Sex Crimes in the Fifties by Lisa Featherstone and Amanda Kaladelfos (Melbourne University Publishing)

Judges' Comments

In *Sex Crimes in the Fifties*, Lisa Featherstone and Amanda Kaladelfos have given us a timely and sensitive analysis of the treatment of sexual crimes in the conservative court system of 1950s New South Wales. In the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, this book offers a much-needed historical context that illuminates the unequal power relations of the court system. In the 1950s, when respectability was the preserve of the white middle class, the courts often dealt harshly with difference, calling into question the sexual conduct of ‘wicked’ children, of allegedly wayward teenage girls, of homosexual men, and of Aboriginal and immigrant peoples.

This powerful and moving book is a testament to the combined expertise of these fine historians of sexual and legal history. By drawing on the rich resource of court transcripts, they have produced a meticulous study that combines the personal and the political in a profound analysis of moral conservatism.


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