

around the television set in a place more comparable to "home" in the English sense. Fortunately the French are more inclined than they were to devote a sizeable portion of their budget *au logement*. The agencies are well aware of this; the current racket is to demand a rent equivalent to one quarter or one fifth of a prospective tenant's income.

As far as standard of accommodation is concerned, the low-income social class in France does not yet enjoy the comforts offered to, say, Norwegians. In numbers of rooms they are not yet on the level of the British or the West Germans. During the last twenty years these Frenchmen have begun to pitch their demands higher; they no longer want a "water closet" but a bathroom. Who would now dare to say, as they used to, "If you give the workers baths, they'll put coal in them", though some still say this about the immigrants of course.

The French are convinced that it is easier, cheaper and more practical to do one's own decorating and repairs on something one owns than to rely on the bureaucracy of some housing association or that mysterious personality, *le gérant d'immeubles*, the house manager. As far as maintenance is concerned a glance at some of the high-rise buildings of the *Hexagone* or those on the Karl Marx Allee in East Berlin proves that what in theory belongs to everybody in fact belongs to nobody. It is altogether regrettable but that's the way it is. Behind a "Dunroamin", a council flat, or a "high class" apartment, stands the problem of "the quality of life." It is all to the

good that these purchasers of the future, now in revolt, should refuse to commit themselves "*sur plan*." The potential owner is a demanding consumer.

BEFORE THE LAST WAR the owner-occupier in France was the exception. In a few years the opposite will be true. In the 19th century Tocqueville summarised France as follows, "A society split in two: those who possess nothing, united in a common covetousness, and those who possess something, united in a common anguish. . . ." This is no longer the case as far as housing is concerned.

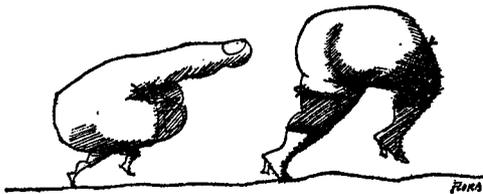
The urge to buy is not explicable solely by the scarcity of a reasonably priced rent market. Psychologically there are certain negative aspects to purchase. It implies a population of relative immobility, for initiative also implies an acceptance of movement.

Some people buy in order to rent to others. Are they taking a good long-term risk? With a potentially falling birth rate (which gives Michel Debré the shivers) reliance on housing, hoping for a big return on one's money, is a risky business. Perhaps we shall see the delightful old "*A louer*"—"To Let"—placards return to French doorposts and balconies.

Private property today is no longer a subject for fierce ideological confrontation. Here, in France, who would maintain that it is robbery? Proudhon, once immortal for saying, "*la propriété — c'est le vol*", is as dead as Marx.

A Philosopher at the Airport

Reception in Germany—By HERMANN LÜBBE



"WHAT a reception!" A foreign colleague, who had arrived in Germany by way of Frankfurt's new airport, was expressing his astonishment at our way of receiving guests there. How exactly? Everywhere as one comes through one is struck by prominent, garish invitations to visit the local sex-shops. I myself had never found this astonishing. Our country is teeming with sex-shops and other erotic

establishments nowadays. That is why, I suppose, it makes less of an impression on us when we come into contact with this flourishing branch of business next to the composed customs officials of the *Zoll-Amt* in Germany than it must make on unemancipated citizens of less progressive countries. The next time I landed in Frankfurt, I kept my wide eyes open. It's all quite true. Even the luggage trolleys for the enormous distances of the Super-Airport are labelled exclusively with their advertising slogans. It looked as if we had reached the land of pornography.

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Since it is all, when you really get down to it, simply indescribable, I won't go into any further detail here. I hope it will not be misconstrued as a sly advertising gimmick if I recommend that everyone takes a look for themselves at the next opportunity—who knows, it may even help to improve *détente* and the new European consciousness.

An inspection of the goods on offer is, incidentally, in accordance with the formal practices of our retail trade, without obligation to buy. However, free film previews are not on offer. Those who all too seldom come to Frankfurt will not be denied the opportunity of fully informing themselves elsewhere at other branches of this prosperous expanding enterprise. The name of the firm is difficult to miss (in fact the most well-known German name there is, and what is more, graced with the dignity of the academic doctor's title).

IT IS THE ACADEMIC ASPECT of the matter which perhaps explains how that which previously remained hidden like *puenda* in the harbour alleys and other out-of-the-way places now functions as a kind of German hallmark in the reception building of our largest airport (don't forget, the President of the *Bundesrepublik* himself took the trouble to open it). We are after all living in the free part of Germany; and it is of course by no means an article of faith among the masses, but rather a central theory of progressive academe, that only the sex-cultural revolution will make us truly free. The validity of this theory is undisputed among our intellectuals; and to be prudish is no longer a harmless, faintly comical quality, but a sure indicator of reactionary ideology.

What airport manager could still afford to scoff at the lucrative rents paid by sex boutiques simply because these boutiques refuse to con-

How "Happy" are the Germans?



Frankfurt
 "CHANGES in the values of the working class" was the subject of a report presented by Professor Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann at a recent West German conference. Based on demographic research, her figures reflect a remarkable relationship between the increasing material "bourgeoisification" of the working class since World War II and the increasing spread of an un-bourgeois "lower-class" mentality. They also show an interesting relationship between employee status, job dissatisfaction, and discontentment on the one hand

and self-employment, freedom and happiness on the other.

Dr Noelle-Neumann offered the following statistics to illustrate the improvement in the material living standards of the West German working class: Refrigerators were owned by 5% in 1955 and 93% in 1974—cars by 31% in 1964 and over 60% in 1975. When questioned about their major problems, 51% answered "money troubles" in 1954 but only 26% in 1972. One person in eleven had "no worries at all" in 1954 as opposed to one in three in 1972. According to workers' own estimates, their leisure time increased by one whole hour between 1954 (2½ hours) and 1973. 29% of workers took an annual

holiday trip in 1960, 49% in 1974. The social security system expanded, and savings increased over the same period.

DESPITE THIS "BOURGEOISIFICATION", middle-class values lost ground not only among the working class but also in the middle class itself. Dr Noelle-Neumann investigated this by putting questions about the aims of upbringing. "Thrift", "discipline", "modesty" and "courtesy" have suffered a perceptible and sometimes rapid decline in value; likewise respect for other people's property. Concepts such as "the ability to succeed" have gained ground; so have "tolerance and regard for other people's opinions." On the other hand, typically middle-class notions such as the view that "hard work pays", that "achievement connotes advancement" and "property merits respect", that recognition and education are things "worth striving for", have not been adopted by the working class.

It was found instead that employed (and even self-employed) persons tended to follow the "proletarian" system of values, this being invariably more noticeable among the younger generation than the older. Nearly 40% of young workers aspired to "a life without work." 44% of the working class declared themselves "fully satisfied" with their jobs in 1962 compared with only 38% in 1972, and the difference—42% (1962) to 30% (1971)—was even more marked among the young. Despite a definite improvement in their personal standard of living, 51% believed in 1964 that there was "no equitable distribution of wealth" in the Federal Republic. In 1971, 62% of the working class took this view.

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

form to conventional old-fashioned ideas of reception-hall décor? He would have failed to recognise the signs of the times and would merely have demonstrated that he did not know that we are now really free.

ONE MUST ADMIT that revolutionaries, versed in theoretical sexual politics, do not recognise the sex-shops as the realisation of their own liberation programme. On the contrary, they despise them as profit-orientated organisations designed to satisfy an *Ersatz* bourgeois need which will disappear when the ideal of authentic liberation has been achieved. In all fairness, airport managers and other mere pragmatists are not obliged to maintain such utopian ideals. They can—in fact they must—be practical in the “transitional” period and, if need be, even accept a kind of sexological empiricism. For this purpose, as we know, there are now research institutes in German universities (and lectures to go with them) from which we hear, for example, that a plethora of pornography and an unrepressed market for its gear and equipment can only favourably influence (i.e. reduce) the statistics of sex offences. That really does put the sex-shops in a progressive light; and in the future, I suppose, their clients will earn society’s gratitude for serving themselves here instead of going out to molest unwilling parties.

So far, so good. But to guarantee this beneficial effect is it really necessary, and is it really proven by the crime statistics out there at Frankfurt airport, that of all the imaginable services we could offer to arriving guests, this should be the first? Moreover, shouldn’t those who do find such stimulation helpful in their lives have the opportunity to follow it up, to follow through, just around the corner so to speak? Otherwise, or so the layman imagines at least, that which is supposed to serve psycho-hygienic social comfort will in fact only reinforce frustration. Up until now, as far as I could see, the local red lights have still only been used for the control of aircraft approaches.

I AM AFRAID that the attempt to provide a progressive apology for Frankfurt Airport-Sex is inadequate. The shops are unfortunately misplaced—if for no other reason than because of their missing infrastructure.

In the final instance, freedom is the freedom to choose other places as alternatives to places that are unacceptable. In this case that means: as free citizens and guests we must demand a tolerable alternative to our sex-crazed international airport when travelling to the *Goethe-Stadt*, Frankfurt-am-Main. After all, if such an alternative were to be offered to the rail-user, then in front of the *Hauptbahnhof* in Frankfurt he would run right into the same great new German freedom in all its potency (and this time with full infrastructure).

I sometimes wonder how the Government manages to welcome prominent guests at Germany’s most important junction without alienating them by unsolicited sex-market offers. Sex may play a role in diplomatic affairs, but porn doesn’t begin on the red carpet and erotica is not yet on the conference agenda. Will we soon be forcing upon the eyes of the traditionalist Tory lady who now leads the British Conservative Party the special offer of daring black-leather lingerie which is centrally displayed at the Frankfurt international airport? Is there no fear of a scandal when welcoming the stern President of the Women’s League? And how is it that our own much-travelled Lady Ministers of the West European countries accept it? Why, when confronted with the porno-parade, don’t their women’s-lib impulses take unrepressed free rein? I suspect that the answer is they are VIPs, and their routes to and from the aircraft are along special sex-free routes. Let us not begrudge them their porno-less Potemkin villages. But it would be nice if my colleagues from Zurich, or even from Moscow, in fact all normally endowed men and women from abroad, could also share these privileges. I cannot for the life of me explain to them why the first and last thing they receive on the main route to and from Germany is an invitation to browse in a sex-shop, even if Goethe did once say, “Enough of words, let me at long last see acts. . . .”

BOOKS & WRITERS

Garlands of Erudition

On Critics, Words & Opera—PETER PORTER

SOME YEARS AGO, at a not especially raffish party, I found myself being introduced to a fairly stout but attractive girl, who was necking with a man on a sofa. I did not want to intrude, but my hostess thought I should meet the girl as she was an opera singer and I am an opera devotee. When I heard her name I recognised her immediately as the highly personable Susanna of the performance of *Le Nozze di Figaro* I had seen two nights previously. She had looked slimmer on the stage. I told her how much I admired her performance and, warming to my role, I began to develop some of my pet theories about opera and its relationship to drama, literature and painting. She made polite replies and I failed to notice that her partner went out of the room. Eventually, as I was developing an especially ingenious argument, she interrupted me, saying, "Excuse me, this is very interesting, but I came here to get laid"—and left the room in pursuit of the man she'd been with on the sofa.

I relate this story for a purpose. Opera, for all of its attractions as either the modern equivalent of Greek Drama or as "*Gesamtkunstwerk*", and despite the temptations it offers to literary music-lovers to follow the further reaches of the higher criticism, is rooted in an almost garlicky physicality. Tenors really do flop to their knees and kiss holy pictures before storming on to the stage in *Aida*, and sopranos, roped in furs, eat gigantic meals after performances, and entertain lovers in opulent hotel suites.

More important than these jokey parodies of the behaviour of operatic performers is the heavy unreality of the conventions of the art itself. No matter how subtle the extensions of opera in the minds of score-readers and listeners, it remains an art of large gestures, physical domination and strong emotions. It is a salutary experience for opera lovers to go on to a stage and try to imagine the experience of singing and acting in such wide spaces in frequently elaborate costumes, with an orchestra between you and your audience. It must seem more like taking part in an army

tattoo than like playing a Bach fugue in your study. I also believe that this corporeal reality extends beyond singers, producers and conductors into the world of composers—Mozart and Wagner being affected by it as much as Bizet and Puccini.

There is therefore a paradox to contend with when writing about opera. Part of oneself (the part which tends to idealise loved works of art and which is more at home with scores and records than in the theatre) recognises opera as the most complex and dream-like of autonomous works of art. But another part is drawn to the tear-drenched and excessive, to the wallowing and the canary-fancying. I suspect that men of letters, being somewhat ashamed of the appeal made to their senses by the irrational and erotic elements in opera, prepare feats of paradoxical criticism to justify a taste their purely literary peers might otherwise hold against them. It is not simply that opera has dramatic texts which make comment easier—songs and cantatas have these also but do not attract literary commentators to anything like the same extent—but that its wide public and sensual ambience make the intellectualising of its processes a doubly attractive challenge. It is the only large form in music which can be made over into literature almost intact.

When W. H. Auden returned to the Christian communion in America in the '40s, he also, under tutelage of the far-from-Christian Chester Kallman, took up opera, declaring it to be for our age what Athenian drama was for the Greeks. Auden had always loved music, and in the '30s was prepared to interest himself in lieder (Wolf's *Ganymed* gets a plug in *Letter to Lord Byron*) and in keyboard music. After his conversion to opera, he never referred to absolute music in his poetry or his criticism again. His record notes to *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I Pagliacci* were rightly described by one commentator as the higher criticism at its most pretentious (though he failed to point out that, even so, they were more worth reading than most of the stuff which passes