

The Morning After
Katie Roiphe

Katie, you write so well! Has it done you any good?

I love Roiphe's writing style. Perhaps envy is a better word. She was amazingly gifted writing this as a young woman now seventeen years ago. The best part is her forward in defense of dissent, written after she had suffered and survived her first few waves of feminist onslaught for not toeing the party line. Yes, the feminists are strident, boring, and so caught up in their own Marxist, deconstructionist cant as to be incomprehensible.

The thought that I cannot suppress is one which never even comes to Roiphe's mind. What is sex for? The biological answer is procreation, not recreation. One would hope that she would document a glimmer of a notion on campus that kids might be preparing for marriage and family, but there is hardly a hint of it. No concept that a body is more than just a vehicle for sex organs, or that a person might reside within a soul. Nope – just mechanics.

This fearful, mechanistic view of sex precludes preparation for forming a partnership with a person of the other sex, for that noblest of traditional reasons, raising kids. If you are preoccupied with him raping you, or your not getting off when you have sex, it is hard to look beyond these ephemera towards working in tandem to raise kids.

Returning to Roiphe's issues, she sees men and women more clearly than her feminist antagonists. She recognizes that men often want more than just sex, and that women sometimes do want sex. It is perhaps not a bad generalization that men have higher libidos than women. However, she is right to observe that men can and generally do control their lust, and women sometimes allow themselves to be swept away by it.

This many years after publication, biography seems like a legitimate question. How has Roiphe's life turned out? She is a writer of a modest number of well acclaimed books. There is no mention anywhere of marriage. She herself refers to a series of shallow affairs as a young woman, and it may be that that has continued. At 43 she is almost past considerations of family. This seems to me to be a tragedy. Her mother created her, which by her contribution to the world was a noble effort. What about Katie herself?

Roiphe waxes philosophical in the last chapter of the book, noting that every era has its own signature foibles and dogmas. Take Back The Night and the demonizing of men were the quirks of her generation. She saw through that enough to write this book. Too bad she didn't see far enough to realize that men and women are in the game together, bound to find each other and somehow reproduce the species, or else die out in a flood of exculpatory explanations for not doing so.