

But it was not of the proletarian merchants of love that I wanted to speak. What we all perceive wide-eyed and everyday anew is the *corruption of the bourgeois woman*, the young girls from so-called good families who are turning into whores. Countless marriages have become a façade for the most wanton sexual chaos. “Do any still exist,” I recently heard a young woman from Berlin asked a few months ago, “twenty-year olds who are not having an affair?” Twenty-year-olds? She could have said seventeen, perhaps even fifteen. [...]

What am I calling the overrunning of Berlin by whores? There are two aspects of the process. First, the financing of sexuality. Institutions such as previously flourished only in Budapest, houses with albums of photographs and prices for women waiting on call, have established themselves in Berlin, and, since the provincial cities do not want to miss out on progress, they will soon have branches in Leipzig, Hannover, and Breslau. Board a train traveling from Berlin to Frankfurt and you will find a quick connection in nearly every second-class compartment. But I have no desire to slander. There are many beginners who still bashfully avoid discussing the price. Nevertheless, the corrosion has set in. Every woman who has lost her memory for the experiences of her lower body—and this is the second, deeper feature—has fallen victim to the sexual corruption. Once the internal unity between psychic and sexual experience was broken, once the isolation of sexual experience became the norm, Berlin arrived at a Hellenism of its own. It celebrates its festivals in the dark rooms adjoining every dance hall.

[...]

Never has there been such an extraordinary consumption of anti-impregnation devices as now. And whatever the short-sighted social calculus might say in favor of contraceptives, this is clear: the daily use of devices to prevent pregnancy leads inexorably to whoredom on the part of the woman. She learns to enjoy but she forgets how to have a destiny. These preventatives lead to the inner debasement of the sacred act. It becomes insignificant and pleasant, like champagne guzzling and warm baths. A putrid craving for pleasure is written on her face. Woman no longer has a female destiny, and in exchange she acquires a routine that debases her.

The late Robert Hessen, not one to cower and no despiser of pleasure, once wrote that an age is to be judged by how it perceives the symbol of the mother and child. If so, then we are mired, from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, in the swamp of the most hopeless degeneration. Ask any one of these short-skirted, silk-stockinged females what she makes of the thought of carrying and bearing a child. She turns away from the possibility with an amused shudder. There has never been less reverence for the madonna and child.