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Of course, sisters, we're all doing time: with factory type scheduling and little "breaks" from the job; under dress codes of fashion fascism; and because of our sheer impotence and boredom in being at the bottom of the library hierarchy. Off work, and free at last? Then it's probably chore-time with "women's work" to do, male egos and family to nurture. Like Nora, however, you can slam the door and be off. But the women I'm going to talk about are physically caged during their psychological mutilation. Naturally, their plight is pretty much ignored in the old "second sex" tradition. Can you even name a large women's prison? There have been only three sociological studies on imprisoned women. We forget it was women who led the march on the Bastille; about Elizabeth Frye, shocked at the crude "punishment" theory, who was the first to work for reform of and by prisons. How many even know about the fabulous Kate Richards O'Hare who in 1922 organized a Children's Crusade for Amnesty, "a living petition they can't throw in the waste basket," thus embarrassing Harding into freeing all war resisters? And now, for the first time, women have made the "Ten Most Wanted" category. Pirate Jenny's getting closer...

Women into crime (only 13% of all arrests) exert a fascination largely for their audacity in breaking that gentle womanly role we know and love. An aggressive woman is "unnatural." We may encourage Marines to murder, big businessmen to defraud, playBoys to whore, but what kind of woman gets into such rackets? (Note the title of Edith DeRham's study of the female criminal, *How Could She Do That?*) While it is no loss women don't have the "opportunity" to kill for Uncle Sam, why are they imprisoned like killers when they choose to abort a part of themselves? Why is our system so rotten and unequalitarian that welfare fraud by mothers is a real comer? Why aren't men ever arrested for whoring, the public even paying for cops' jollies who solicit and entrap prostitutes? If prostitution were legalized, you can bet men wouldn't be the ones busted if they didn't carry around a VD card.

"Society prepares the crime, the criminal commits it." Society commits the crime of sexism, thus most crimes committed by women are the result of their economic and psychological oppression as women. Let's look at the four crimes most often committed. Women major in larceny (theft without violence or force). It accounts for 15.6% of women's crimes, but only 7.2% of men's. The percentage is going up for women too; they're the first to notice inflation. Naturally shoplifting and other pilferage are tempting to this most economically oppressed group in society, including middle income housewives who have to "justify" all expenses to husbands. Moreover, the needy, the housefraus, the ill-paid *Mademoiselle* "career girls" are all submitted to such saturation advertising exhortation/cajolery that many believe acquisition of a material item will vivify their lives. This manufacturing of false needs for shamefully overpriced products which are usually geared toward obsolescence and waste involves three counts of larceny. Ripping off the goods only involves one, but it's the petty crime that doesn't pay.

Many women are arrested for drunkenness (13.7%) and drug addiction (3.3%). Addiction is symptomatic of lives filled with emptiness and frustration, major targets of Women's Liberation. Women are constantly encouraged to become passive addicts of some sort: to soap operas, gossip, housewifery, barbiturates, pep pills. Some addictions are simply more legal than others. Busted again. Young women often run away from the bleakness where they are. But they hit the road and get arrested as run-aways (10.1%) because that road is not so open to a woman traveling alone, unprepared to fend for herself.

Prostitution? As an ex-hooker feminist said, "All the prostitutes do is eliminate the bullshit." However, a hypocritical society doting on the virgin-wife-mother flak must punish someone for cheating on puritanism. The Evil Temptress, of course (4.6% of arrests). A woman's organs are simply not her own to use for survival or profit. Women rarely commit crimes of physical violence; they are victims instead. But when women do explode murderously (.2% of arrests), invariably the dead are their immediate oppressors, not strangers. Victims are husbands, lovers, or children. It is drearily predictable: Most murders by women take place in the home during a domestic quarrel in the kitchen.

Once behind bars, are women prisoners treated much differently than men? The jails and jailers vary. In Alderson, one of the two Federal penitentiaries for women, and some state institutions, there is tyrannical obsession with cleanliness and order. But city jails are usually hell-holes, fetid and fierce. Overcrowding, constant pandemonium, vermin, food slop are cruel and inhuman punishment, especially since many women haven't even stood trial.

The most publicized abomination is New York City's Women's House of Detention. This place has the distinction of being the most documented prober of women's private parts, because it has been more brutal about it than most jails. A woman is submitted to internal examination allegedly for VD or narcotic concealment, even though she has not been arrested for drugs or prostitution. It's vaginal guilt by assumption; for some reason women's ear and nose orifices are not suspect. Examinations have been conducted with the grossest disrespect for the female body and female dignity: from the doctor's coarse remarks, to his responsibilities for

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LETTER FROM

Dear sisters in struggle, I have wanted to say the things I am about to say for a very long time, yet I have hesitated in fear of possibly adding to the fuel of the detractors of feminism, because I am a transsexual, and because I existed for 26 years as a man in Apollo America. But I was asked recently to write something for EVERYWOMAN concerning my joys and disasters, and so I shall; and my most fervent hope is that some of the clouds of ignorance obscuring the transsexual experience will be dispelled by the magic of truth and understanding, and that this letter will inspire other transsexuals to write similar letters or do other things to help end the oppression of transsexuals.

My personal oppression has been almost negligible; crossing the barriers of sex, as I am, is dangerous, and there are really no maps for us, and I did not expect to do this and reach my various goals unscathed. There are a few scars or wounds on my body, but countless ones in my heart, and these are the ones which will take the longest of all to heal.

My joys may seem strange to you, but they are the joys of a strange experience, and a most excruciatingly enlightening experience.

Writing this letter is one of them, as it gives me the opportunity to share with you some of the knowledge I have obtained. There has been the joy of feeling ones breasts develop, of seeing your body transform in many ways, and the joy of breasts touching breasts, also; the joy of struggling with others in the face of mountains



of hatred, and being able to laugh and dance a few moments later; the joy of traveling across the vastness of Apollo America as a woman, standing in the middle of Kansas plains and walking through the revolution in the South side of Chicago, the East Village and Harlem in New York, and being able to return to my favorite lands, the deep south, as a woman; the joy of having trained killers-Marines riding on tanks-smile and wave at you, and hearing policemen whistle at you. There have been so many joys. But my greatest joy came when I received a document from the Soviet Union describing nine sex conversion operations performed in that nation in 1967 and 1968, as many American leftists had charged transsexuals with being products of bourgeois decadence, and simply results of the sexism existing in a capitalistic society. When I received this fabulous treasure, my hands trembled for hours, as I believe it was the first time such information had been made available to anyone in the west. I made copies of it and sent them to various American doctors and organizations involved in transsexual research, and I have since been informed that much greater communication has developed among these researchers of various nations, as science knows no politics, not really, it is the politicians who try to use science for their purposes. Apparently the Russians are advanced in some ways in this field, and it is one of my dreams to someday visit the Institute of Experimental Endocrinology and Research of Chemistry of Hormones in the USSR,

A TRANSSEXUAL

as it has no counterpart, to my knowledge, anywhere else on this planet.

And to know that I am becoming a woman, that the woman which was trapped inside me for so very long is being freed at last, goes beyond joy.

Part of the reason transsexuals are oppressed is because we are the makers of new gods, and do not believe in the old ones, the gods of ignorance and limitation, of fixed barriers, and our gods are androgynous ones.

The arguments against transsexualism rage furiously, and even if we display our bodies, some people will refuse to accept us as a reality. There is great fear of us inside many people; jealousy, also, which eventually becomes hatred. I have become quite familiar with the words of males such as cunt, whore, fish, slash, slut and dyke, hurled at me with a venom almost beyond comprehension.

I have also become used to betrayal, death threats, intimidation, ridicule, exploitation, and in general, being oppressed because I am identified as a woman in a nation that worships Apollo, because I am not a worshipper of the Phallus and Manhood.

My inspirations are April Ashley and Christine Jorgensen, although I have not met them, and the transsexuals who helped me when I took the first fearful steps into the world as a woman, which was not easy for me to do. I was born 28 years ago in Michigan, anatomically male, but at the age of ten or eleven I knew that there was a woman inside me, that nature had erred. I soon began to wear feminine attire in secret, and over the years spent approximately half of my life in a secret world of fear and lace and unfulfilled dreams. I was a born gitana, and lived in many places, including Japan for several years, and more or less succeeded in passing as a male in society; but I had to consciously be a "man", and I was only acting out a part which to me was most distasteful.

I enlisted in the Air Force when I was 18, and a year later married a woman who later became a gay sister. Our marriage disintegrated several times, and it is now being ended legally. Strangely enough, we were married by a woman, which is not that common.

My world is that of the female, not of the male, and they are very different worlds.

After many years of fear and confusion, I came out into the world, as a woman and around the same time became active in the Gay Liberation Front of Los Angeles when it formed in December of 1969. I did not expect to survive for more than a year, but I had chosen possible death, imprisonment, incarceration in a mental hospital and all the other possibilities that other transsexuals have encountered rather than live another moment in such fear. I did survive more than a year, writing about it for such papers as the Los Angeles Free Press, participating in about 30 demonstrations, helping to formulate it, and above all, confronting the hatred against transsexuals by homosexuals, who had become super male chauvinists, and detested transsexuals, including some of the leaders of gay liberations on the west coast. I, and other transsexuals, were used, as women are used, and encouraged to be shock troops; to sacrifice ourselves for the gay movement; to immolate ourselves in gasoline and die as martyrs; to march at the head of the line and receive the greatest oppression; to be contemporary Joan of Arcs, and to be exaggerated, screaming caricatures of femininity, to ridicule females by being parodies of them, and when we had finished doing these things, to be real "men" and offer our male bodies to male chauvinists. When I began the hormone treatments that have developed breasts and in general feminized my body, the hatred increased in many ways; because it became apparent to many men that I was not playing a game, I was truly in the process of changing sex, that I was not

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spreading infection and inflicting membrane damage. As the gentle, but indignant, Dorothy Day, imprisoned for women's rights in 1917 and pacifism in 1957, notes, "to strip the prisoner, to humiliate him, is a definite part and purpose of a jail experience. Even in the Army, making a man stand naked before his examiners is to treat him like a dumb beast or a slave." The search isn't for drugs, it is for the captive's pride.

Thus physical brutality certainly exists in women's prisons, but this type of violence is rare compared to that of guards and prisoners in male institutions. Women are simply not conditioned in overt aggression and rebellion. Instead, their lot in prison is characterized by treatment as stupid, sick children. In fact, many end up in mental institutions rather than prisons for being crazy enough to go against society's norms. Women guards don't even have guns. Prisoners are constantly referred to as "girls." The "girls" have it best who relate to the matrons with respectful sweetness in a sentimental child/mother role. Women are even watched over for longer parole periods than men. (The five member California Women's Board of Terms and Parole is a politically appointed kangaroo court just like the men's Adult Authority. Naturally, two of the five on it are men.) Guards dig being "maternal," and "protecting" the erring girls. All writers speak of the constant "nagging." To subjugate a defiant prisoner or one who runs amuck, a male goon squad is called in. They're as ugly as they sound--stripping and showering "problem" women at Milpitas. Chronic rebels may also be doped; tranquilizers are liberally distributed in California institutions.

The inmate "code" of loyalty and solidarity so prevalent in men's prisons is weak among women. Women are taught outside to compete with and dislike one another. They often inform on each other to big Mother. Likewise, vicious gossip is rife because women are used to a predatory interpersonal pattern and cliquishness rather than camaraderie. It's a dismal fact: One of the greatest trials of the sentence is the sheer hatred of being cooped up with a bunch of women. Women simply do not take prison "like a man." Expected to have spells and hysterics, they do--with a vengeance. This creates the kind of overall tension which becomes nearly madness even for the tough little character, Anick, in Albertine Sarrazin's fine prison novel, *The Runaway* (1965). Her low opinion of most prisoners and devastating contempt for the matrons is understandable: their outbursts of self-pity; compliant fatalism; numb, stagnant minds; pathetic vanity and materialism. Inculcated outside, these qualities become monstrous when isolated and reinforced inside walls.

As in male prisons, mature, decision-making behavior is atrophied. Even absolutely irrelevant matters are humiliatingly controlled. At Frontera, the California state prison for women, inmates may only wear white or pastel underpants; navy blue, purple, black or brown are expressly forbidden. Red is also *verboten*, because it is reputedly the color of homosexuality. (It was not clear to me whether this particular color causes, reflects, or attracts lesbians.) For some reason both V-neck and turtle neck sweaters are forbidden. *Rags* magazine could do an article with enormous implications on the do's and don't's of prison fashion--with Jane Fonda on the cover wearing the much touted boxer shorts and surplus WAC jacket featured at Alderson Federal Prison. This is not far fetched. A prison in New York actually held a beauty contest. Miss Imprisoned America. Joan Henry, who served a year in Her Majesty's Prison, Holloway, simply says a sense of the ridiculous is one's most valuable asset in prison. It will probably be tested to the breaking point.

As outside, it is the domestic womanly virtues that are held up as the end all, be all, and cure all. If life is organized around anything in jail, it is the cleaning, kitchen, and needle arts. Large prisons like Frontera and Alderson are made up of little "cottages." Here the "girls" learn good table manners, general courtesies, spit and polish housework. Thus rehabilitated, they can look forward to rewarding careers as domestics, waitresses, or seamstresses. Advanced penology in California institutions may offer some training in clerical and hairdressing skills as well. In most jails, however, there is no educational activity, not even correspondence courses usually made available to men. Libraries are always worse (!) than men's prisons. At Alderson, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn summed it up, "Waxed floors are more important than women, be they old, sick, pregnant, or crippled."

With all this phony housekeeping, a woman's identity as wife and mother is being ripped apart by family deprivation. Many are tormented

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