

THE END OF THE SENTENCE

PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH FEMALE OFFENDERS



EDITED BY

PAMELA WINDHAM STEWART AND JESSICA COLLIER

FORENSIC PSYCHOTHERAPY MONOGRAPH SERIES

SERIES EDITOR: BRETT KAHR

ROUTLEDGE

THE END OF THE SENTENCE

HMP Holloway was the largest women's prison in Europe, historically holding numerous infamous female criminals and eliciting intrigue and fascination from the public. *The End of the Sentence: Psychotherapy with Female Offenders* documents the rich and varied psychotherapeutic work undertaken by dedicated specialists in this intense and often difficult environment, where attempts to provide psychological security were often undermined by conflicting ideas of physical security.

Women commit crime most often in the context of poverty, addiction and transgenerational violence or trauma, familial cycles of offending and imprisonment which are often overlooked. Using personal testimony and case studies, and screened through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, the book examines the enduring therapeutic and relational endeavour to find connection, closure and to experience a "good enough" ending with prisoners when the possibility of a positive new beginning often seemed remote. It also considers how the cultural and political discourse remains hostile towards women who are incarcerated, and how this may have culminated in the closure of the only female prison in London.

Through real-life accounts, this insightful book also emphasizes the importance of professionals finding ways of supporting one another to offer women who have entered the criminal justice system a way to leave it. It will prove fascinating reading for forensic psychotherapists, forensic psychologists and criminologists, as well as anyone interested in the criminal justice system.

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Psychotherapy with Female Offenders

Edited by

*Pamela Windham Stewart and
Jessica Collier*

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-07431-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-07432-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-02072-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Palatino
by Swales & Willis Ltd

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The case material in this book has been used throughout with permission from the individuals with whom the authors worked. We are grateful to them for allowing us to share their experiences and the insights they offered.

We would like to thank Brett Kahr for his generous and enthusiastic approach and encouragement in the making of this book.

In the years before its closure our clinical work at HMP Holloway was supervised by Professor Gill McGauley. She was a deeply supportive and inspiring colleague, and we hope this book is imbued with her warmth and generosity.

SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Brett Kahr

Throughout human history, prisons have served, first and foremost, as places of punishment, in which the long-standing philosophy of *lex talionis* – the law of talion – would be enacted with vengeance. Indeed, our ancestors performed cruel retributions upon prisoners, perfecting the notion of “an eye for an eye”. Whether the ancient Greek *desmoterion* or the ancient Roman *carcer*, penal institutions have flourished, often treating inmates with great sadism.

During the late eighteenth century, the Englishman John Howard lobbied for prison reform, as a result of which, incarcerated men and women began to receive better food and care within their cells (e.g., Howard, 1958; Southwood, 1958; Radzinowicz, 1978). Throughout the nineteenth century, the prison reform movement made great strides, campaigning for more protective legislation. But not until the introduction of psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century would penal institutions begin to flirt with a more compassionate approach to the rehabilitation of offender-patients (Kahr, 2018).

As early as 1907, Professor Sigmund Freud lambasted the horrors of penal institutions, lamenting the “unsinnige Behandlung dieser Leute (soweit sie Demenz zeigen) in Gefängnissen” (quoted in Rank, 1907a: 101), which translates as the “nonsensical treatment of these people in prisons (in so far as they are demented)” (quoted in Rank, 1907b: 108). Freud certainly transmitted his compassionate attitude to his followers, including the Hungarian psychoanalyst, Dr Sándor Ferenczi (1922), who wrote about the vile manner in which guards would often mishandle their prisoners.

It remains unclear when, precisely, psychoanalysts first began to work in prisons but, certainly, by the 1930s, a number of German Freudian practitioners had begun to do so, notably the Berlin

physician and novelist, Dr Alfred Döblin (1924). In similar vein, the early Adlerian psychotherapist, Herr Fritz Kleist (1931), occupied a pioneering role in the history of forensic psychotherapy by having offered both individual and group treatment to offenders in a prison at Celle, near Hannover, in Germany.

Across the twentieth century, prison psychotherapy spread across diverse territories, ranging from Argentina (Abraham, 1924) to Lexington, Kentucky (Chessick, 2018). Psychoanalysts worked hard not only to worm their way *into* the prison but, also, laboured intensively to get inmates *out*. Most famously, the French psychoanalyst, Princess Marie Bonaparte, petitioned both Edmund Brown, the governor of California, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the American president, pleading for the release of the convicted criminal, Caryl Chessman, then serving on death row in the California State Prison in San Quentin, albeit to no avail (Bertin, 1982).

British mental health professionals, as well, worked hard to introduce psychological ideas into the prison system. In 1924, the English psychiatrist Dr Maurice Hamblin Smith (1924), an early Associate Member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, argued that inmates should receive treatment in hospitals, as many suffered from mental illnesses, rather than punishment in prisons. A sometime Medical Officer at HM Prison Winson Green in Birmingham, Smith may hold the distinction as the first Freudian-orientated Briton to practise within the penal system.

Some years later, Dr John Charsley Mackwood built upon the pioneering work of Dr Maurice Hamblin Smith by introducing psychodynamic psychotherapy as part of the rehabilitation of mentally troubled offenders at Wormwood Scrubs Prison in London. Recognising that psychoanalysis requires an immense investment of time and resources, Mackwood (1949, 1952) championed group psychotherapy for offender-patients. The English psychoanalyst Dr Arthur Hyatt Williams (1964), who succeeded Mackwood at Wormwood Scrubs, continued to develop this work during the 1960s, while, in the 1970s, the psychiatrist Dr Murray Cox (1979) did likewise at HM Pentonville, also, in London (cf. Kahr, 2000).

Her Majesty's Prison Holloway, the subject of this wonderful new book edited by Pamela Windham Stewart and Jessica Collier, occupies an important place not only in the history of British criminology and psychology but, also, within the wider context of British history more generally. Founded in London in 1852, the Holloway prison served as a house of punishment for innumerable men and women, not least many of the suffragettes, such as Christabel Pankhurst and, also, Emily Wilding Davison, who eventually committed suicide by hurling

herself underneath George V's horse, Anmer, at the Epsom Derby in 1913. During the Second World War, the Fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley lived in a cottage on the prison's grounds, along with his wife Diana, Lady Mosley. Perhaps, most notoriously of all, Holloway served as a prison for the infamous Myra Hindley, convicted for her participation in the cruel murders of many children during the 1960s.

Like most British prisons, Holloway punished its inmates with incarceration and, sometimes, capital punishment. The prison hanged at least five women during the twentieth century, including, in 1955, Ruth Ellis, the last female murderess subjected to execution in Great Britain.

It took quite some time before Her Majesty's Prison Holloway embraced more enlightened psychological approaches to the care of its mentally troubled inmates. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, the first "Freudian" to enter the prison did so as a punishment for being an enemy alien.

In 1938, Professor Sigmund Freud, a refugee from Nazi-infested Austria, emigrated to England, where he would spend the final months of his life. He travelled to London with his wife, Frau Professor Martha Freud, his daughter, Fräulein Anna Freud, and also a physician, Dr Josefine Stross, as well as his long-standing housekeeper, the devoted Fräulein Paula Fichtl, who had worked for the family over many years.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, the British government treated many refugees with considerable suspicion, and Fräulein Fichtl had her passport confiscated as an enemy alien. In 1940, not long after the death of Sigmund Freud, an officer from Scotland Yard arrived at the Freud family home on Maresfield Gardens in Swiss Cottage, North London, and arrested Fichtl, and then drove her in a Black Maria police vehicle to Holloway prison, where she remained for a time, in a cell, prior to her deportation to the Rushen Interment Camp in Port Erin on the Isle of Man. Eventually, Freud's aristocratic colleague, the aforementioned Marie Bonaparte, had to call upon none other than Winston Churchill to arrange for Fichtl's eventual release (Berthelsen, 1987). Thus, Paula Fichtl may hold the distinction as Holloway's first psychotherapeutically informed resident.

Happily, in the decades which followed, various mental health workers began to apply psychodynamic ideas more formally to the rehabilitation of the women of Holloway, many of whom suffered from profound psychological illnesses and vulnerabilities. Sadly, in spite of this valiant, path-breaking work, Holloway prison closed in 2016, depriving numerous female inmates of a sanctuary.

This extraordinary book, *The End of the Sentence: Psychotherapy with Female Offenders*, chronicles the very pioneering efforts

undertaken by many of the psychoanalytically informed members of staff who contributed to the amelioration of prison life at this formidable institution. In a series of creative, original chapters, Windham Stewart, Collier, and their many colleagues, describe in graphic detail the moving ways in which they have drawn upon psychological understanding to work therapeutically with many of these dangerous and, also, tormented, women.

Prison psychotherapy remains a relatively new development within mental health for the simple reason that we, as human beings, have committed ourselves far too enthusiastically to *punishment* rather than to *rehabilitation*. But I predict that prison psychotherapy will become, increasingly, the gold standard approach, rather than an occasional luxury.

In 2001, the Forensic Psychotherapy Monograph Series, in which this new title appears, launched with the publication of the first British book on prison psychotherapy, Jessica Williams Saunders's (2001) edited collection, *Life within Hidden Walls: Psychotherapy in Prisons*. At that time, nearly two decades ago, Saunders's book – a worthy and well-prepared study – attracted very little attention outside of forensic mental health circles, in part, because virtually no one knew that professionals *could* work psychotherapeutically with offenders. But now, in 2018, the climate has changed considerably, and I regularly encounter young psychotherapy and counselling trainees who have obtained clinical placements working in prison settings across the country.

I earnestly hope that the visionary labours of Pamela Windham Stewart, Jessica Collier, and their comrades – described so clearly and so passionately in the pages herein – will serve not only as a testimonial to their valiant work at Her Majesty's Prison Holloway but, also, will, inspire future generations of forensic mental health professionals and volunteers to help us transform our prisons from houses of punishment into clinics for care.

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FOREWORD

Estela Welldon

Over the last twenty-five years, the forensic psychotherapy movement has grown by leaps and bounds due to the creative energies of my former students from the seminal course of Forensic Psychotherapy, together with colleagues and friends, who joined the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy, founded in 1991. These enlightened individuals have pioneered the development of psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytical methods in high-secure institutions, in psychiatric hospitals, and even in community-based organisations, providing psychological treatment, rather than punishment, to those men and women who, due to early trauma, have become forensic patients who have perpetrated acts of criminality.

Sadly, in spite of all these remarkable achievements, surprisingly few colleagues have succeeded in establishing forensic psychotherapy services within the British prison system. Although psychoanalysis and psychotherapists such as John Mackwood, Arthur Hyatt Williams, Margaret Orr and Murray Cox had pioneered prison psychotherapy during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, very few have followed in their footsteps. In 2001, one of my former students at the Portman Clinic, Jessica Saunders Williams – a talented dramatherapist – published an edited book entitled *Life within Hidden Walls: Psychotherapy in Prisons*, which chronicled some important projects in the field of prison psychotherapy. In fact, this title held the distinction of being one of the first three titles to appear in the Karnac Books Forensic Psychotherapy Monograph Series, for which I have served as honorary consultant these many years. Regrettably, very little has appeared in print on psychoanalytical approaches to the care of the prisoner in that time.

It pleases me hugely, therefore, that this new book, brilliantly edited by Pamela Windham Stewart and Jessica Collier, has now appeared in print. These passionate colleagues in the forensic therapy field have excelled at recruiting their peers from HMP Holloway and have created

a marvellous chronicle of the important work that they have undertaken by working in prison with a psychodynamic lens.

The authors and editors provide us with a magnificent collection of deeply moving stories about life in the prison, about the grim and traumatised backgrounds of the prisoners themselves, and about the ways in which the members of staff have used psychological ideas creatively to bring some relief and compassion and understanding to the inmates.

I feel very proud of my younger colleagues for having assembled such a wonderful addition to our forensic psychotherapy literature and I know that this landmark book on prison psychotherapy will serve as an exciting inspiration to future workers in this important field.

Introduction

Jessica Collier

Feelings and feelings and feelings. Let me try thinking instead.
(Lewis, 1961: 32)

The idea to create this book came very quickly, as an almost intuitive response to the shock and anger elicited in us by the sudden decision to close HMP Holloway.

It was a paradox that while serving as an institution of punishment and retribution, the prison simultaneously offered some of the women held within its walls a secure base from which they could begin the arduous work of understanding why they were there. Indeed, HMP Holloway provided a place of personal challenge and discovery to almost everyone who found themselves in its confines for any period of time. When the news came, after years of speculation, that the prison was closing, there was a cry of pain from the crowd listening to the announcement. This was followed by muted silence. As we stood together in the quiet of the chapel, there was a distinct impression that a large and close family had been given news of an untimely and gratuitous death. How to survive this incomprehensible decision became the focus for many of the individuals who had worked in the prison with the women and was responded to in many different ways.

Anecdotally, it seemed that workers who had not been in the prison long, who had other opportunities or who could not manage the uncertainty of waiting to see what would happen, left quickly. Others, principally the prison officers, were mostly treated respectfully and offered new positions in establishments of their choosing. However,