



The Enigma of a Violent Woman: A Critical Examination of the Case of Karla Homolka

By Jennifer M. Kilty, Sylvie Frigon

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Karla Homolka has proven to be a figure of enduring interest to the public and media for the last 20 years. However, despite the widespread Canadian and international public commentary and media frenzy that has encircled this case, Homolka herself remains an enigma to most who write about her.

In contrast to much of the contemporary discussion on this case, this book offers a comprehensive and detailed examination of the legal, public and media understandings and explanations of Homolka's criminality. Drawing from multiple fields of study and varied bodies of critical literature, the book uses Homolka as an object lesson to interrogate some of the narratives and conceptualizations of 'violent women', the problematic normative constructions of womanhood and 'acceptable femininity', leniency in sentencing, taboo and disgust, and questions of remorse.

The authors address broad questions about how women convicted of violence are typically constructed across four sites: the courts; the academy; the mainstream media; and public discourse. This unique text is extremely important for feminist criminology and socio-legal studies, offering the first comprehensive academic effort to engage in dialogue about this important and fascinating case.

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Editorial Review

Review

'The spectre of Karla Homolka has invaded our understandings of criminalized women. By turning the gaze away from Homolka to interrogate our cultural fixation with her, Kilty and Frigon adeptly reveal the factors that coalesced to produce this enigmatic figure, enjoining us to rethink her as the paradigmatic Criminalized Woman.' Elizabeth Comack, University of Manitoba, Canada

About the Author

Jennifer M. Kilty is Associate Professor in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa. Her research primarily focuses on gender and different aspects of criminalization, including the social construction of dangerous girls and women, the medicalization/psychiatrization of criminalized women, self-harming behaviours, drug use, and more recently the criminalization of HIV nondisclosure. She recently edited two books, *Within the Confines: Women and the Law in Canada* and *Demarginalizing Voices: Commitment, Emotion and Action in Qualitative Research*, both published in 2014.

Sylvie Frigon is Professor in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa, where she has been teaching since 1993. She is currently Joint Chair in Women's Studies at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University and Senior Research Associate at Peterhouse, University of Cambridge. Alongside academic publications, she has published two novels, *Écorchées* (2006) on the issue of women in prison, and *Ariane et son secret* (2010) on a little girl's quest for her imprisoned mother. She has also worked with Claire Jenny, choreographer and director of the Parisian dance company Point Virgule, with whom she published a book on dance in prison (2009). She is currently working on her third novel funded by the Ontario Arts Council and works in partnership with Le Grands Ballets Canadiens of Montreal's Centre for Dance Therapy.

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