



The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America (The American Social Experience)

Kevin F. White

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In the early 1900s, a sexual revolution took place that was to define social relations between the sexes in America for generations. As Victorian values gradually faded, and a commercialized consumer culture emerged, the female figure of the flapper came to embody early-twentieth century femininity. Simultaneously, masculine ideals were also undergoing radical change. Who then was this New Man to accompany the New Woman? Who was the flapper's boyfriend? In this remarkable book, Kevin White draws on a vast array of sources to examine the ideology spread through movies, advertisements, sex confession magazines, social hygienists, sex manuals, and Freudian popularizers that has defined modern American manhood. Examining attitudes toward masturbation, homosexuality, violence against women, feminism, free love, and the emerging dating system, *The First Sexual Revolution* shows how American men in the Jazz Age were subjected to a barrage of information and advice about their sexuality that stressed not character but personality and sex appeal. Repression was out; sexual expression performance was in. This New Man was more egalitarian and more sexual than the Victorian patriarch. But the diffusion to the middle class of the Victorian underworld ethos of primitivism and violence against women, and the flight from commitment to relationships, heralded instability and tensions that continues to define American sexual relations. To illustrate this point, Dr. White takes a close look through letters and diaries at the successes and failures of nine marriages involving actively feminist women, demonstrating the pressures that this revolution in values caused. Dr. White concludes that the return to primitivism characterized by the men's movement marks the most recent aftershock of the revolution that has shaped us all.

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