on overblown theories of the 'postmodern' collapse of 'space'. Through

this phenomenological route, we are better able to address, for instance, the role of the electronic media in a question now urgent within cultural geography (Sibley, 1995, Cresswell, 1996), namely how space functions as a site for social and symbolic contestation .

This last point is particularly important when so many recent political conflicts in Britain are distinctive because they combine both the defence of land (generally land far outside the metropolitan centres of power) and forms of symbolic challenge to authority which rely on the amplifying power of the media. They are conflicts which are both 'immediate and media-*ted*' (Routledge, 1997: 362) . In this context Greenham remains both a practical model, ⁹ and an important theoretical reference-point. Perhaps Greenham's form of resistance to the implicit geography of media frame has already become part of the taken-for-granted background of protest action (for example, the Pollok Free State anti-roads protest of 1994-5, the Newbury and Fairmile anti-roads protests of 1995-7) . By returning to events at Greenham, this article has aimed to extend our understanding of the wide field of action in which such 'struggles for visibility', and the complex processes of social mediation upon which they draw, are played out.

NOTES

¹ See Altheide and Snow (1979), Altheide (1985), Meyrowitz (1985), Scannell (1988, 1996), Silverstone (1981, 1994), Snow (1983), Thompson (1995).

² This article is based on research conducted under ESRC research studentship R0042953066. Thanks to David Morley, Louise Edwards and the anonymous referees for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. Particular thanks to Beth Junor and Sarah Hipperson for their detailed comments on an earlier draft and to all the women of Yellow Gate for giving time to be interviewed.

³ I interviewed Rosy Bremer, Sarah Hipperson, Katrina Howse, Jean Hutchison, Aniko Jones and Peggy Walford, each on 7 September 1996.

⁴ Newbury residents' complaints that the Peace Camp, not the weapons base, disfigured the English countryside (Cresswell, 1996: 133) show how far this process of naturalisation had gone.

⁵ For a useful review of the concepts of 'frame' and 'framing', covering literary and visual art theory, discourse analysis, sociology and cognitive theory, see MacLachlan and Reid (1994). One influential use of the 'frame' concept was Goffman's (1974). For Goffman, the 'frame' or 'primary framework' applying to a situation is that which would be appealed to in order to answer the question: 'What is it that's going on here?' (1974: 8). The 'frame' is a set of cues which together form the context for talk and action. But as MacLachlan and Reid point out (1994: 47, 65), Goffman's insistence on micro-context excludes another sense of 'frame': the more general 'structures of expectations' (social, cultural, political, ideological) which people draw on in talk and action. My use of the term 'media frame' relates to that wider sense, and in particular to two usages of the 'frame' to which MacLachlan and Reid do not refer. First, the recent adaptation of Goffman's 'frame analysis' in work on new social movements (Snow and Benford, 1992) which covers both the analysis of specific frames of political action and the 'master frames' within which specific actions make sense (ibid: 138). Second, Roger Silverstone's discussion of the 'mythic' dimension of television in terms of the 'frame' concept (1981: 75-7). 'Frame' for Silverstone means the boundary through which we gain access to the sacred or extraordinary. My term 'media frame' draws on these wider senses of 'frame' as a wider interpretative structure which orientates behaviour in relation to the media, as well as specifically recalling at certain points Silverstone's illuminating 'mythic' analysis.

⁶ On the ejection of everyday television consumption in 'cultures of resistance', see McKay (1996: 147).

⁷ Compare Benton and Redfearn (1996) on the 1995 live animal export protests at Brightlingsea .

⁸ The term 'ordinary women' was also of course a defence against the attempts to stereotype Greenham women as not 'ordinary', as 'other'. That defensiveness was criticised from within the women's movement (see Cresswell, 1996: 139-42).

⁹ A January 1997 rally commemorating the Newbury protests linked hands around the road construction works in explicit homage to 'Embrace the Base' at Greenham Common.

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**DISRUPTING THE MEDIA FRAME AT GREENHAM COMMON
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