

Statement in reference to Christine Margaret Keeler aka Christine Margaret Sloane.

Douglas Thompson

History has refused to let go of Christine Keeler who legally changed her name as part of her lifetime of vain subterfuge to avoid attention. Yet she was an endless source of fascination. Everyone, the newspapers, television and radio pundits, pub customers, believed they could say anything about her. They *knew* the story.

They didn't. Because of her conviction for perjury, she felt unable to fight back against hurtful and mentally upsetting allegations. She couldn't sue — she'd have been laughed out of court as 'unreliable', a proven liar.

That troubled and tainted Christine for most of her life. That, I feel, is the real scandal of Christine Keeler for she is one of the most honest people I have ever met. Christine wouldn't change her story, any story, for money or favour.

I was one of very few people to become close to Christine, having spent two decades of her life collaborating with her on two books and magazine articles after being introduced by a publisher who thought we would get on well - we did, and she became a family friend. When we met, she was already reclusive, living quietly in north London; a fiercely independent woman who could never shake her fear of others. It took months before she could trust me with her innermost thoughts. Even then — although for weeks she would talk to me or my wife every Sunday afternoon, and call back again to talk about politics or some story in the weekend newspapers — she'd cut off contact, working herself up and wrongly believing I'd betrayed our trust. Then, without reason, she'd be back on the phone as if nothing had happened.

Christine feared everyone. She hated the attention and desperately tried, but could never escape, being Christine Keeler; for almost six decades she would shrink from view, bundling herself in a duffle coat, hood up, walking with her arms protectively around herself. She tried living on the south coast, attempted to start a new life in a remote part of Wales where no one knew her, but she loathed it, trying again in the West Country, but always finding herself back in London. The world, she believed, was after her.

For all the outrageous headlines the ones she hated most were about outrage that she had been selected to sit on a jury, that she should not carry out her civic duty. She was annoyed when she felt ‘squeezed out’ of a Chelsea bridge club when it was discovered who Christine Sloane was in another life. At the same time others wanted something from her, a photograph, a quote, an endorsement. But why write books if she was terrified of attention? What else could she do? It was the only way she could present her side of the story. She had been silenced in legal forums because of her conviction for perjury. It was never about sex or sensationalism; she told me she couldn’t even clearly recall the sex with Profumo, astonishing as that affair changed the course of history. Britain, socially, was never the same after Profumo but Christine, like some cursed survivor, carried the burden of ‘the scandal’. Caroline Coon, an artist she had met in the Sixties, recalled Christine as being ‘the most beautiful woman I had ever seen; she took your breath away. Every man who met her wanted her and those who couldn’t have her wanted to punish her.’

Seen through the prism of the MeToo movement of today, the Christine Keeler experience would cause outcry. She was 17-years-old when she began work at Murray’s Nightclub in London and entered a world of predatory men (Profumo was 29 years her senior). She was haunted by the fallout that ensued, her eyes always full of sadness, as if she were living a penance and couldn’t permit herself a happy life. ‘Is what she did really so awful?’, Caroline Coon asked. ‘She was 19, she had no idea what she was getting herself into. [The men] knew what they were doing, and yet Profumo is now regarded as some kind of saint.’

Because of her treatment by such men, and by the police, the security services and the law, by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who personally dismissed her as ‘a tart’, and his Cabinet, Christine was desperate and fair game to be taken advantage of. Her mental health deteriorated and that displayed itself in random paranoia. Anything and anyone could set it off. She was never the same she said after her time in Holloway Prison. Her cell, it was pointed out to her, overlooked where Ruth Ellis was hanged, on July 13, 1955, the last woman to be executed in the UK. Christine often reminded me about that. Yet, she would not talk in detail about her time in prison, how she felt, what she did. It was something she wanted to forget, too traumatic for words.

When it came to how she had been treated in the legal arena she was content to discuss all the details. She felt she had never lied. Instead, and in this she was fair to the point of self-harm, her life's work was to show how the Establishment had turned her existence, and that of so many around her, into a mess of innuendo, of secrets and lies. That perjury conviction was like a noose around her neck and the start of the circus she spent her life trying to run away from. She felt unable to defend herself and maybe it was post-traumatic trauma, I'm not qualified to tell, that made her only secure within her own four walls. When she came to our farmhouse to film a documentary she would never stay the night in any of the spare rooms: she had to get back to London and her beloved stray cat. If she felt her whereabouts were compromised she'd move home, no matter the cost. I think she changed her telephone number 27 times while I knew her and, later, her email switched from one account to another. In looking at Christine's emails to me for this statement I found this one from 2009. It is not edited:

...But I didn't know then that my meeting Stephen would lead me to become an infamous person me a shy sweet young country girl who thought Marilyn Monroe and Diana Dors were repulsive yet because of what I would learn and witness from Stephen I was to be shut up and turned into someone far more repulsive than them so no one would believe or even want to talk to me and even the good I have done in my life they have claimed credit for then kicked me in the teeth with no care to shut me up should I ever tell anyone. MI5 have been allowed to distorted history as they like year in and year out. The latest put down in 2006 was for those who wish to take the glory for the good I have achieved in the past thirty years. I never wished to take the glory I never asked for that nor did I when I uncovered the nest of important spies that I lived amongst in the 1960`s. Anyhow my voice has been taken away as there is still a D notice on me from the 1960`s till now yet they still live by my creations as I've always been good at those. Even the my voice on my film test has been taken off. As I spoke very well especially after living with Stephen.

Her self worth was so clearly damaged by how the system had treated her. She was guilty by perception and I don't think that's legal.

But, as I said, she was so honest. She'd insist on giving me my 'petrol money' if I drove her to appointments. In the hours after John Profumo died in 2006, she was offered £35,000 by a national newspaper to talk and comment about him. She refused saying it would not be 'appropriate' as his family would be grieving. She only addressed Profumo's death six years later when we updated her book. She did not want to cash-in on someone's heartache. She'd had enough of her own.

At her home in Kent, where she spent her final years, she had a tiny kitchen where she made me lunch. I had to have three courses and she stood over me as I ate. Her rescue cat Clover took over the place; Christine's television had to be moved to allow her a comfortable spot to view it from. Christine Keeler, the sex bomb, was by then living the life of a spinster. Men, an item she was notorious for indulging in, were all but taboo as she told me: 'I wanted people close around me, close to me. The problem was what attracted these men. They wanted me, wanted to have Christine Keeler. They didn't want to be involved with me in a romantic relationship. As a sexual scalp, I was a trophy to boast to the boys about, not take home to mummy. It's been a misery for me, living with Christine Keeler. Even a criminal has the right to a new life, but they made sure I did not have that.

'They just didn't stop calling me a prostitute for ever and ever and ever and ever. I took on the sins of everybody, of a generation, really.'

For Christine, life was a wheel of ill-fortune, spinning endlessly. 'Lucky' Gordon, who raped Christine at knife point, and was later convicted of assaulting her was someone she feared for most of her life. Gordon's conviction was overturned and this led to Christine being sent to Holloway Prison for perjury. When Christine's lawyer and friend, Desmond Banks, telephoned her on March 30, 2017, to tell her that Gordon had died, her emotions were confused. She told him: 'Good. I shouldn't say that, God forbid. I wouldn't have liked to have come across him. I wouldn't have known what he was thinking. I must say I'm not sorry, but I shouldn't say such horrible things.' All those years later, the thought of Gordon being anywhere nearby still terrified her.

The late barrister Jeremy Hutchinson, Baron Hutchinson of Lullington, QC, who represented Christine in her 1963 perjury trial, described her voice as holding ‘no emotion, tired, defeated.’ As you might expect a young girl who had been shuffled through the system and into court to be.

I found the opposite in the final years of her life. She was defiant, adamant that the Establishment wouldn’t get away with the trouble they had brought down on her. Things, seemingly irrelevant, were of major importance to her. Yet, by then she had no vanity - it was as if she felt her looks had been the cause of it all. Her weight ballooned due to emphysema medication, but she would just buy a bigger anorak from Marks and Spencer.

Sometimes I think she had a guilty conscience, scarred and angry about it all. It certainly opened her up to flights of fancy. On a re-screened television interview she repeats three times that was wasn’t ‘bitter’. But she was, and entitled to be. It was what others did that that set Christine Keeler’s life on such an astonishing trajectory, yet she never gave up. She believed in truth, and stuck with it to the very end.

It was the frustration of not being totally free to defend herself that constantly disrupted her mental health and being.

Signed *DouglasAThompson*

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STATEMENT of DESMOND BANKS

I still have the paperback copy of *Scandal '63* by Clive Irving and others which I had bought when it came out in September 1963. That was six years before I met Christine - she worked as a volunteer at Release and I was the Information Officer.

During lockdown I have come across two books published in October 1963 that were completely new to me, *The Profumo Affair: a crisis in contemporary society* by Iain Crawford and *The Profumo Affair: Aspects of Conservatism* by Wayland Young. These turned out to be serious, balanced and well-researched works, drawn from contemporary sources, no doubt principally press reports and *Hansard*, as the authors do not seem to have been at court themselves, to have access to court transcripts or to have interviewed the protagonists. I would far sooner rely on these works and on *The Trial of Stephen Ward* by Ludovic Kennedy (who sat in through the Ward trial) than on later works, stories sold to the press or *The Denning Report*. To my sources I add only my long association with Christine, as a colleague, client, friend and ultimately carer, and transcripts of the 1963 cases.

What has come home to me very clearly is that, in the events of 1963, the young women took much of the blame for what happened when it lay squarely on the shoulders of the older men who used, abused and exploited them. The language used says it all: in Parliament Christine was called a prostitute, a call girl and a slut. In English we have many words for a woman who sells sexual services, but very few for a man who buys them. The word 'punter' is not specific, and does not even appear in my 1979 Collins English Dictionary. The only word that I can find is 'whoremonger', but I have not heard Profumo or any of the men who admitted that they had paid for sex called a whoremonger - they would not have put up with it, but Christine never had that choice.

Years ago, I used to take my 45 rpm singles to a pub in Bayswater (just along the road from Frank Critchlow's El Rio, where Christine met Lucky Gordon in about October 1961) and play them to the clientele. In return the manager would give me a pint of beer and pay me £5, but you couldn't call me a disc jockey. Recently I took away a friend's neglected bicycle, pumped up the tyres, adjusted the brakes, replaced a cable and fitted some old mudguards, and he insisted on giving me £20, but that doesn't make me a cycle repairer. Christine did occasionally accept money from men that she had had sex with, but that did not make her a prostitute. Like countless others, Christine was a girl from the provinces finding her way in life, making the most of her talents, doing what she enjoyed and just about managing to make ends meet. She was never available to be hired like a call girl. To call her a prostitute is to dehumanise, demean and devalue her, and it is misleading.

Christine had been assaulted by Gordon early on the morning of 18 April 1963. She was at court for committal proceedings on 26 April and gave evidence at his trial, which began on 5 June. I have read the transcript of the proceedings and many of the newspaper reports, and I am in no doubt that it must have been a terrifying experience for Christine and that she must have felt utterly powerless and extremely vulnerable. In his statement from the dock at his trial, Gordon said of her, 'She has

told me of her past, about Stephen Ward and being that she had known him since she was about 14. And she went to live with him, and since then he has been teaching her to aggravate people. Not only that, but since she turned the age of 17 she has been on the phone working as a call girl and supporting him'. This was splashed over the newspapers and Christine had no redress. It was not true.

Lord Denning's attitude to Christine is demonstrated by the shockingly prejudiced and unbecoming things he wrote about her, finding himself unable to spell out what he assumed about Christine and objectifying her. In paragraph 16 of *Lord Denning's Report* (HMSO, 1963), he wrote:

On Sunday, the 3rd February, 1963, the *News of the World* published a large picture of Christine Keeler, in a seductive pose, with nothing on except the slightest of swimming garbs, and the words alongside, "Model in shots case. Attractive Christine Keeler, a 20-year-old London model, features in a case at the Old Bailey this week in which a man is accused of shooting at her with intent to murder. He is a 30-year old West Indian, John Edgecombe, of Brentford, Middlesex." I mention this photograph because most people seeing it would readily infer the avocation of Christine Keeler.

Then again, in paragraph 129, Denning repeated:

It should be mentioned here that on Sunday, 3rd February, 1963, the *News of the World* published a picture of Christine Keeler saying that she was to be a witness in the shooting case I have described earlier ... Most people seeing that picture would realise what she was.

Here is the photograph from which Denning drew his conclusions:



Yet again, in paragraphs 160 and 161, Lord Denning referred to photographs of Christine in *The Daily Express* of 15 March 1963 and commented:

On an inner page there were four striking photographs of Christine Keeler from which most people could readily infer her calling.

Here are the photographs:



I think that most people who saw the photographs would believe that Christine was a model and that her 'avocation' or 'calling' was modelling, but Lord Denning was surely saying that he assumed that she was a prostitute and not a model and that those to whom his report was addressed should share his assumption.

If one of the country's most senior judges was unable to reach and express an unbiased opinion about Christine, can you blame her for choosing to plead guilty at her 1963 trial rather than take her chances with an English jury directed by an English judge, particularly after what she experienced at Gordon's trial?

I do not know what happened behind the scenes when Christine went to the Central Criminal Court for her trial on 5 December 1963, but I worked as a criminal defence lawyer for more than 25 years, starting as an articled clerk at Kingsley Napley in 1971, and I know well the horse-trading that often used to go on before a criminal trial. I believe that counsel for the prosecution and the defence would have met informally in the judge's room before the trial and carved the case up between them. Her barrister would, as a result of an indication given to him privately by the judge, have told Christine that, if she pleaded guilty to two of the charges, she would receive only a short prison sentence. Christine's counsel would no doubt have given her his assessment of her prospects if she went to trial and perhaps argued that her lie was not 'material' pursuant to s.1 of the Perjury Act 1911, but Christine would have had her own ideas as well. She knew that a vocal section of the public was very hostile to her and that she was widely believed by senior members of the establishment, politicians and Lord Denning to be a prostitute and thus (in their

eyes) a person of little worth, so I think Christine would have found it easy to choose the certainty that a guilty plea offered over what she would have to endure if she took her chances with a trial.

I have heard it suggested that Christine should have been dealt with by way of a suspended sentence and not a sentence of immediate imprisonment. I strongly hold that what she did did not warrant her being sent to prison, but I do not think a suspended sentence was an option available to the court, as suspended sentences were introduced by s.39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1971.

I came to know Christine very well, and I knew that, rationally or irrationally, she often lived in fear. She found it impossible to trust anyone completely and she would always fall out with anyone to whom she was close, often with no good reason at all. I certainly wasn't immune, but I think I just about managed to hold on until the end because I had come up with a way of working with Christine. The important thing was to know that if you got too close to her or showed too much interest in her or her past, that would make her suspicious, and when she was suspicious nothing would calm her suspicions. She had an unshakeable belief about herself which she would express as, 'There is something strange about my life.' She believed that people wanted to 'take over' her life, to 'steal' her life story, or even to kill her so that they could silence her and then say what they wanted to say about her and her life without her being able to stop them. I think that she believed that the same figures and bodies of authority who had shut her up and imprisoned her in 1963 were still out to get her, but the shadow of Lucky Gordon was always hanging over her. Christine had collaborated with Paul Nicholas and Gill Adams on the stage play *Keeler*, which drew on her autobiography *The Truth at Last*, but she resolutely refused to see it when it was staged at theatres in Highgate and Richmond and ultimately at the Charing Cross Theatre, telling me that she believed that Lucky Gordon would be waiting for her outside and would attack her.

Christine would often stay up late into the night rattling off a long and not always comprehensible email to me to tell me of some detail that she had remembered and which she did not think had been properly covered in the most recent edition of her autobiography or in something said about her. It was no good asking her to elaborate on what she had said, because she believed that what she had written spoke for itself. If I questioned her too closely about her writings or something I had read or heard, that would rekindle her suspicion that I was in league with some writer that she had come to distrust or dislike and that we were about to write about her without her agreement, 'stealing her life.'

I would have liked to have talked to Christine properly about the court papers I had obtained under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and from the National Archives in Kew in about 2013, but it was never possible, partly because Christine was reluctant to relive the events leading up to her conviction and no doubt partly because she did not want to risk my taking advantage of her through what she would tell me.

I have known people who have been stalked and I have known someone who has stalked a friend. I have read harrowing accounts of celebrities and of ordinary people

who have endured relentless stalking. I have recognised in what Christine told to the police, what she has written and told me and what Gordon said in court the clear and unmistakable signs that he stalked, harassed and abused her from when she first met him in October 1961 until at least June 1963, when he was convicted of assaulting and injuring her and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Gordon was a man with a serious record of violence against women who was obsessed with Christine. In his mind, he loved her and he seems to have somehow believed that that justified his behaviour towards her. A woman about twenty years younger than Christine whose daughter was at school with my daughter recounted to me thirty years ago how she had once met Gordon in the Blues Club in Notting Hill and that he came up to her with the chat-up line, 'You remind me of Christine Keeler.' He was still using her.

I did not know Christine in 1963, so I cannot say how she was changed by what she went through then and nor can I say to what extent the Christine whom I knew was shaped by those experiences. All I can say is that she found it very difficult to trust anyone with whom she was in any kind of relationship, whether family, friends or business colleagues and that she was afraid that someone, Lucky Gordon being one example and an important one, wanted to kill her to silence her. Some would call it paranoia - I wouldn't say that her fears were justified, but I do think that she had more reason for nursing such feelings than anyone else that I have known.

I survived with Christine for nearly fifty years because I tried not to cross the boundaries that she set; if I had questioned her about her feelings and about the impact that 1963 had on her, I would not have lasted that long. I was touched and honoured by her dedicating *The Truth at Last* and *Secrets and Lies* to me.

In 1963, Christine was a helpless victim of circumstances beyond her control. Already damaged by Lucky Gordon, she was caught up at the centre of events caused by men with power and influence and made to carry much of the blame. As Tanya Gold has commented, it is time for Christine to be given redemption.



Desmond Banks

1 May 2021

STATEMENT of SEYMOUR WALTER PLATT

I was born on 4 December 1971, the son of Christine Margaret Platt, née Keeler, and her second husband Anthony Sidney Platt. My parents were divorced on 5 September 1977 and I was brought up by my mother, who changed her name to Christine Sloane. She was born on 22 February 1942 and died on my 46th birthday, 4 December 2017. My wife Lorraine and I have a young daughter. I am the executor of my mother's will and the sole beneficiary of her estate.

I have found it very hard to put into words the lasting impact that my mother's guilty plea in 1963 had on her. Imagine if you can the scale of her humiliation in an international media storm. The world saw her as both a prostitute and a liar. For most of her life she was painted a pariah and a liar.

There was an inhumanity to this verdict. We have shown through our Application that it was accepted by the courts that Lucky Gordon had assaulted my mother that night, it was accepted that she lived in permanent fear of Lucky Gordon and that there were police reports of Lucky Gordon assaulting and molesting my mother on a number of occasions in the lead-up to that night, and yet she saw her attacker exonerated while she went to prison. My mother found this to be dehumanising.

My mother would often talk about Christine Keeler in the third person; Christine Keeler was somebody to be ashamed of. In fact my mother hated Christine Keeler, not for what that young girl did but because the name that hung around her neck like Coleridge's albatross.

My mother found a normal life impossible. With her notoriety and her criminal record, work was very hard to find, and being unable to work led to periods of poverty. As a convicted perjurer my mother was unable to defend herself from defamation. This meant journalists, historians or anybody could and did say anything they wanted about her, leaving my mother to believe, 'My life is not my own'.

Even now, newspapers, documentaries and books on the subject will say my mother lied about the Gordon assault, that Gordon was an innocent victim and that my mother was a cruel liar who made the whole thing up. Even some respected historians say it was a conspiracy between the police and my mother to frame Gordon for leverage in the upcoming trial against Stephen Ward. Nearly all those stories say that Gordon was her ex-boyfriend and that the two of them had a turbulent relationship. This false telling of the story caused my mother immense pain. Calling Gordon a boyfriend when he was in truth her stalker and her attacker and, in her words, her rapist was more than she could bear.

The pain this caused my mother was unconscionable. My mother lived with these accusations for most of her life and had no recourse. It is a popular myth that she withdrew her accusation of assault against Gordon regarding the night of 17/18 April 1963, but she never did. My mother was always clear: this man injured her on that

night and raped and assaulted her on other occasions. She lived her whole life in morbid fear of Gordon, as anyone who was there or knew her would attest.

My mother always felt that she was badly let down in 1963, that she was imprisoned while her stalker and attacker walked free. For her even the witnesses had tried to blackmail her and yet she was punished. She felt she was the victim of a conspiracy by powerful men and institutions who had set out to punish and silence her.

Understandably there were long-term effects on my mother's mental health. She continued to live in fear of Gordon, afraid that she could encounter him on the street and that he would attack her, or that he would break into her flat and attack her there. When growing up I was acutely aware that Gordon was a tangible threat. I once noticed that she had nailed carpet tracks over a small window in her flat in north London, "In case Lucky tries to get in" - 40 years later.

My mother would have episodes where she would feel victimised, downtrodden, beaten. My mother found it very difficult to trust people and in every relationship she at times expected or imagined betrayal.

In the years after 1963 my mother became estranged from nearly all of her family, the infamy of Christine Keeler being too embarrassing, her episodes of expected or imagined betrayal making her too difficult to be around. Her own mother turned away from her, and her eldest son too. Aunties, cousins and most of her family distanced themselves from her over the years. Nobody was above suspicion, people she worked with, friends, family, at times even me. My mother would blame Christine Keeler: "Who would want to be associated with Christine Keeler?" she would ask.

This conviction of my mother cemented her legacy, not only as a liar but as a prostitute and as a national pariah.

I must say again - It cannot be overstated how much of a national pariah she was for so many years.

This legacy haunted my mother and had its own impact on her family. I was there through the period of poverty and as a child I would help her through bouts of paranoia and depression. "There is something strange about my life," she would say.

My mother found it difficult to trust almost anyone, and she would push those around her away, assuming that Christine Keeler was a curse, even for the people she loved.

There was always a price and the arrival of her granddaughter put a great deal of strain on our relationship. I can't be sure if she felt that she was losing another son but she said later, she just wanted to protect her grandchild from her legacy. It took a few difficult years to bring our family back together, all time lost.

My mother's conviction painted an untrue picture of her as a liar and a fallen woman. It would be naive to think it did not impact my career or relationships. Growing up, children were not allowed to play with me; "Not that mother's son" one father screamed at me. Years later after one particular newspaper story where my name was mentioned I was asked to leave a particular job "We don't want to associate with that sort of thing here, it could be damaging for our reputation," I was told. In fact, the manager expected me to apologise for the embarrassment.

Of course I had wonderful opportunities to meet interesting people and most importantly I always knew I was loved. Despite what she thought, I was never ashamed of my mother, even if on occasion people have tried to make me.

This part of our story is just not told correctly, our history is not understood and I think that matters. We allow people who tell a story that dismisses my mother as just a liar whose motivation for setting those events in motion back in 1963 was money or fame, but my mother's motivation through much of the story known as 'The Profumo Affair' should be seen through the prism of Gordon's stalking, Gordon's ongoing assaults and how on occasion he held her against her will and raped her. My mother was just trying to get away from Gordon, and all the men she went to for help used her and what she knew, for their own ends.

It leaves a visceral feeling of injustice that the police and courts all accepted that my mother was assaulted that night, and yet her attacker was exonerated, and she was sent to prison.

The perjury conviction meant my mother had to spend the rest of her life listening to the lies that "Gordon was a boyfriend" and that "she tried to frame him for a crime he did not commit", perpetrating a most painful untruth that she had to endure. An untruth so horrible for a victim that I just can't comprehend.

I hope it is time to forgive my mother, so as to better understand our history, or for her family, or just because she was a human being.

I hope it is time to free Christine Keeler.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seymour Platt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Seymour" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Platt".

Seymour Platt 3rd June 2021

To whom it may concern

It is, in my view, an urgent moral necessity that Christine Keeler be pardoned; should she be, it would send a strong message that the abuse and scapegoating of women is something that is no longer tolerated by our society; and they will not be further punished for being abused.

Christine Keeler was an abused child, growing up in an era when it was usual to exploit women. She was sexually assaulted by numerous men, and she lost a child under heart-breaking circumstances. As she grew older, she was, as you know, picked up by Stephen Ward and encouraged into affairs with important men to satisfy his desire to social climb. When she met him she was just seventeen. She was a toy for cynical and self-interested men; Ward aside, they escaped unscathed.

The Profumo Affair embarrassed the government, as you know. Keeler's conviction for perjury was nothing more than revenge. She was assaulted many times by Lucky Gordon and she feared him for the rest of his life: she was the victim. But, because she credulously protected two witnesses to the attack, which is typical of her naivete, she was convicted and jailed. It wouldn't happen now, and it shouldn't have happened then.

Keeler had the misfortune to become an archetype: a symbol of everything that was threatening to a Status Quo unsure of how to respond to societal changes. She was punished twice: for being a victim of the abuse of Lucky Gordon and for being Christine Keeler, the woman who destabilised the government. Except she didn't. Profumo did. The responsibility is his.

The notoriety followed her for the whole of her life and, as a member of the British media, I feel deep shame at this. Her life was essentially destroyed by the Profumo Affair. I understand she never really recovered.

I urge you to pardon her.

Sincerely

Tanya Gold

I have been researching the Profumo Affair for over twenty years, and have written a novel on the subject (*Wicked Baby*.) More recently I contributed an essay for the art exhibition, *Dear Christine: A Tribute to Christine Keeler*. The main focus of my interest has always been Christine. As a young working-class woman unwittingly drawn into a national scandal, she was easier for me to relate to than the powerful men she came to know, like society osteopath Dr. Stephen Ward, or the politician John Profumo.

Christine is an inspiring figure, having escaped a childhood marked by poverty, abuse and neglect to establish herself as a model and showgirl while still a teenager. Unfortunately, her experiences of sexual harassment and predatory male behaviour are still all too commonplace. Whenever a new political scandal erupts, it is inevitably compared to the Profumo Affair. Many people were hurt by the revelations, not least Ward, who committed suicide. But while the unfairness of his trial is now widely acknowledged, the same commentators seem unperturbed by Christine's conviction and imprisonment.

She first met Lucky Gordon in 1961, when she was nineteen years old. While Gordon is often described as her boyfriend, Christine denied this. Whatever initial attraction she may have felt quickly changed as his obsessive nature emerged. Over the following months, she spoke of being raped, of being held against her will, and being attacked on the street by Gordon. At the very least, she was a victim of what we now understand as stalking.

By December 1962, she was in fear for her life. Their troubled relationship was now known to the police, and the press. However, any genuine concern these parties might have had for her safety was vastly eclipsed by their growing interest in her friendship with Ward, and the open secret of her brief affair with John Profumo, the Secretary of State for War, more than a year previously.

She was leaving her home in early 1963 when Gordon appeared and attacked her yet again. He was charged and found guilty of grievous bodily harm in June, and immediately launched an appeal. Although the fact that he had attacked Christine was never under question, he called on two witnesses whom she had previously agreed not to mention, in a misguided act of kindness which now backfired on her. Gordon was released, and in December 1963, Christine was tried for perjury. She pleaded guilty, and would spend six months in Holloway Prison.

For the remainder of her life, she struggled to move on from the events of 1963, as her notoriety always preceded her. She made tireless efforts to set the record straight about her part in the Profumo Affair, culminating in her 2001 biography, *The Truth At Last*. But her wish to live in dignity was rarely honoured in the media. And while the public may have mostly forgotten about her imprisonment, journalists still point to her perjury conviction as indicative that she was dishonest, and an unreliable source.

At the time of Christine's death in 2017, revelations of sexual abuse in Hollywood were dominating the headlines. The parallels between her story and those told by women in the #MeToo movement did not go unnoticed. My participation in the exhibition, *Dear Christine*, enabled me to discuss her life with women artists, finding that many others were also inspired by her lifelong refusal to be silenced. I was also pleased to see a sympathetic depiction of her ordeal in the BBC drama, *The Trial of Christine Keeler*.

However, there is still much work to be done. If Christine were on trial for perjury today, she would likely be found not guilty. Her 'lie by omission' does not alter the facts of the case, and we now have a greater understanding of the impact abuse has on victims' mental health, and the long-term impact of trauma. The reporting of both Gordon's trial and Christine's were steeped in tropes we would now recognise as both racist and misogynistic, and there can be little doubt that a key player in the Profumo Affair being incarcerated was convenient for the government, eager to draw a line under the scandal.

I believe that Christine Keeler should now be pardoned, to correct an historic injustice and communicate to current victims of stalking that their cries for help will not go unheard, and in the fervent hope that never again will an abused woman be blamed for the suffering inflicted upon her while a violent partner goes free.

Tara Hanks

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