

# Styllou Christofi : Criminal Lunacy as a Defense in Court

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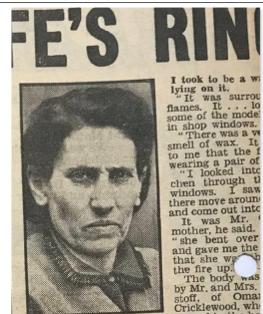
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## ABSTRACT



Two murder trials in the 1950s examine the criminal justice system of discrimination towards women and people of ethnic minorities within London. This project focuses on the case of Styllou Christofi and Ruth Ellis. The Holloway prison for women is located in London, where these two were incarcerated offered medical treatment and lacked psychiatric treatment. In the UK, Parliament addressed the care of the mentally ill in three vital legislative acts. These include the Capital Punishment Act of 1868, Criminal Lunacy Act of 1884 section 2 (4), the Mental Deficiency Act 1913, and the Durham rule in 1954. The two women were executed, and it is arguable that neither of the women should have been. The crime of “passion” resulted in incarceration, court trials, and the execution. The research focuses on how the court rulings determined the psychological stability of “murderers.” Press reports clearly distinguished age, race, gender, class, and religious beliefs. These trials highlight the challenges posed by poor mental health within the criminal justice and health care systems. The also research addresses how the media publicized the Ruth Ellis case in comparison to that, of the Styllou Christofi death.

## METHODOLOGY

**Original Archival Research** – This project includes a thorough review of the Christofi Styllou court records from the London Metropolitan Archives, British Library and the National Gallery.

•Literary review of *Some Account of Life in Holloway Prison for Women* from Kathleen Lonsdale provides insight regarding the treatment and care within the prison.

•Review of the Criminal Appeals Act of 1907 with Rules of Court and the Form for assessment from A.C. Forster Boulton, M.P., provide first-hand information.

•Holloway Campaign Group from Christian Action Publication.

**Note taking** – Collecting the information from the National Archives, The British Library, and the London Metropolitan Archives.

Analysis of specific documents to gain an historical background to the Durham Rule, which determined criminal insanity.

Statistical analysis of information – creating new information exploring the gender ratio for executions and comparing the Holloway Campaign Group, Radical Alternatives to Holloway research.

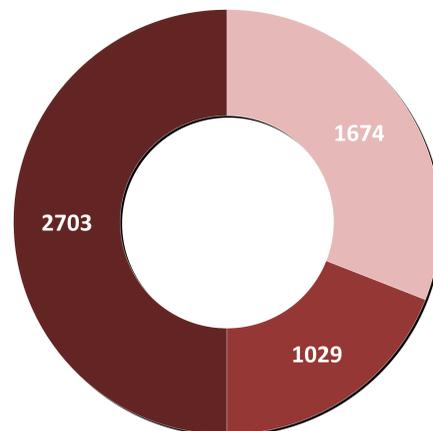
Processing the information – presentations and papers and preparing for further research.

## RESULTS

Despite all the efforts, some may argue that pleading insanity can appear as a way to back out from one’s actions. The Criminal Lunacy Act sec. 2-4 1884, Capital Punishment Act, and The Mental Deficiency Act 1913 were established to protect the rights of individuals with mental disorders. There were various laws that were established to determine sanity during the nineteenth and twentieth century in London. These rules differ from those in the United States.

According to the Holloway Campaign Group, “During 1970, there were 4,902 receptions of women and girls into penal institutions. (On average, 988 of these women were inside at one time). Most of these have not actually been sentenced to imprisonments. They may be remanded in custody before trial, or alternatively, they have been found guilty in order for reports (medical or psychiatric) to be made.” The figures below show that the great majority of those remanded in custody were not sentenced to imprisonment.

Women in the Holloway Prison during the 1970s.



- Remanded in Prison before trial and then not sentenced to prison.
- On bail, but court found no reason to imprison this group.
- Non-custodial sentence

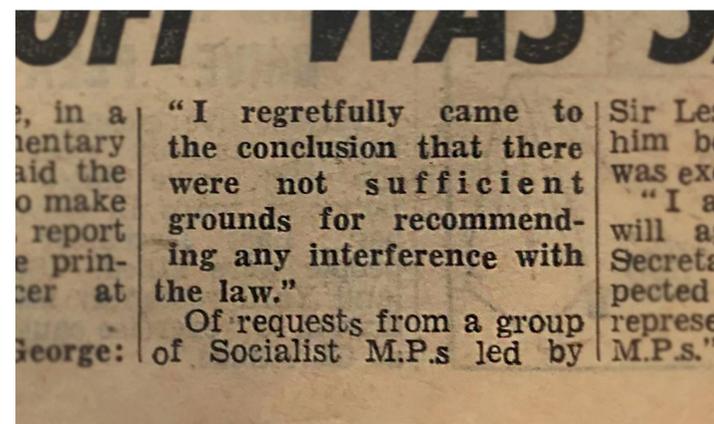
A good way of understanding the gendered nature of imprisonment in the mid-twentieth century is to address the statistics shown below. Of the total 5406 cases, the majority were placed under non-custodial sentencing, and others were released from prison, unless a the defendant was involved in a capital offense. And at the time, Christofi and Ellis did not have the support of experts to aid in determining their sanity, because of a lack of evidence.

## CONCLUSIONS



During one’s stay in the Holloway, various amounts of women describe their treatment inside the Holloway prison as poor. There are slight differences between the criminal justice system in Britain versus the United States regarding the treatment inside prisons and psychiatric facilities.

In prison, during the 1970s a large group of women were given a non-custodial sentence. Finally, the collection of laws reflect upon a person's sanity to determine if he or she should be executed regarding a crime committed.



## ARCHIVES CONSULTED

British Library, London  
London Metropolitan Archives, London  
National Archives, London

## WORKS CITED

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