

Women lost the Sexual Revolution

AUGUST 16 — The marvelous English poet Philip Larkin has written, "Sexual intercourse began in 1963/a little late for me." That is very funny. Try interviewing Helen and Paris, Aeneas and Dido, Cleopatra and Antony.

And, of course, I remember when Alfred Kinsey's study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* came out in 1949.

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So what happened in the poet Larkin's 1963? Of course, the pill became available — important, perhaps, but not I think decisive.

Rather, a number of customs, discretions and expectations collapsed all to the detriment of women in the equations of sexual power.

First of all, sexual relations are not innocent — as propagandists like D.H. Lawrence make them out to be. Between the man and the woman — let us stick to normality — there are almost always disproportions that have to be understood and negotiated.

One or the other might well have more money than the other. The man might be handsome, the woman plain, but perhaps she has personality or brains. There might be differences in social class.

It is commonplace that a powerful man aged 60, or even more, can marry a beautiful 25-year-old if he wants to — a "trophy wife." The marriage-market value of a man like Henry Kissinger far surpasses that of Madeleine Albright.

IN ADDITION, men and women on average are different as far as sex is concerned. Some very busy professional women are content with recreational sex; some of the upscale women who worked with the "Mayflower Madam" did so because they wanted encounters with men of their own rank without

strings attached. The hell with wine and roses.

But that is very rare. It seems obvious that the male indulges in casual sex at a much lower cost than the female. Characteristically, the woman hopes for more "meaning."

As the familiar example goes, after intercourse HE wonders, "How soon can I get out of here." SHE wonders whether he will phone her in the morning.

Because the woman is often much more serious, people like Bill Clinton and Gary Condit will hint or even promise that they will leave their wives and marry their latest partner. Of course they have no intention of doing anything of the kind. On the evidence, Monica meant next to nothing to Clinton, not absolutely nothing, but next to nothing. She saw herself as Mrs. Clinton. The disproportions and impossibilities here were colossal.

Men like Clinton and Condit at one time were called "cads." They were refused the best society, the best clubs and so forth.

No more. We are not supposed to be "judgmental."

That is the inner meaning of the 1960s sexual revolution. The rules have changed, changed in favor of the "cads," and to the disadvantage of women.

The powerful institution that at one time moderated the disproportions was, of course, marriage.

It was a sort of treaty that equalized the partners. It trumped all possible disproportions. Different though man and woman might be, if he loved her he married her.

The disproportion between King Edward VIII of England and Mrs. Wallis Simpson of Philadelphia was about as great as it could possibly be. He did not just point to the bedroom. He abdicated the throne and married the woman. This mutual commitment wiped out the disproportion. They were equal in commitment.

In many or most male-female relations, there are disproportions of age, wealth, beauty, status. Marriage trumps them.

It also gives the woman the stability that, in my opinion, she usually needs more than the male. His commitment gives her that.

Since the 1960s, it has become almost commonplace for a young couple to "live together" without being married. The women who do this must be nuts. They throw in all of the cards they have, without the equalizing agreement of marriage. The statistics on these arrangements must be grim.

Prior to the 1960s, social convention frowned sternly on these arrangements. It was "not done."

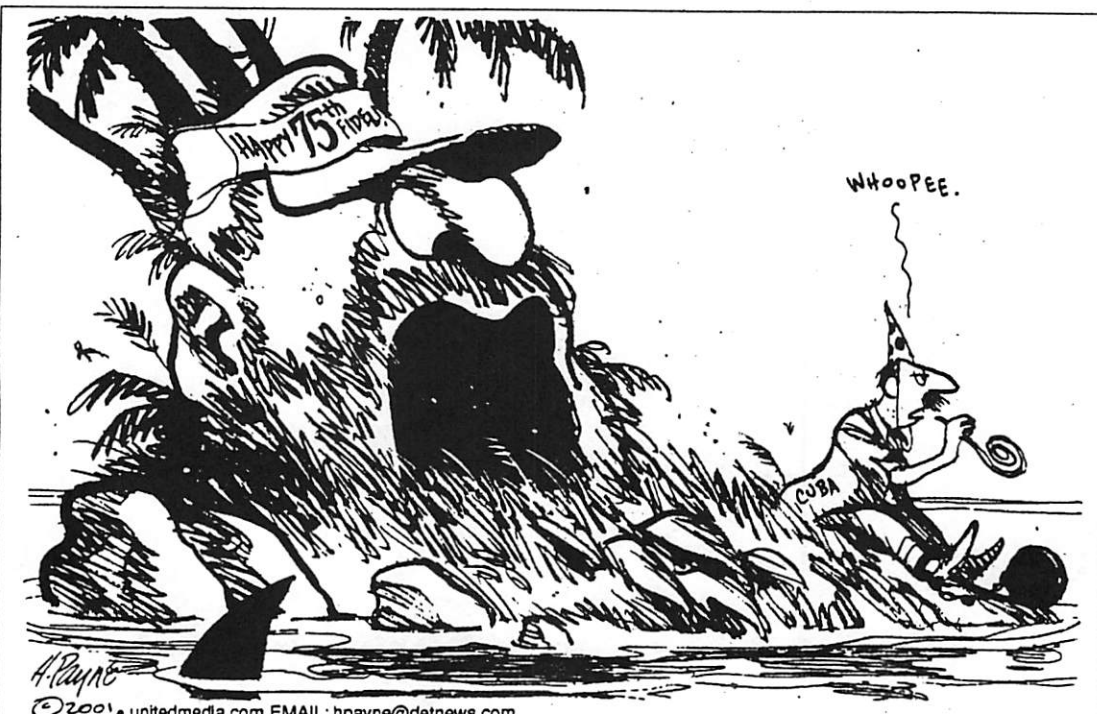
When Ingrid Bergman became pregnant by Roberto Rossellini while married to Dr. Peter Lindstrom, she never made another Hollywood movie.

Those conventions protected women. That we now are "nonjudgmental" harms them.

G.K. Chesterton saw marriage as civilizing, that is, as constituting a small society in which very different kinds of human beings learned to live and even love one another. Thus men are what we know they are, and so are women. The child growing into adolescence can be a monster. But the institution holds this "society" together and civilizes it. Often, at least.

WOMEN LOST the Sexual Revolution. And so did the social fabric.

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