

## **My Mother, the Protestor**

### *Arms are for linking*

When I was a child, my mother chained herself  
to a high-wire fence decorated with toys,  
ribbons, messages, wool and nappies  
to protest against nuclear weapons.

I picture her, younger than I am now,  
with hennaed hair, a grubby cardigan  
smelling of woodsmoke and lentils  
going for the cause and staying for the friendship,  
the singing, the dancing, the hand-holding.

### *Fight war, not wars*

Did she join in with the mass  
ululations? Was she dragged out of her tent  
in the dead of night by soldiers?  
It's easier to imagine her chatting  
with them through the fence  
about their wives and daughters

### *Whose side are you on?*

but she was not me,  
with my caution, fear and people-pleasing.  
She would have put on  
a belt of bolt-cutters, destroyed fences  
and stormed watchtowers  
before making a nice cup of tea  
for everyone.

*\* The italicised words are those sung by the women at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp when they faced the police and soldiers.*