



Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939 (Canadian Social History Series)

Andree Levesque

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During the interwar period, Quebec was a strongly patriarchal society, where men in the Church, politics, and medicine, maintained a traditional norm of social and sexual standards that women were expected to abide by. Some women in the media and religious communities were complicit with this vision, upholding the "ideal" as the norm and tending to those "deviants" who failed to meet society's expectations. By examining the underside of a staid and repressive society, Andrée Lévesque reveals an alternate and more accurate history of women and sexual politics in early twentieth-century Quebec. Women, mainly of the working class, left traces in the historical record of their transgressions from the norm, including the rejection of motherhood (e.g., abortion, abandonment, infanticide), pregnancy and birth outside of marriage, and prostitution. Professor Lévesque concludes, "They were deviant, but only in relation to a norm upheld to stave off a modernism that threatened to swallow up a Quebec based on long-established social and sexual roles."

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