

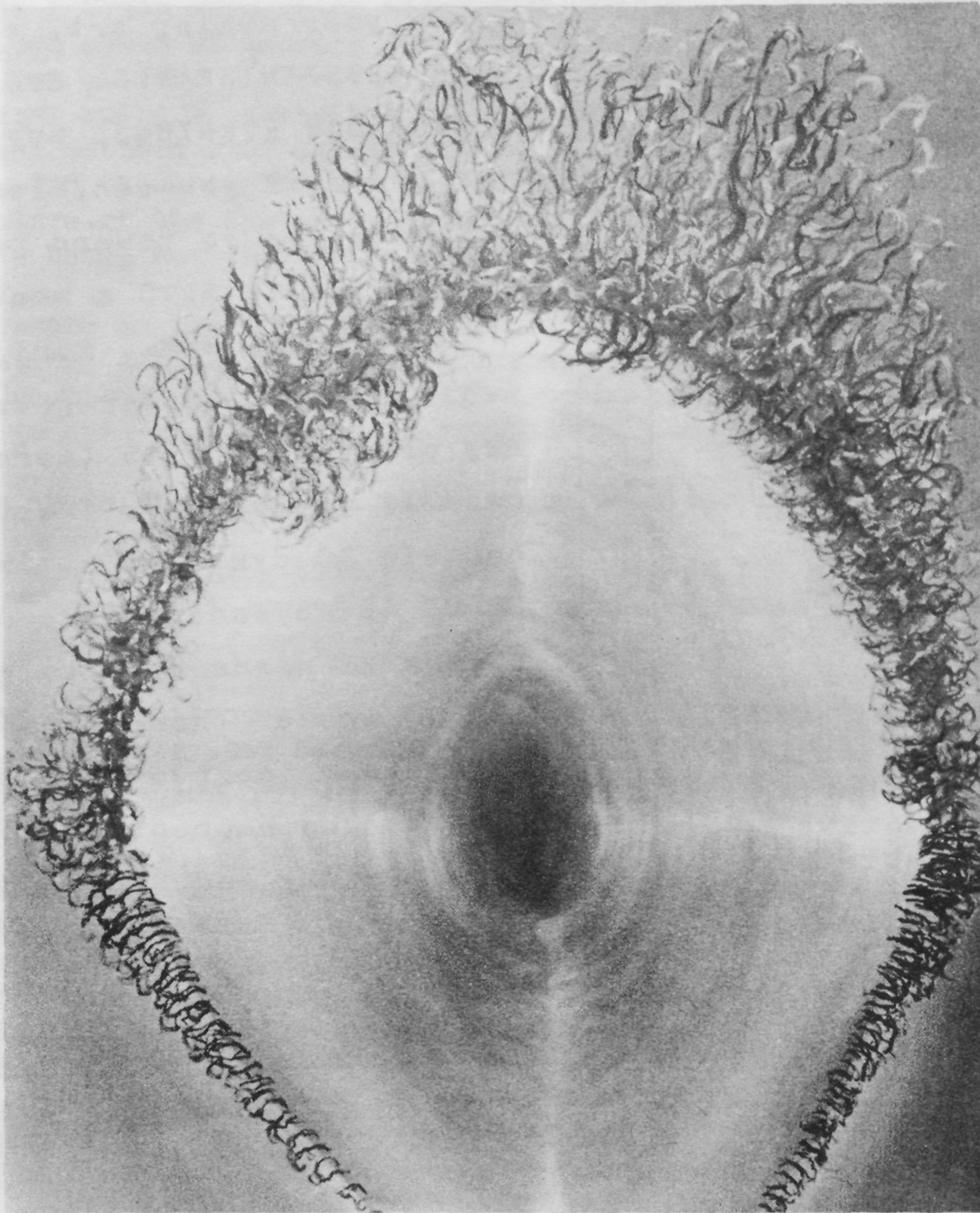
TRIBAD

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"CUNT COIF" BY JANET YACHT. Photograph by Jane R. Cohen.

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BIMONTHLY

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Matriarchies, Queens and the Star System

by Charoula

A lot has been written about the ancient matriarchies, societies where women were powerful and in control of the course of Herstory. But has anybody answered satisfactorily the question of why the patriarchs took over?

Let me venture a possible explanation: STARTRIPPING.

Matriarchy is a Greek word which means "leadership of the mothers". Leadership of the mothers implies power of mothers over all others, including children, including DAUGHTERS. Immediately, we get the distinct feeling of hierarchy: mothers over daughters to begin with, then some mothers over other mothers over all daughters, then one or two mothers over all other mothers over all daughters. Those one or two mothers eventually become the QUEENS. And though initially the intentions are good and the Queens benevolent, it is in the nature of the system of hierarchy that sooner or later a position of power gets to one's head, and the Queens then embark on a starship en route to Hollywood.

Need we elaborate on the dangers of startripping? It leads down the path to arrogance, selfish behavior, dishonesty, competitiveness and greediness, all of which add up to an oppressive Queen. And since no one likes to be oppressed, there is eventually turmoil, upheaval, a general weakening and disruption of the existing social order.

Yes, hard as it is to swallow, I think women were the cause of the end of the matriarchies.

The importance of examining this possibility lies in the direct lesson we might get out of it regarding our present course in the movement. In such a study lies the beneficial opportunity of healthy self-criticism which all of us are in dire need of today.

These are the observations of one participant in the women's movement, in NY. They are inspired by two events that happened in the community in the month of September, the Forum on the Future of the Women's Movement, on September 16, and the Alternate Forum, on September 23.

The first Forum was a formal occasion orchestrated by the Matriarchists, a new, N.Y. based group committed to work for a society which would be fashioned after the ancient Matriarchies. The second Forum was organized by a group of women, the Grass Roots Lesbians, the Coalition of Grass Roots Women, and the Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Forum. Its purpose was to provide an opportunity for representation in discussions on the women's "future" to those women who had been excluded from the first one by virtue of the Matriarchists' Forum having been highly focused on the leaders of the movement. Both forums failed, as far as I'm concerned, because both were plagued by lack of responsibility to the wider mass of women, those the first forum ignored and those the second forum wanted not to ignore: the grass-roots women, the unidentified and so far justifiably uninvolved women's proletariat. In fairness, both Forums had good intentions, but the issues and attitudes gnawing at our movement these days are detrimental to anything but startripping, and we must examine them with an open mind, if we are to overcome them and build a truly all inclusive women's movement.

I would like at this point to take a trip into the past in order to discuss the concept of Matriarchy. What is a Matriarchy? The New York Matriarchists, for instance, see themselves primarily as nurturers, of men including, and believe that their nurturing power as mothers will suffice to transform society, once matriarchy is returned, and that all evils such as racism, classism, imperialism etc. which insidiously feed men's warrior

The mothers then define the space they have so far naturally occupied, and proceed to claim it as their own, decreeing that it will, after their death, go to their daughters. Matrilineal descent and inheritance through the mothers' side marks this next stage and it's the beginning of the end of the great women's societies. From now on, the internal structure of the Matriarchies begins to weaken, troubled with hierarchy and power games that eventually oppress the women themselves.

E) The men who've been allowed to come in are becoming more and more demanding, and are granted more and more concessions. The men who still live apart maraud around the land of the mothers. Eventually the two get together; hatred for the Queen mother and all the Daughters, combined with their natural aggressiveness, is translated into warfare, and the Matriarchies, already weakened by class (and race) divisions, led by ambitious Queens promoting their sons and their daughters, fall. The men take over.

G) Patriarchy.

Thus, the way I see it, Matriarchy is not the ultimate evolutionary stage to look forward to, not the purest age of woman society ever to have existed. It was a stage in reaction to the growing danger of men.

See the similarities with our movement today and with the way we are dealing with the issues that are dividing us.

Like the old Matriarchies, we are acting IN REACTION to men. A lot of our political energy goes into placating men, into telling them we are just trying to be equal, into wanting to nurture them back to the good old ways of the Mothers. That's mistake #1.

Second mistake is not to honestly try to get rid of the attitudes that form the basis of a divided "warrior" society. We want to proceed to Equality dragging with us the very same negative tendencies which the men perpetuate around us, the same tendencies we developed while fighting the men off, the same tendencies we now profess to abhor. We think that after the revolution -- the women's revolution -- all classes will be overcome, all races will be equal. This is a utopia as long as we do not examine what has caused classism/racism/imperialism to rise. Indeed, for the most part, the women's movement goes around professing to be classless, raceless, etc. It is this lack to admit our part of the guilt and deal with it effectively that leads to events such as the Forums.

Forum No. 1 claimed to be a comprehensive survey of what the future holds for all of us women. It was dished out to us ("us" -- the audience itself being primarily white and probably middle class) by the "leaders" of the movement, the stars, who no doubt had valuable things to say but in no way representative enough of all the women in the world. There are realities out there in the world which we have not faced yet inside our movement. There is devastating poverty, hunger, genocidal abuse of women's bodies, to mention only a few. To ignore them is to ignore the perspective of poor and Third World women all over this earth. And since these make up the majority of women, it is defeatist and unreal to talk of the future of women and not include them, just because they don't have the time and energy to come rap with us, having other priorities such as surviving. It is also elitist. It means that some women make assumptions about who the movement is for and who it is "run" by. In this case, a handful of women--the Matriarchists--decided who was going to speak and, in the name of us all, went and rounded up all the prominent names of the movement, the majority of which were white, the majority of which belong to the middle class intelligentsia of the movement, some even belonging to the upper class, and ordered them to deliver fifteen minute speeches on how we should all proceed. This is doing a great disservice to the idea of the women's movement which should be an all participatory process of dialogue between us all. Further-

more, this dialogue was also hindered by the admission price of \$5, which naturally excluded poor and working class women, i.e. most of us.

Forum No. 2 tried to rectify the above declaring the event an open forum. However, what ensued was chaos. As one of the organizers I can say that the responsibility lies both with the organizers and the participants. The organizers refused to step on anyone's toes in the name of anarchy and non-leadership, neglecting to give some direction to the event for fear of hurting some egos; this uncritical laissez-faire approach ended up oppressing a whole lot of women. Everybody expected everybody to act in a truly responsible way, which nobody did. Instead, each woman came wanting to say her thing and then "walked out"; no one was interested in listening, in exchanging views and knowledge. Above all, no one came interested in ACTION. All wanted to rap and CR and have a fun evening, which is a waste of time with respect to the revolution and a serious insult to those women who have no leisure time for any such CRing and who are in dire crisis of survival RIGHT NOW, not in the future. This is another aspect of our elitism, this middle class attitude, this liberal attitude which refuses to look at the root of trouble and take responsible action, be serious about the oppression coming down on us. Instead it goes on and on in defeatist circles, which is fine for middle class because the middle class has no interest in changing the status quo; it has only an interest in maintaining the existing order, and to that purpose it produces "Stars" who engage in competitive assertiveness training, which will never promote any change.

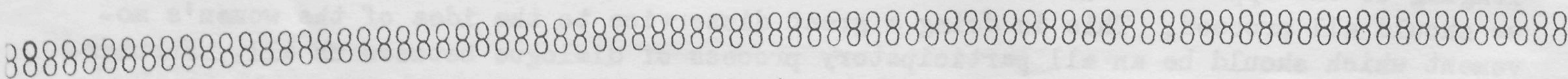
A "Star" doesn't have to be famous, to have published books or have been in the service of the president. A "Star" doesn't even have to be rich, or of the middle class. Unfortunately, this system we live under has the insidious power to fashion all our attitudes after the model of those who control it. Thus middle class oppressive values trickle down to us, as we strive to be upwardly mobile (consciously or un); they take hold of our brains, they become "ours", and they are the best insurance the system has of keeping us forever shackled, forever divided, incapable of acting, of becoming truly revolutionary.

And so it can come to pass that a forum of even grass roots women can in turn become oppressive to their sisters. Whichever way we choose to look at it, whether we are oppressed by women with class or race privilege, or by individuals who have been brainwashed into adopting the attitudes that come with race or class privilege, what lies at the root of our troubles is this emphasis on individualism and ego-tripping, which is the cornerstone of American Cowboyism and Capitalism.

And while there are still self-styled feminists who speak in the name of Matriarchy or a women's revolution while having vested interest in stardom, property, middle class values, and equality with men within a system that is oppressive to all women, the women's movement will be in the constant danger of being short-circuited, coopted and betrayed.

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Note: In writing certain aspects of the above, I'm indebted to my friends/co-workers Gail and Janet for their invaluable input during discussions on matriarchy, as well as to Evelyn Reed's Woman's Evolution, for her anthropological wealth of evidence on this subject. Also, I have confirmed and deepened my already existing insight into the nature of oppression by reading P. Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and discussing it and other aspects of class and race oppression with friends/members of the Grass Roots Lesbians.



Katherine Mansfield

by Maricla Moyano

Katherine Mansfield has been totally ignored by this wave of the feminist movement. I am not sure if this is good or bad. I would hate to see her become the victim of shameless exploitation, become an industry like Virginia Woolf: T shirts, walking dolls, next will be replicas of her toilet paper, all proceeds going to Clive Bell, and Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich.

But for the few women who write short stories and are interested in the short story as a form (most Movement women write poetry) I think it is strengthening and inspiring to know that we women have produced one of the two or three geniuses ever in that form. (Katherine Mansfield loved Chekhov. The reader is free to supply her favorite as third.)

Apparently, Katherine Mansfield is disfigured and defiled by male English teachers in high school who teach children that she is "delicate." As Katherine Anne Porter said, "She was as delicate as a surgeon's scalpel is delicate....The work itself...is superb. Those very elements that combined to form her main virtue: a certain grim, quiet ruthlessness of judgment, an unsparing and sometimes cruel eye, a natural malicious wit, an intelligent humour, and beyond all she had a burning indignant heart that was capable of great compassion...." *

Mansfield was born October 14, 1888 in Wellington, New Zealand. She was christened Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp, educated in Wellington and at Queen's College, London. Her family were middle class "colonials," her father eventually becoming Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand. An excerpt from her nineteen year old diary, June, 1907:

....She is tired. Last night I spent in her arms--and tonight I hate her--which, being interpreted, means that I adore her: that I cannot lie in my bed and not feel the magic of her body: which means that sex seems as nothing to me. I feel more powerfully all those so-termed sexual impulses with her than I have with any man. She enthralles, enslaves me--and her personal self--her body absolute--is my worship. I feel that to lie with my head on her breast is to feel what life can hold. Gone are all recollections of Caesar and Adonis; gone the terrible banality of my life. Nothing remains except the shelter of her arms....I am half mad with love. She is positively at present--above my music even--everything, and now she is going.

The woman is left nameless. Katherine Mansfield was from adolescence a rebel, fighting to get away from home, fighting to get to England and to "experience" London and "life." She was finally allowed to leave. Little is known of the next six years of her life. She burned all her journals of this period. She spent some time in Paris, Belgium, Germany, and Geneva. In London she suffered many misfortunes: a miscarriage, later an abortion, then an operation for peritonitis which permanently injured her health and made it unlikely she could ever have a child. In 1909 she got married and then left her husband the next day. She got the impulse to do so when she read a note left her by her friend L.M. which said "Bear up."

L.M. or Ida Baker was Katherine Mansfield's friend from adolescence on and took care of her when she was dying of tuberculosis. People say they were lovers. All of Katherine Mansfield's personal papers and journals have been edited by the second man she married, the critic John Middleton Murry. She stayed married to him until she died and he was her heir. He may have censored, distorted, or destroyed evidence of her lesbianism.

A book by Ida Baker on Katherine Mansfield was reviewed in The New Statesman and Nation July 2, 1972. In the review, entitled "The Wife's Story," Claire Tomlin quotes from a letter written by Katherine Mansfield to Ida Baker in which she tells her, "Try and believe and keep on believing without signs from me that I do love you and want you for my wife."

Gudrun and Gerald in D.H. Lawrence's Women In Love are based on Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry. In the film version, Gudrun (K.M.) was played by Glenda Jackson and Gerald by Oliver Reed. The Murrays and Lawrences were friends for a while, sneering at Bloomsbury, exploiting Lady Ottoline Morrell's country place, Garsington. About Virginia Woolf's book, Night and Day, Katherine Mansfield wrote: "talk about intellectual snobbery--her book reeks of it." While Virginia Woolf was writing of her, "In truth I'm a little shocked at her commonness at first sight, lines so hard and cheap. However, when this diminishes, she is so intelligent and inscrutable that she repays friendship...." The friendship with Lawrence ended when he wrote her, "I hate you stewing in your consumption. You are a loathsome reptile. I hope you will die..." A few years later, he too died of tuberculosis.

It is ironic that after her fierce struggle to leave New Zealand Katherine Mansfield's best work, and her life, were drenched in the unending nostalgia of the exile. It does not seem to matter whether the exile is voluntary or not. "Do you remember how the grass smelled?" "Do you remember...?" And she would remember, in a reverie, alone, or with her brother, all the smells, sights, sounds of their New Zealand childhood, Down Under, below the equator, where there had been a whiter, hotter sun.

Elizabeth Bowen said that Katherine Mansfield "was a writer with whom there could be no secondary substitute for genius: genius was vision. One might speak of her as having a burning gaze." Murry said she had "an unusually rich accumulation of sensuous perception."

Let her great New Zealand story, "At the Bay", speak for itself.

Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were smothered. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and bungalows began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows the other side of it; there were no white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea. A heavy dew had fallen. The grass was blue. Big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall; the silvery, fluffy toi-toi was

A Lesbian Eye View of the Seventies

by SUSAN CAVIN

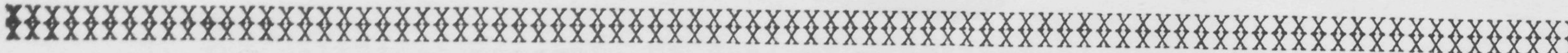
Men, patriarchy, and male history are so dumb they often repeat themselves, and pile on one bad trip after another, building their errors into the sky, play king of the mountain til they die, until women knock them off their plastic ego stilts. If men get on a bad trip they like (patriarchy), they'll stay on it for two millenia. The male errors--sexism, racism, classism, ageism--repeat themselves, expand on top of each other, and grow like cancer cells, rapidly and in the wrong direction. When patriarchy is threatened by liberation movements, the patriarchists bring back their barbarian act, their worst historical behavior to kill off the threat of revolution. You have to realize we're dealing with a maniac system.

In late patriarchy, capitalist patriarchies swing back and forth between liberal democratic welfare states and fascist states. When capitalists are threatened by communism, socialism, Third World liberation, women's liberation, lesbian liberation, children's liberation; the liberal democratic capitalists depend upon the fascist capitalists to do the dirty work of wiping out the revolutionary threats. This Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde relationship worked in the 1930's for the capitalists; they are trying it again in the 1970's. Witness the two-faced relationship between the liberal democratic U.S.A. and every fascist capitalist dictatorship in the world. Spank their hands in public, but privately fund and train the fascist police forces to electrocute women's breasts and vaginas. This Jekyll-Hyde number is played out by fascist and liberal democratic capitalists in Latin America, Black Africa, used to be in Asia, and now at home on U.S. domestic liberation movements in the seventies. The Women's, Lesbian, and gay Movements are getting a fast abject lesson on backlash in the seventies; the Black Movement got it first: the liberal democratic capitalist state feeds a liberation movement through the system's legislative civil rights battles, while at the same time, turns the fascist, christian barbarians loose on us in the backlash process. Whip a movement with backlash if you can't defeat them on the first draw.

Male history repeats itself, but some decades aren't worth repeating. (Erase 2000-3000 years of patriarchy while you're at it.) In patriarchy, the same alliances of reaction that oppose a liberation movement 50 years or 100 years ago, turn up again to try to kill the same types of revolutionaries. After a while, it gets to be dumb and predictable who's trying to kill who, so there's no point feeling confused, paralyzed, or passive by these repetitious patriarchal nightmares.

The capitalist world crises of the 1930's bear striking politico-economic resemblances to the 1970's in Europe, the U.S.A., and Japan. However, the straight press (including Majority Report, which is a straight papa paper) obscures this rather obvious parallel between the 1930's and the 1970's by appealing to the short-term political memory, and by repetitiously reporting that "nothing is happening" in the "boring" seventies compared to the "exciting" sixties. This is straight garbage. Clarity on the political meaning of the seventies comes from a view of the long haul toward world liberation, not just the short straight of things.

I am thinking of these political and economic parallels between the 1930's and the 1970's: (1) the early Lesbian-gay Rights Movement in Germany experienced simultaneous legislative successes and reactionary backlash defeats in a number of cities before the movement was exterminated in Hitler's concentration camps in the 1930's; the early homosexual movement in Europe began in 1864 and ended in 1935; the movement was tremendously successful for almost the first third of the twentieth century, then came under severe attack by fascist Christian capitalists in the thirties backlash of the capitalist right against commies-queers-jews-blacks-and-handicapped people. The simultaneous success-defeat period of the early movement in Germany reminds me of the legislative battles registered in the American seventies. (2) in both the thirties and seventies, Germany, Italy, and Spain are the "hot spots" of Europe, torn between the same choices: the rise of socialism and communism on the one hand and the pendulum swings between fascist and liberal democratic states on the capitalist hand's reaction against communism; as well as, extreme right wing and left wing terrorism; (3) the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the depression of the thirties parallel the October 1978 Wall Street 59 point drop in one week, the biggest drop in Wall Street history ever, the inflation, recessions, and near default of New York City in the seventies; making almost the perfect 50 year curve (1929-1978) in the predicted return of depression in capitalist systems; the decline of the U.S. dollar and rise of the German mark and Japanese yen ; (4) the fascist capitalist backlash against commies-queers-Blacks-Jews in the 1930's is paralleled by a strong right wing reaction in the U.S. and Europe to counter Black Liberation, Women's Liberation, Lesbian Liberation, Gay Liberation, and socialist liberation in the seventies; the same ideologies are clashing in both the thirties and seventies; (5) in the 1930's and 1940's, European and North American patriarchal capitalist states successfully channeled the leftover feminism of the previous decades into patriarchal military campaigns, encouraged the female crossover from femme to butch in labor roles, fashion, and industry (munitions, defense, physical labor) as capitalists of the seventies and probably the eighties attempt to utilize the female army of reserve labor for their own economic and military advantage; (6) the thirties was a major decade of trade union strikes and management-cop violence against labor; the seventies have produced some major trade union strikes (Coal Miner's, farmers driving to Washington & Plains on tractors, Memphis 1978 strike, textile unions against J.P. Stevens, WOW (Woman Office Workers) organize, teachers strikes, newspaper strikes, health care workers strike, etc. (7) finally, in both the 1930's and the 1970's there was almost a revolution which was politically thwarted in the thirties, F.D.R. delayed a twentieth century american revolution by creating social security, the welfare state, where the bourgeois pay the oppressed not to make a revolution; in the 1970's, domestic unrest was derailed and sent off on a wild goose chase by the C.I.A.-media coup against the Nixon personality; the people could have brought down more than Nixon's ass, but that was satisfying enough; instead of profoundly changing the system, we just changed Presidents and kept the same system. Another revolutionary opportunity missed. There are probably other parallels between the thirties and the seventies as well.



Colonialization emerges with a forceful, involuntary entry by one group into another group's culture. Secondly, those that enter (the colonizing) set up a system which systematically destroys the colonized people's former way of life. Their culture is eliminated. Lastly, the colonized group is totally ruled by this foreign intruding force. If the colonized individual supposedly commits a crime, she or he must go to the colonizers' prison. The community no longer celebrates its own holidays, festivals, heroes, etc., but instead, celebrates the festivals of the colonized class. As previously stated the colonized peoples' former institutions and culture have been totally eliminated. Due to these circumstances, often the colonized become ashamed of their culture, institutions, their true selves, and try to assimilate into the dominant culture.

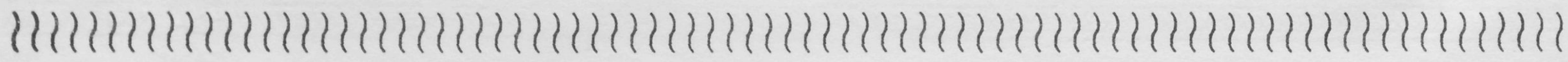
The crux of colonialization is racism. Blauner defines racism as the "principal of social domination by which a group seen as inferior or different in terms of biological characteristics is exploited, controlled, and oppressed, socially and psychically by a superordinate group." This will lead us into our discussion of women as a colonized class.

In order to comprehend women's colonized status, we must first comprehend patriarchy, a system which predates capitalism and continues to exist under socialism. The following passage from Adrienne Rich's book, Of Woman Born, illustrates patriarchy for what it is:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men--by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. It does not necessarily imply that no woman has power, or that all women in a given culture may not have certain powers. Among the matrilineal Crow, for example, women take major honorific roles in ceremony and festival, but are debarred from social contract and sacred objects during menstruation. Where women and men alike share a particular cultural phenomenon, it implies quite different things according to gender. When men wear veils--as among the North African Tuareg--this remoteness serves to increase the status and power of an individual, but it hardly does so for women in purdah. Ultimately the line is drawn, as it is drawn, albeit differently, in every culture.

Patriarchy is difficult to apprehend because it totally pervades society; it is so all-encompassing that it has appeared to be the natural order of things. Women cannot remember a time when they were not subordinated to the male class. Their history has been both distorted and denied. However, there is much evidence which points to the existence of primitive matriarchal societies, and as women begin to reclaim and develop their history we become aware that patriarchy has not always been the natural order of things.

In contrast to patriarchy, matriarchal societies were societies in which female power was pervasive. This power had a natural origin and was not a result of women procuring and maintaining predominance or command over man. The respect that women were accorded stemmed from their childbearing abilities and was essentially utilitarian in origin. The



if we look at society today, we see that men and women have two different cultures; it is man's culture which is the dominant prevailing culture, while women's culture remains invisible. Barbara Burris, et. al, described this in The Fourth World Manifesto:

"Part of the customs of a culture are its habits. Habits here means what people do in their daily lives...It is clear that women and men have very different habits. Women--in most all parts of the world--whether they are working outside the home or not, have responsibility for the cooking, cleaning and child-raising chores of the society. This means that most women spend their time with children. This in itself is a cultural split as men go out of the home and mix mainly with other males in the male world outside the home. Generally males do not do any of the work designated as female work. Women, mainly in the company of other women and children organize their time and routines and socializing on an entirely different basis than males."

"Women have been excluded from contributing to the art, philosophy and science of all national cultures. These things are in tight male control. The male culture, which is the dominant culture in every nation (i.e., synonymous with the national culture) cannot accept a female view of things as expressed by female writers, artists and philosophers."

"The institutions of a people are an essential part of their culture. The major institutions of every culture are the same--the family, religion, government, army, and economy...Though it appears that both men and women live together within the institutions of a society, men really define and control the institutions while women live under their rule."

Burris also analyses women's position in relation to race and class in order to prove that women are a class. According to Burris, if the racial privilege accorded to white women defined her position in society, she would have the same power and control that all whites have. However, it is the white men who control the institutions, army, police, cultural foundations, education, law, government, etc. Burris concludes that whiteness does not overcome the fact that one is female. Burris states that "there are some...advantages to being white for a woman who is white, but there are also advantages for black males for being male in this society."

Simultaneously, if class defines a woman's position in society above her sex, then any woman of a particular class would be able to compete with a male member of her class. However, in actuality, this is not true as women constitute the most discriminated group in the economy. As Black people's position is affected by the racial dual labor structure, women's position is affected by a sexual dual labor structure as women are cast into rigid job categories based on sex. Burris states "that female work is the lowest and the caste lines of labor are most rigid in terms of sex can be proved by the fact that Black males--while demanding integration in jobs in male fields, i.e., better paying jobs, have never demanded to integrate (sexually, that is) as secretaries, waitresses, salesclerks, etc. When Black males integrate into a female job (which is rare)--such as nursing--they are paid more as males than are the females doing the same job."

As previously discussed, Black people have often been viewed as a particular ethnic/immigrant group, or as a particular economic class. Both of these theories neglect to take into consideration race or racism

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