

Other Scenes

John Wilcock

1968

Gradually the Kennedy legend is being demolished and there's hope that one day both JFK and Bobby will be seen in less idolatrous terms. To the rest of the world, JFK will always be a superhero but Americans are obsessive about the "White Knight" syndrome—the myth of the untarnished pure prince who will ride out of nowhere to save us all from everything. It's the favorite myth, oddly enough, of what rednecks describe as the pseudo-intellectual: the thinker with intellect but no intelligence, no depth or genuine humanity. The White Knight syndrome is a cop-out theory that somewhere is somebody who will solve all the problems that beset society. He will take power and sweep away inequities, injustice, greed, colonialism etc., etc. And, of course, once he's in power we won't have to bother about it any more ourselves will we? We can go on being vicious, greedy, rapacious, unfair to our fellow men, knowing that we already did our bit. Well, Kennedy (neither of them) was a White Knight. He was an ambitious, compromising, timid aristocrat who achieved power first and foremost through money and retained popularity largely through shrewd publicity. He was, admittedly, a cut above most of the disgusting illiterates who masquerade as our "leaders" but just by definition that's not saying very much.

And now here's a shock to the Jackie cult—their glamorous, smiling heroine turns out to be like any other rich, privileged, spoiled beauty who proves where her interests really lie by marrying a notoriously rapacious war criminal who stole several millions from the U.S. Government over a shipping deal but was neither punished nor barred from entry. The one redeeming feature about the White Knight syndrome is that no Knight can stay white for very long in this dirty world and the postulants who prostrate themselves before him initially are invariably the first ones to try to help him up when the tarnish begins to show through. But it never takes them long to find another.

If it is true that a good artist is always a revolutionary then their worst enemies today are the reactionary counter-revolutionaries that operate the big museums. So many of our major artists have been only too willing to sell their souls for approval by the handful of culture vultures who manipulate the art tastes of the mindless public. Rauschenberg is a classic example of a talented artist who lives today off the bloodstained dollars of the big corporations who approve (and finance) America's colonial wars. And how the poetic Robert Whitman whose enlarged chromium hubcaps were entertaining little baubles for the plush crowd that thronged the Jewish Museum last week. What have the museums got to do with art? They are well-guarded warehouses stuffed with useless trinkets (whose values have been inflated by the complacency and complicity of docile art "critics") and patrolled night and day by some of the toughest, rudest, uncouth rentacops that can be found anywhere. In the past few months in New York City, I have been manhandled by these goons at both the Jewish Museum, where I was ejected forcibly for giving my newspaper to some friends, and at the Museum of Modern Art where the Uncle Tom guards carried me out bodily because I sat in the press seats at a jazz concert in the garden. The Whitney, refusing to acknowledge my press credentials, won't even let me in. Make no mistake, the museums do not stand for art, only property. And it is the property of a privileged few, most of whom can be unmistakably identified as the enemies of all who seek social change. When will the artists recognise fascism in their midst?

London's *Sunday Times* (which plans to serialise it) has been touting the "authorized" Beatles biography (McGraw Hill, \$6.95) as some kind of earth-shaking event that will move mountains. Just publicity. The book (by Hunter

Davies) is undeniably interesting, and well-written but has no disclosures other than that the fab four smoke pot, which all heads knew already...

Seventy per cent of the jazz and pop music concerts (\$1 admission) organized by Schaefer beer in NY's Central Park this summer were sellouts. Major exception were five concerts of Indian music which lost money. Producer Ron Delsener booked them earlier in the year but by August "the fad was as cold as yesterday's curried rice"...Organizations that are changing the style of living, of publishing, of politics and education are listed in an invaluable guide, "Vocations for Social Change" (2010 B Street, Haywood, Calif. 94541)...

"The hippies may be goofy, unsocial, even drug addicts but they have the good sense to reject current values, to remain apart, to make merry while Rome burns" (Henry Miller)..

In Holland the society to protect animals will always lend you a pet whose owners have gone on vacation...Impulse Records have signed up Alice Coltrane (widow of John) to write original material.

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