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When a teen-age girl finds pleasure in violence

WHEN I WAS YOUNG I always swore that I would never say: "When I was young things were different"

But they ARE.

And it is the girls who have changed most of all.

A dear friend of mine, aged fifteen, said to me recently:

"I've made up my mind. I am absolutely determined to stay a virgin until I marry.

"I shall feel so proud as I walk up the aisle and think I've done it!"

In my generation you did or you didn't, but at fifteen one definitely assumed one would not. In the unlikely event of one even realising there was an alternative.

Service life with its freedom from home and the feeling of living-now-for-tomorrow-we-die changed some girls' minds.

But at no time do I remember any suggestion that one would not get any dates if one "didn't."

New

IN MY MOTHER'S GENERATION, even with their particular war, most girls were virgins when they reached marriage.

And loss of virginity was not something my grandmother and her friends even considered as a remote possibility.

The men just did not dream of suggesting it.

But now we have a generation of little girls who have to DECIDE about virginity.

And we have boys who think nothing of refusing to date a girl "who doesn't."

Do you wonder the poor babies sometimes get their priorities haywire?

GIRLS' DELINQUENCY is going up faster than boys.

And something else that is new is a pleasure in violence.

Of course there were those frightful old women who knitted whilst the guillotine sliced aristocrats into two pieces. And those unspeakable Nazi females who enjoyed working in concentration camps.

But, by and large, we have always assumed that women abhor violence, senseless cruelty, and wanton destruction.

All mixed up with our inborn knowledge of just what it means to carry and

BUT GIRLS interviewed by I Paula James and reported in the Daily Mirror had this to say about the Margate battles they had cheered on:

"Listen—it gives you a kick, a thrill. It makes you feel funny inside. You get butterflies in your stomach and you want the boys to go on and on.

"You forget you may get hurt—you don't care about anything any more.

"It's bad luck on people who get in their way, but we can't do anything about that. You *can't* cry for *people you don't know*."

They had brought some purple hearts with them because they wanted to stay awake all night, for fear of missing something.

"The plan is to fight with the Rockers and that all day and smooch all night.

"People get hurt down here, but that's the way life is. You've got to get your kicks somehow. You've got to make up for all that boring time you are going to spend at work, next week."

What beats me about this beastly philosophy is that it is so UNFEMININE.

I UNDERSTAND a little about why things have changed.

Dwindling belief in hell fire and all that has removed the fear of everlasting punishment.

And increased earning for the youngest workers has snatched away father's economic big stick. It is likely that he earns little more than his son—with far more commitments.

The phrase "money means power" has suddenly taken on new meaning.

Teenagers are a whopping big MARKET—subject to their only special kind of keeping up with the Joneses.

To keep up you must have a motorbike or scooter, studded leather jacket or mod hat, pictured or initialled T-shirt, sneakers and a mass of discs.

Teenagers identify with each other as a group in a way Impossible in the days of puny pocket money.

Never since Regency days have the boys strutted and preened so fervently.

For what? Girls who think that life is for kicks? Who laugh at the senseless inflicting of pain?

Poor silly little things.

Scared

I KNOW that most youngsters are fine. That they spent their Whitsun climbing mountains, gazing at the best blossom for years, helping the aged, or taking baby brothers and sisters out.

I also suspect that most of the mad Margate mobs have had little in their lives to make them feel *really worthwhile*.

They were almost certainly in tow "streams" at school and may have felt unappreciated and uncongratulated most of their young lives.

They may feel that whatever work they do is worthless except as a means of earning.

I know that even poor schools or boring jobs do not defeat most young people.

But I am frightened by the maniac fringe of show-offs. Frightened that they, like rotten apples, will infect others. Frightened that the savage girl gangs of America will "happen" here. Frightened that more than a sprinkling of boys will get the daft idea that violence = virility.

We know that Socrates said it. I expect Adam said it. I hate to admit that I say it, too. But things *have* changed.