



Modern Sex: Liberation and Its Discontents

Myron Magnet, Editor

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There is an undercurrent of emotion running through all the contributions to this work on sexual liberation, but it isn't enthusiasm for the subject or even optimism for the future of romantic relationships; it's anger that bubbles beneath the surface of these essays, bringing home the point that for every young lover who revels in the fruits of the sexual revolution, there is a furious advocate for abstinence decrying co-habitation and Sex in the City.

The editor, who also edits City Journal, a quarterly publication from the conservative think tank The Manhattan Institute, has assembled here a group of the Journal's luminaries to write about the effects of the sweeping social changes that have affected sexual roles in America. The result is fascinating, if one-sided. All the contributors seem eager to fight, and write as if they expect to be contradicted. They discuss sex-ed topics, current television shows, and feminist writings with sharp derision, and bemoan the rise of teen pregnancies and divorce. In his introduction, Magnet writes that the sexual revolution has failed, leaving us in confusion and emptiness, and that as a result, "Our civilization suffers by weakening the family, the institution that socializes the young and forms them into citizens." Many of the writers here are concerned mainly about the younger set, railing against the provocative dress now worn by little girls, and the promiscuity apparently rampant even in middle school.

These essays are controversial, to say the least, and quite polarizing, but the contributors pen their thoughts with conviction, interweaving research with opinion and personal experience to form a coherent, and formidable, front. Their collective anger is a righteous one, and although more liberal-minded readers may take offense to their slings and arrows against the outrages of feminism, the broad points of the essays are not so easily dismissed.

ELIZABETH MILLARD (January / February 2002)

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