

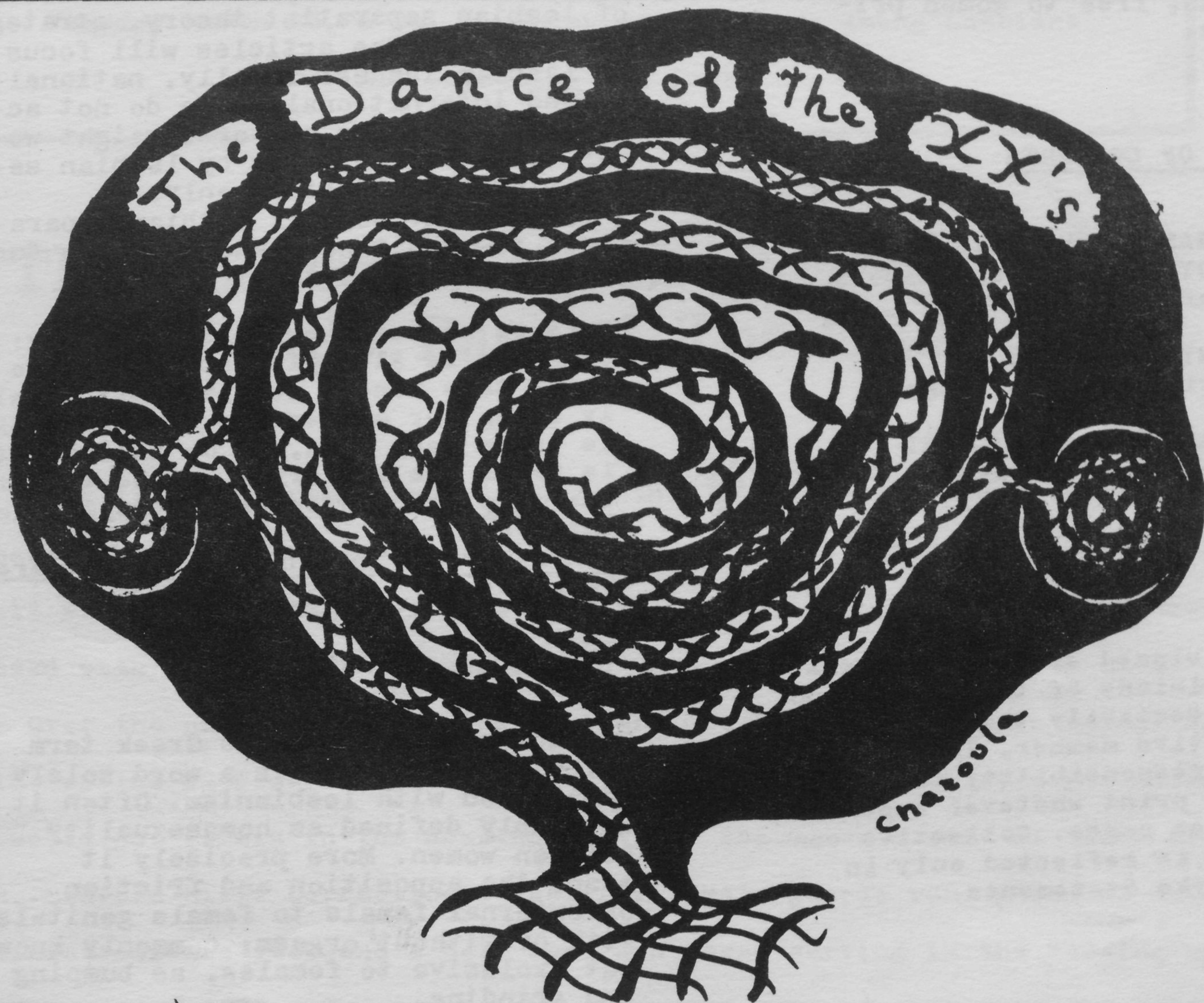
TRIBAD

a lesbian separatist newsjournal

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE REASONS WHY PRISONS HAVE
ALREADY PASSED THE ERA
by Charoula, page 1

AN ARMY OF LOVERS
by Mariela Moyano, page 9

LESBIAN ECONOMICS COUNT
by Susan Cavin, page 11

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We are a lesbian separatist col-
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At Fort Dyke, we meet to develop
lesbian separatist theory and stra-
tegy, exchange political information,
hold open workshops on lesbian separ-
atism for the lesbian community, and
to publish TRIBAD.

TRIBAD: A Lesbian Separatist News-
journal is a forum for the discussion
of lesbian separatist theory, strategy
and visions. The articles will focus
on lesbian issues: locally, national-
ly and internationally. We do not ac-
cept letters from men or straight wo-
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paratists for lesbians only.

TRIBAD invites all lesbian separa-
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possible publication.

This is how we operate financially:
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raise this money, we divide it equal-
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is often very hard, we do believe it
is worth the sacrifice, since this is
the only lesbian separatist space in
the area.

Contributions in whatever amount are
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TRIBADISM

Tribadism comes from the Greek term
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identified with lesbianism. Often it
is simply defined as homosexuality
between women. More precisely it
means the apposition and friction
of external female to female genitals
with or without orgasm; commonly known,
but exclusive to females, as bumping
and grinding.

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TRIBAD Editors: Charoula, Debra Kessler,
Irene, Karen, Mariela Moyano, Robin,
Susan Cavin

Fort Dyke Schedule Of Events

Tuesday February 14, 6 pm: Ethics with Friends and Lovers

Tuesday February 28, 6 pm: Lesbians, Money, Power & Change

Tuesday March 14, 6 pm. : Lesbian Separatist Streams of
Consciousness

Tuesday March 28, 6 pm. : Anger and Violence among Lesbians

All Workshops Are FREE

The Reasons Why The Prisons Have Already Passed The ERA

by
Charoula

Part II of my article on racism in the ♀'s movement had to be postponed because these last few weeks another matter came up which I felt had to be dealt with first. As it will be seen below, it is anyway inherently connected with what is being discussed in this article in general.

Over the past month and a half, there has been a hearing in the S. District of the US Federal Court in N.Y. to determine whether male guards would or would not remain in the housing units of the women's only NY State prison, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. Male guards were hired by the administration a year and a half ago, and began serving in the housing units in January of 1977. The reason for this move was, according to the institution, a recent decision by the US Courts that no one seeking employment within the Correctional Services Dept. should be discriminated against on the basis of sex, i.e. men could serve in women's prisons and women in men's prisons. It seemed that the U.S. Courts and the Correctional Dept. were indeed more open-minded than the US Congress and the general public as well

who haven't been able for years to pass the ERA, granting all of us women equal opportunities!

When I first heard why males could now serve at Bedford, my first reaction was, whom are they kidding? I did not at all consider the equal job opportunity line as actually having anything to do with the real reason for hiring men to supervise women. My mind, as well as everyone else's, raced to the obvious connections, i.e., the sheer intimidating force of males over females and the sadistic harassment by the mere presence of men at all times in one's daily life.

Not that these aren't valid enough reasons. Housing units are defined as those parts of the institution where women sleep, lounge and shower, and of course use the toilets (located in their cells). This includes the segregation and medical building units. While performing any of these very private bodily functions, the women are in full view of the guards: thus privacy, guaranteed to all of us by the US Constitution, becomes an impossibility within the confines of a US prison. This lack of privacy, or constant surveillance, is, as a woman psychiatrist testifying for the women put it, totally demoralizing. When male guards replace female guards, the demoralization becomes, plainly, harassment. Any woman, any lesbian, but especially all separatists, can appreciate situations such as these: waking up in the early morning with menstrual blood all over you while a man is looking in taking the count; being strip-searched (including anal search) with men as part of the searching team; taking a shower and looking up in the mirror skillfully placed across the shower booth to see a man (ostentatiously in the corridor outside) observing your reflection with gleeful eyes; lying on a doctor's examining bed, your legs apart for a vaginal check-up (bad enough in any doctor's office) and catching in the open door the peeping glance of the male guard who escorted you there.

This is sexual harassment, even though it is not actual physical molestation. In fact it is worse because it is too subtle to be noticed at

first glance. After all, the creeps supposedly are doing their "duty"!

But it doesn't always stay so subtle. It often becomes actual physical harassment, and, though this didn't come up at the hearing, there have been cases of rape (and resulting pregnancy) where the males just go and force the women by telling them they'll write up fake charges against them if the women won't comply.

This type of harassment, the sexual kind, can either be calculated sadism on the part of the institution, designed to make the women feel cheap, to lower their self-esteem and produce malleable material which will not ever cause trouble; or it can be the natural result of having males around women, especially women in a cage, powerless to defend themselves. In the latter case, the administration may not necessarily order the males to behave that way, but they tolerate and encourage it, knowing full well that physical intimidation of women by men has kept women in their "place" for millenia.

Next in line of escalation is the issue of violence and brutalization. Males are wanted in these positions of control because they're physically stronger, they can twist your arm quicker than a woman guard, they can beat you up harder, and strangle you faster.

All these are good reasons, but they are not, I came to realize, the essence of why males are now at Bedford and in more and more women's prisons around the country. It is much subtler than that and it is scary.

None of the above reasons had any relevance when the question of women guards in men's prisons came up. A woman guard won't be much help, after all, in quelling men's riots in Attica. So it had to be something else, and the state lawyers themselves (in defense of the prison) let their own cats out of the bag. Their "experts" testified that, where there was a certain mixture of the sexes, things in general ran a lot smoother. It was stated that the presence of male guards in women's prisons was a "humanizing, stabilizing" factor and proved to make women "act more lady-like",

use less "vulgar" language, and get involved in less fights, i.e. show less physical aggressiveness → more passivity. Not only that, they claimed that women, in general, felt more "secure" in the presence of male guards!

This led to the next surprise element of the hearing: it became apparent that they blamed the whole lawsuit against the prison on those women who were "man-haters" because they were lesbians!!

Suddenly, the whole thing clicked together: beyond the sexual harassment, beyond the intimidation of brutality, this was a move dictated by subtle psychology and Madisonian PR, based on the greatest fear patriarchy can experience, the fear of not being wanted, the fear that women will learn to know, love and support each other in the absence of men.

It is well known that lesbianism thrives in women's prisons, women turn to each other for emotional and physical sustenance; in order to cope with the dehumanizing environment of the prison, the women form alliances, families, entire structures, which may not be feminist according to the women's movement standards, but are nevertheless vitally woman-identified.

Parenthetically, it is common criticism by the movement that these lesbians, once out in the street, turn straight again and that their lesbianism was a temporary form of seeking relief inside the prisons. First, there is nothing wrong with turning to women for relief, no matter what the reason. Second, many continue to be lesbians outside. Third and most important, since most of the women in prison are Third World and/or poor, it is very racist of us not to understand that they may not have the luxury of choice and the freedom to "come out", considering the discrimination against Third World lesbians and the necessity to survive as best one can, especially if one already has children and no job qualifications.

Back to the prison system, however, A situation that makes it vital for women to turn to other women is a situation inimical to patriarchy's ends. Women in prison go from forming strong personal ties to supporting each other as a group, which, though again not always according to our

"feminist" standards, nevertheless is a political education hard to come by on the outside. A lot of political revolutionaries were formed out of raw material within prison walls. Translate that to women revolutionaries, even worse to Third World women revolutionaries, very possibly woman-identified, and you have a concept, a power that could totally undermine the system and must at all costs be stopped. To do that, you re-introduce men where there were none before, and you subtly induce women to think "straight"; if they dress more like "ladies", if they talk more like "ladies", if they act more like "ladies", it will surely bring them benefits; if they can appeal to the men sexually, they are sure to get less charge sheets, and more favors, which will make prison life a little more tolerable.

As women, we are conditioned since year one to respond to men, to sell ourselves to men, in one way or another, in exchange for "protection". In a vulnerable situation such as prison, it may be doubly easy to induce women to act "feminine", i.e. submissive, passive, in order to survive. Such an inducement may be so subtle as to be subliminal, and such a choice of action on the part of the women may be so unconscious as to seem "natural", the "normal" reactions of women to men. But we lesbian/feminist/separatists know for a fact this is man's tactic to exercise control over us by keeping women dependent on men. The worst aspect of this is that it divides women from each other while they must compete to get the attention and favors of the males; even more important, it divides those women who are politically aware and intent on resisting this psychological game from the rest of the women. Above all, it separates the lesbians from the straight women, and it isolates lesbians as those responsible for all revolutionary resistance, interpreted as trouble-making, it sets them up as those who are violent and dangerous not only to the institution but also to the rest of the women. Thus, eventually, the women are told male guards are there to protect them from other women. Consequently, far from turning to other women for help and love, they once again learn to

depend on men for survival. Eventually this dependence becomes associated with friendly feelings -- a psychological set-up where control is insipidly achieved by consent of the oppressed, because obviously when you consider a guard as a friend and protector rather than an oppressor, you are bound to listen and do what he says.

So obviously male guards are placed in women's prisons for the psychologically well-thought out purpose of not letting the women forget what it is to live with men around, that the boys are still out there, controlling a world that is, and must remain, heterosexual. Because of course we know that, if patriarchy is the foundation of capitalism, imperialism, and all such evils, heterosexuality is the foundation, the prerequisite for the perpetuation of patriarchy. It is the system where the two sexes are defined by man into rigidly distinct roles, so that women will always know their place of childlike dependence on the male sex. Anything threatening heterosexuality threatens the patriarchy.

Homosexuality threatens the patriarchy, lesbianism of course more so than male homosexuality, but the latter is a threat also, since male homosexuals do not fit the male role which the system depends on. Women guards are introduced in men's prisons to keep the idea of sexual exploitation alive in men's heads, to remind men of the existence of another sex; never mind that this other sex now wears the uniform and is seemingly in an upper hand position. Already women guards have been beaten up and molested by inmates. Anyway, what better way to remind men that women are hate objects than by placing them in the horrible role of prison guards?

Affirming heterosexuality is one way the system fights to destroy lesbians and other strong women in prison (as well as outside). But there is another way, should the above fail, and it is so camouflaged under the concept of equality -- beloved to liberals and all good democrats -- that I

suspect it will be used more and more to work against women in general.

With the upsurge of the women's libera(liza)tion movement, the sexual "revolution", and the pushing for better and bigger pieces of the pie for women, the system has been under pressure to do something about the Woman Problem. Since men won't voluntarily give up their supremacy, this something inevitably would have to be co-optation, neutralization. I find the key to a lot that is happening in the name of the women's movement in that word: neutralization, rendering something dangerous neutral, neuter.

We have to remember that, after all, throughout the ages, what man hasn't been able to conquer, he assimilated and coopted; he has known that what he couldn't totally possess, he had better "transcend", thus denying the essence of the unpossessable. This process lies at the basis of most eastern religion and philosophy systems (enjoying such popularity in America today) which put forth as the highest ideal the being in which the opposing forces of yin and yang, male and female, have been combined, or rather resolved (neutralized!). This superior being is thus sexless, neuter, that is, above sex, better than male or female. For a woman to become this ideal, she has to first surrender her femaleness, stop being a woman. Yet, as many people have already pointed out, this heightened superior state is today primarily taught by male gurus and "masters"! The transcendence of femaleness obviously is a state useful only to men who can thus do away with femaleness altogether and control us while making us believe we've achieved nirvana.

This philosophical/theological principle finds its practical adaptation in the goals of a movement which aims at nothing more than equality for women, the elimination of all sex roles and the creation of a unisex civilization. Although we do need the ERA, our society being what it is today, although we do need equal job and education opportunities so that

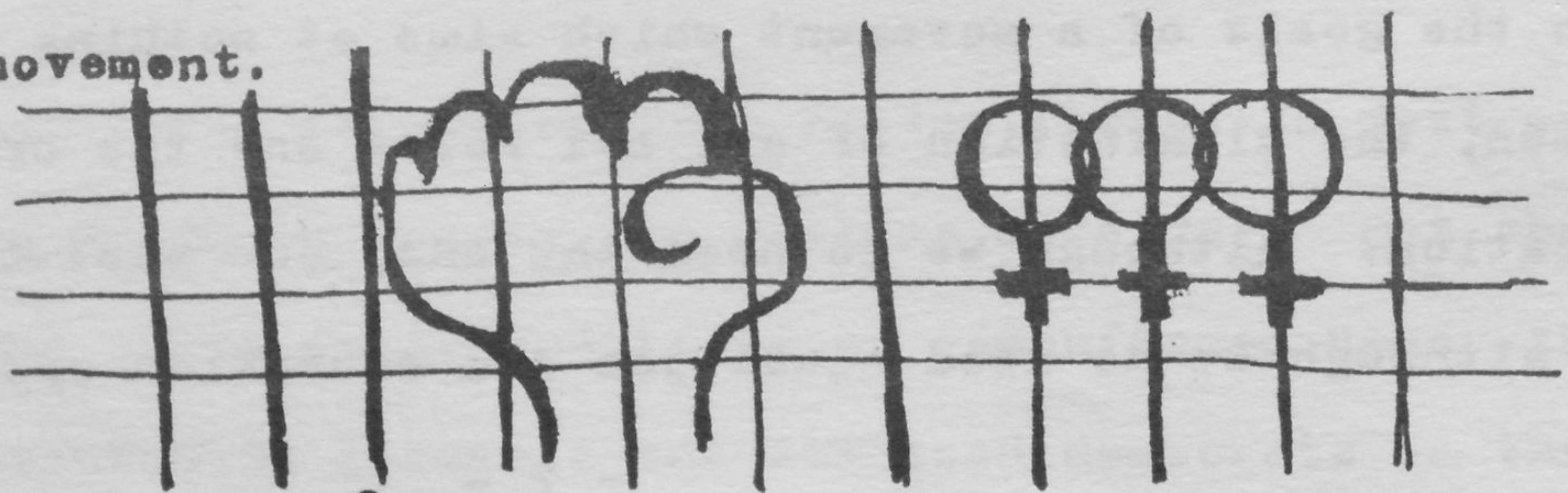
we can get out from under and begin to see the avenues ahead of us, nevertheless to put all our faith in equality (as offered by a male system) is indeed tantamount to inviting male guards in our lives, or, as many men and male-thinking women would have it, having fathers giving birth to our daughters!

This is the dangerous place where equal job opportunity in the prison system has put the women at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

It is no accident at all that such a scenario would start being written and acted out in a women's prison. As I stressed in my last article, the system is using Third World women as guinea pigs. And what better place to carry out experiments than within prison walls, on women the world has turned its back on, because they are of color, poor and powerless?

Third World women, most of them lesbians, were on trial during this hearing. They were there first, but, as I sat through the hearing, I knew beyond doubt, and with horror in my heart, that we all would follow some day in the near future. No matter how one looked at it, as enforcing heterosexuality, or fostering transexuality, the patriarchy considers the separation of the sexes and the evolution of strong women taking care of themselves and one another as the ultimate danger to its existence. These women were being put on the stand as examples to the rest of us of what could happen if we decided likewise to resist.

It was a witchhunt, and, to my great regret and disillusionment, very few women from the lesbian or feminist movement were there to witness it and show their support for these women. Not only did this absence of the community from the court show total lack of foresight about what will be happening in the future, but it is of course another blatant example of racism in the women's movement.



AN ARMY OF LOVERS

by Maricla Moyano

In reading Jeanette Foster's book Sex Variant Women in Literature I was struck by how much the interpersonal problems of Lesbians have remained the same. In spite of the Gay Liberation Movement and then the Lesbian-Feminist Liberation Movement, many of the problems that plagued Lesbians in the past, and especially in the 1920's and 30's, continue to plague some Lesbians now. Alcoholism, callous disregard of one lover for another, "broken hearts," chaos, and drunken melodrama still seem to abound. The revolutionary relationships of love and trust that the Movement promised in its early days are few and far between.

I am not sure what the causes of all the destructiveness and self-destructiveness are. Of course, we are still battling men and an alien society, are still confined to a few gathering places, mostly bars, and perhaps Lesbians are still incorporating a male-spawned image of themselves that makes them hate themselves and therefore their lovers. Some Lesbians treat other Lesbians as sex-objects and have no more tenderness or respect for them than a man would.

When I read about the death of Romaine Brooks I was saddened for past Lesbians and for Lesbians now, for the same story could happen to some of my contemporaries. Romaine Brooks and Natalie Barney had an "open" but steadfast relationship for fifty years. The "openness" was mostly on Natalie Barney's part. They were both in their 90's when Romaine was dying.

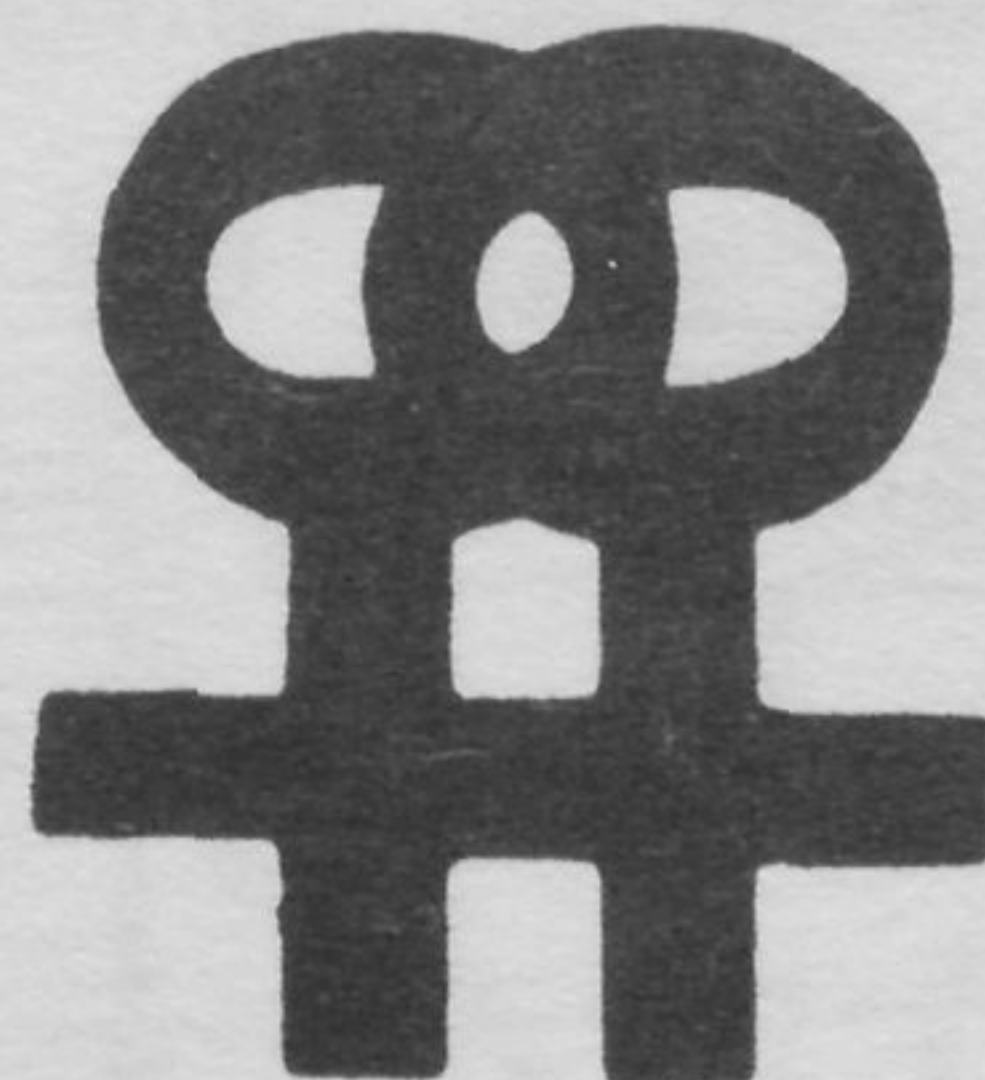
It so chanced that Natalie then developed one of her interests in another, younger woman who was in her 70's. Romaine, jealous and perhaps exhausted with Natalie at last, refused to see her, write her, talk on the phone to her, and died bitter and alone in a darkened room, the windows covered by black curtains.

Lesbians have been so oppressed by society's "moral code" that it is very hard for us to even approach the topic of ethics. But Lesbians cannot continue damaging each other as they do and ever succeed in building a truly revolutionary network, much less a revolutionary society.

Perhaps I am an idealist, but I do not believe that the act of love (in America called "having sex") is something taken lightly by any woman in her heart of hearts. I think Lesbians, like all Americans, live in a society that is decadent in all its aspects, including the sexual, and that Lesbians swallowed the 60's male "sexual revolution" which gave everyone license to fuck without feeling.

But the crux of the matter is that Lesbians are full of feelings and that when they violate their own or their lover's feelings, they suffer, and they can be seen suffering in droves, at the bars.

I don't have a prescription. I only know that the topic must be opened up for discussion, brought out into the light.



LESBIAN ECONOMICS COUNT

by Susan Cavin

The Lesbian-Feminist Movement has yet to translate its political power into economic power. We have organized our communities around "sexual politics", but we have not yet used the political organization that is already functioning locally, nationally, and internationally among lesbians to translate our "sexual politics" into "sexual economy."

The "gay boycott" against orange juice constitutes, I think, the first mass gay national organizing effort aimed at hitting straight economy. But this is not strictly a lesbian venture, and not exactly what I had in mind.

Lesbians have frequently organized around economic issues and actions proposed by movements outside the Women's and Lesbian Movements. I am thinking of lesbian participation in civil rights boycotts, workers strikes, farmworkers boycotts, sit-ins, rent strikes, consumer protests, etc.

But lesbians have not organized themselves economically as much as lesbians have been organized by others, by patriarchists. But it is also true that lesbians have not done as much for themselves, both politically and economically, as they have done for women in general (through feminist work) and other oppressed sectors. I am not trying to tell lesbians to stop working for other oppressed groups, just that we should start taking care of lesbian business. By lesbian business, I do not mean business in terms of a few nouveaux lesbian capitalists who have made it to reactionary nowhere-ville.

There are several approaches to creating collective lesbian economic power that can be used for lesbian liberation purposes. I mean collective as opposed to individual lesbian economic power. The few nouveaux lesbian capitalists spawned in late patriarchy are examples of individual lesbian power that does the numerical mass of lesbians no good whatsoever, unless they give financial support to the lesbian movement, a rare event.

As a leseparatist, I favor the lesbian separatist approach to liberation as a long-term plan for the long haul. But there are other approaches like the reformist, integrationist feminist economics that closet lesbians can use for short-term benefit. But first:

LESBIAN SEPARATIST ECONOMICS: I think if the lesbian movement counted itself, we would find more than sufficient techno-economic skills to create and support a society of some 250,000-500,000 out lesbians in the U.S. Lesbian world society would, of course, be much larger. I am counting only out lesbians here. However, we are only the tip of the iceberg. The great mass of lesbians are still buried in patriarchy's extortion closet. Their number is unknown. The reformist economic approaches are more geared for lesbians in the closet, which is no place to be free---in fear. To practice a lesbian separatist approach, you really have to be an out lesbian, so far out that you're ready to leave patriarchal perimeters of mind, time, and space altogether. Reform approaches function within patriarchy, and often within the closet too; the reform closet deforms hope and possibility.

I believe that already there is enough land under lesbian individual ownership to shelter many lesbian societies in various parts of the country. What has to occur is a shift from individual lesbian to collective lesbian control of that land. Instead of attempting to integrate with patriarchy and get higher social insecurity benefits, why not organize lesbian counter-societies linked together nationally and internationally, politically and economically, lesbian interdependencies that are, as a whole, a self-sufficient female body independent of patriarchal economy?

The political organization is already there, the communication is possible. But economically, we have done nothing to organize ourselves. There is no time like the present to pool lesbian resources, and swim out together in a pool.

For those who want to stay in the closet or believe there is no exit out of patriarchy, here is an interesting chance of reform economics where lesbian economic organization could prove beneficial and politically useful. But since it is a reform, it must be viewed in its patriarchal context.

Recently I was told by labor lawyers that some of the big trade unions have in the 1970's attempted to get federal legislation passed that would enable them to organize and unionize temporary and part-time workers in all fields, but so far the courts and congress have turned down such legislation.

These temporary and part-time workers include everyone from "Kelly girls", domestic workers, waitresses, anyone who works "off the books" at any kind of job; anyone who is a non-unionized worker, anyone on unemployment, anyone who works below the minimum wage at whatever job conditions, baby-sitters, welfare workers, nurses aides, part-time school teachers, non-union-

ized farmworkers, unemployed artists, writers and intelligentsia.

Furthermore, some trade unionists are now interested in organizing not only the people on unemployment, but everyone on welfare, SSI, and Social Security because they understand the close relationship between workers and non-workers or work and non-work in capitalist business cycles due to the experience of many union workers in the 1970's who have ended up on welfare or disability after their unemployment ran out. In some labor unions in New Jersey now, over half the membership is on either unemployment, then welfare, SSI and SSA. The unions now estimate that some 50 million Americans fall into the categories of part-time, temporary, non-unionized, unemployed or disabled workers in the 1970's.

Most mainline Marxists do not regard part-time workers or welfare clients or disabled workers as part of the "real" proletariat, but rather see this sector as too transitory, too much in flux to organize. Most Marxists regard the lowest economic strata as belonging more to the unpredictable lumpenproletariat than to the proletariat. Both the lumpenproletariat and the intelligentsia are viewed by Marxists with great mistrust much the same way a bi-sexual is viewed in a lesbian revolution: capable of swinging either way--reactionary or revolutionary. Although I believe that lesbians come from all classes, and are present in all economic sectors; lesbians as a class have been regarded as lumpenproletariat, sometimes intelligentsia.

Selma James has beautifully criticized the Marxian designated proletariat as essentially being a white male industrial proletariat. James (Sex, Race, and Class, 1975) points out the sexist and racist hierarchy functioning within the proletariat where white male workers oppress women and Blacks and other ethnic minorities within the class as bourgeois white male capitalists oppress white male proletarians. You know the old kick-the-people-underneath-your-class theory: man kicks wife, wife kicks children, children kick dog, dog kicks bone, bones don't kick. James' theory is more complicated than this; read it yourself.

Nevertheless, there are some renegade Marxists who see the temporary part-time, unemployed, non-unionized, or disabled workers, the 50 million as a recognizable revolutionary mass, that if organized could exert powerful pressure on the economy; they have already organized thousands of workers on the East and West Coasts.

I began to think most of the Lesbian Movement falls into these categories: non-unionized, part-time, unemployed or disabled workers. Many lesbians are workers who are artists and writers, or artists who are

workers or intellectuals who are workers or workers who are intellectuals at the same time too.

I think the Women's Movement and the Lesbian Movement in alliance should organize ourselves first into economic sectors and see where our muscle lies; then organize female workers outside the movement. If we do not think to do this work, male unions or male leftists will do it--that is, organize women and lesbians for their own political purposes, and not necessarily to the collective benefit of lesbians and women. I think if the Lesbian Movement organizes itself economically with a mind to strike, we can attach political lesbian demands and rights to economic punches and see faster action.

T R I B A D

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