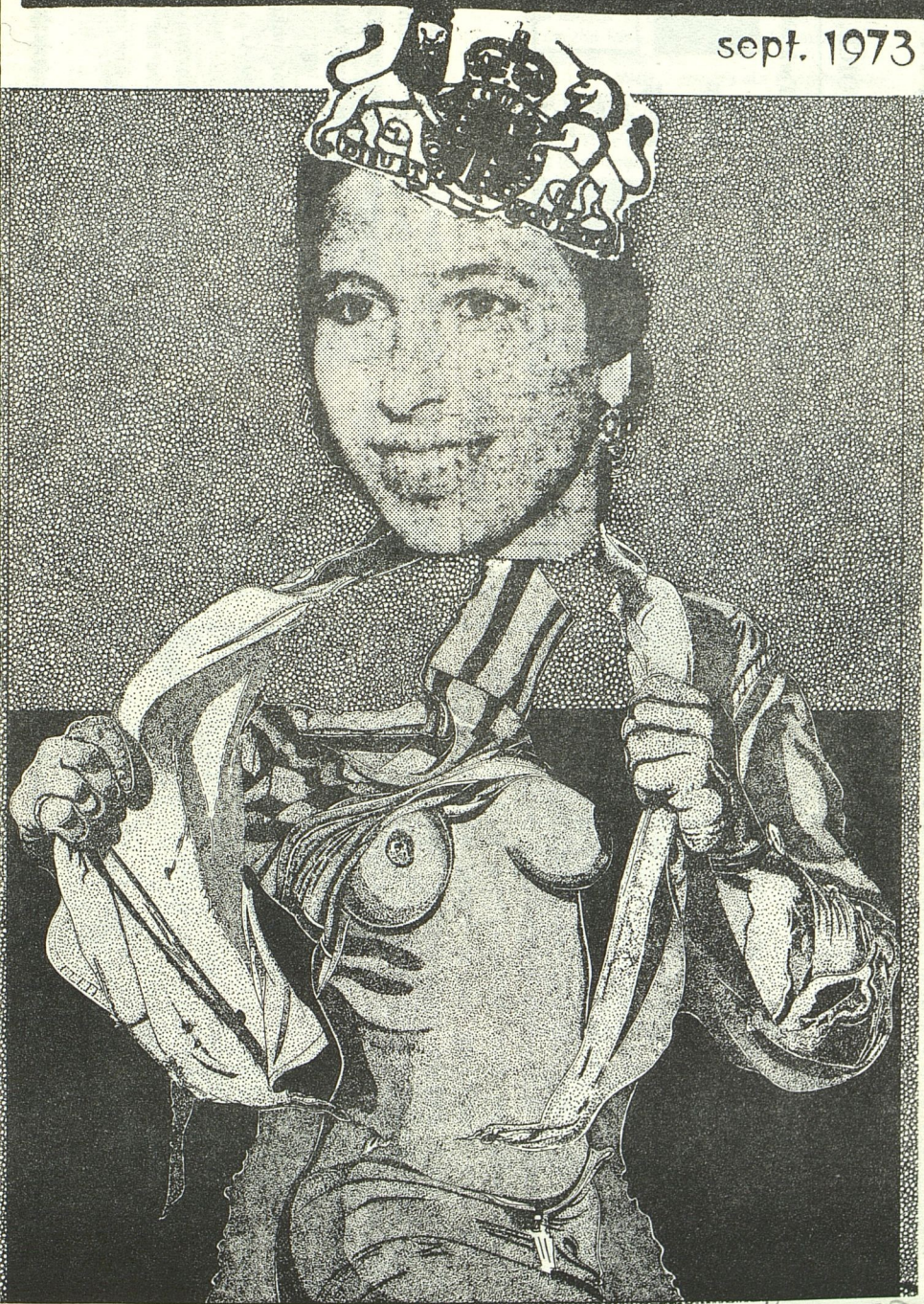


OTHER SCENES

sept. 1973



11-19-73. 67

THE EDITOR....

the village VOICE, 6/1/66

Dear Subscribers:

The beautiful issue I had prepared for you was unwittingly sabotaged by the typesetter who lost half the copy.

So this makeshift issue fills the gap until our next reports on Japan later in the year. We hope to be in Australia for Xmas and back to Europe early '74.

Also coming up for subscribers soon is a Nomad Almanac offering wisdom and sound advice for travelers all the year.

We are working on a book about magic & magical sites and would appreciate hearing from anybody who has information or would care to join the research. Because it will be as comprehensive as we can make it the book will hopefully contain reports from people into almost every aspect of this limitless subject. If you have knowledge of specific sites or may be studying any area of magic please contact us.

Blessed be.

John Wilcock

address John Wilcock's mail to Box 8, New York 10014

John Wilcock

THE VILLAGE SQUARE



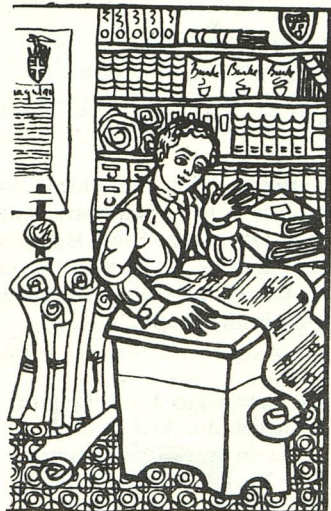
The column of lasting in-significance.



525

Ideas for 1966

Buy stock in the Zig Zag, Bambu, or Rizla cigarette paper companies. . . . paint a mural on the ceiling of the Cinematheque (125 West 41st Street) considering what a high percentage of lobby loungers it has have red, white, and blue lapel buttons made up that state "Everything Will Be Fine In '69" persuade Charles Hamilton to open a farm club agency for unknown auto-graphs (I offered him mine for 19 cents—no reply) assemble kits containing forged copies of press cards for all the major museums, galleries, ball clubs, and TV studios. . . . invent an INTERESTING jig saw puzzle that offers some incentive for completion (i. e., actual photograph of a toilet whose walls are covered with witty, fascinating, graffiti) wage peace.



Fleet Street Fraud

Shortly after arriving in England this year I had an offer from London's biggest newspaper, the Daily Mirror (circ: 5 million) to do a series of mini-columns about the British scene (through the eyes of a former Daily Mirror reporter, myself, who'd been away for 20 years).

At the time I was working on a special issue of the International Times, London's underground newspaper, and so I felt it would be good publicity for this project. I undertook the assignment — which was to pay £200 — despite my misgiving about working with the straight press which I had discovered, in common with most of my fellow radicals, was invariably untrustworthy in its dealings.

The columns were to run the following week and were duly turned in on time. But they didn't run the next week, nor the week after (when a strike eliminated one day), nor the week after that (when a day was lost to Easter), nor the week after that.

At which point, the IT issue having come and gone, I got pissed off with the person who'd commissioned

them, a typical Fleet Street smoothie named Michael Hellicar, and wrote and told him that he'd treated me shittily and the columns were now out of date (several of the subjects having been discussed ad finitum by other writers in the Mirror in the interim). I told him to drop the idea, send me the bread and forget all about it.

Well, now it's six months later and despite several letters and the intervention of my agent, I still haven't been paid. What's more Hellicar is now claiming (dishonestly) that the agreement was for "payment on publication". In other words he doesn't propose to pay me a penny.

You can perhaps understand why underground press people have always hated dealing with the unprincipled representatives of Fleet Street and its equivalents around the world. At any rate, for curiosity's sake, here are the mini-columns.



On formality: "The British are so formal, I'd forgotten that. Most of my friends in London are American or Australian and they have few English friends themselves because they've only been here a year or two and it takes time to get to know the British. Even I find it hard to feel close to people who wear a collar and tie at the seaside.

On flowers: "One of the nicest things about London is all the flowers. Cities aren't so usually magnificently green."

On immigration: "For a country that affects to like dogs so much they make it very hard for someone

to bring one into the country. Six months quarantine! When I mention this to my friend he said, 'Oh yes but they're *foreign* dogs you're talking about.'

On law observance: "Quite a few of my friends bought cars on the continent and got foreign plates so they could drive around London without getting tickets. This would be second nature to most Americans but the British always seem shocked by it."

On televisions: "Why does everybody accept the government's right to restrict us to three channels? There are 11 in New York and at least it means that you can stay up all night and watch movies. I have a simple plan: allow all the channels that are technologically possible and levy their commercial profits to subsidise the BBC."

On service: "I bought a copying machine in New York so I called the 3-M company in London to see what kind of an adapter plug I'd need; They took my name and address and phone number and called me back ten days later. But I'd already been to a shop and bought a plug a week before."

On post offices: "It's true everybody is politer but I get so impatient when I have to wait behind people cashing pensions, depositing savings and opening giro accounts when all I want is a stamp. Why not a separate window for that?"



On ice cream: "I don't know what it's made from but when it melts it looks inedible. Strange because the real cream is marvellous."

On cleanliness: "You've no idea how fantastic it is to live in an apartment without cockroaches. There is no such thing in New York; even the Waldorf Astoria has had cockroaches turning up in the rooms."

On puns: Americans don't dig puns but the English do. And so do I. Wit and charm are scarce commodities in New York, but there's plenty of both here."

On police: "They certainly don't make me nervous as the storm-troopers types in the States. But I think it inevitable that one day all police will be armed. I asked one whether he agreed with this and he replied that many more of them are already armed than the public suspects."

On marijuana: "America has just about resigned itself to the fact that millions of people smoke grass and so they might as well accept it. But in England they're still arguing about whether a joint is harmful or not. Why don't they ask the man who smokes one?"

On transport: "Amber, my American wife, says the reason why the underground shuts down early is upper-class arrogance. The rich can afford taxis or cars and their attitude is that the poor slobs ought to get home early so that they can get up and keep making profits for their bosses."

On privileges: "People keep telling me class-structure has broken up but it still looks the same to me. There's still a privileged group skimming off the cream from the top of

society while telling the workers that to strike is to 'hold the country to ransom'. They're making virtually unrestricted profits from other people's hardships and saying, "£17 a week is good enough for the likes of you"."

On queuing: "Obviously people love waiting in line. I always think about that wartime story about the woman who joined the queue from force of habit, and, told it was for the Tales of Hoffman, said: 'Oh well it'll do for a stew.'"



Winkles and welks can still be found here and there in England's back streets but street food isn't one of this country's staples. Street food is stuff you can buy and eat almost on the run and the Americans are particularly adept at producing it.

The garlic-tipped hot dogs served by Nathans of Coney Island at its new branches in Times Square and Greenwich Village; gargantuan sandwiches from Bimpy bases whose soft rolls are stuffed then topped with handfuls of shredded lettuce, onions and sliced tomato; and the reliably uniform hamburgers from the nationwide MacDonaldis and Wetsons chains are all native American street food.

And increasingly, prompted by higher restaurant prices and an infectiously casual lifestyle,

they're being supplemented by Mexican tacos, Greek souvlaki, Italian pizza, Japanese chicken on a stick, French crepes and Belgian waffles. More and more Americans these days are snatching a snack instead of making a meal.

In England most people still sit down to eat. There's fish and chips, of course, but not much else. The British have never been good at imitating other country's street food and apart from pub snacks the over-the-counter concept has so far failed to catch on. As for the food that is actually sold in London streets, most of it is abominable. It's a moot point whether the bacteria count compensates for what it lacks in nutrition, but either way it's no bargain.

In Hong Kong where a bowl of steaming dog meat is a fragrant, though illegal, delicacy – the aftertaste is said to linger for days – the vendors at least have the honesty to label it as such. But a "hot dog" or "hamburger" in most countries is as suspect as a wartime sausage in Stalingrad.

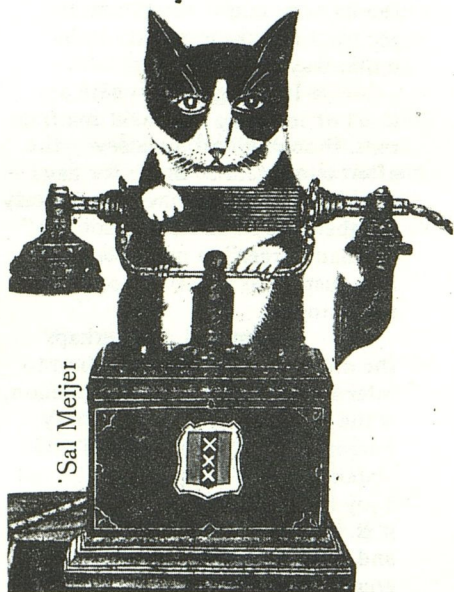
The major, and perhaps the only American contribution to international cuisine, in my opinion, is the hamburger. A good quality burger, cooked with love and understanding, is a thing of beauty and a joy for everyone. Simple though it is, it's hard to duplicate properly and most countries simply make a greasy mess of it.

But in the US where 2,000 Macdonald's counters daily sell 5 million burgers (topped by 7,000 gallons of gooey ketchup) the customers always know exactly what to expect. And the opening of a new branch, especially abroad, invariably raises standards and lowers prices locally.

I was in Paris recently when a Macdonalds branch opened on the Champs Elysee and in Tokyo when the familiar red roof blossomed down on Ginza, and in both places all the Americans who den-

ounced street food as "plastic" couldn't wait to get their hands on a Big Mac plus some of their deliciously shoestring chips. One thing you can say for street food; it's cooked while you wait and can be eaten while you wait.

When I left England back in the Fifties, Woolworths was serving what it described as a hot dog — in reality a delicious pork sausage in a bun. Unfortunately they soon discovered their mistake and started to imitate the real thing. It was disastrous. Some things, especially native street food, are best left alone.



Why is there no English Andy Warhol? An American friend of mine thinks he knows the answer. It's because Britain, he says, "has no revolutionary consciousness." Americans are brought up on revolution, taught about George Washington, Tom Paine, Nathan Hale at school, and they're always ready to champion some new challenger to the Establishment. Especially the art Establishment.

Art and culture, of course, are especially exploitable by the media and hence the fantastic

growth of the public relations business, the cynically-operated publicity machine. Warhol's antics, and the freaky clique around him, are made to measure for the media machine and he's never made any secret of welcoming any and all publicity.

The recent furore over David Bailey's ITV movie on Warhol was a fortuitous example of that very American phenomenon, the hype, which can be defined as selling the package rather than the contents, the full flowering of which could be observed over the David Cassidy affair. The hype is still fairly new to England but gaining ground fast, with television acting as it's most obedient servant. (There's no real reason, of course, except for Government veto, why London shouldn't have 11 television channels like New York, with the BBC's two outlets being financed by a percentage of profits from the other nine commercial channels.

Americans are addicted to television and, like junkies, need bigger and better sensations to get them off. They've seen moon walks, street riots, assassinations and even wars in wide screen, living colour (to what extent did the Vietnam war hype sales of colour sets) and it seems inevitable that they'll one day gloat over exploding 747s, public executions and galactic collisions.

But — to get back to Warhol — the main reason why there isn't an English counterpart is that one isn't needed. One Warhol is enough because his message is about things that are universal. He's a mirror that reflects certain gritty aspects of the society in the way that Hogarth did in his day, or Toulouse Lautrec for that matter. Predictably, the people who don't like what they see want to smash the mirror.

I've known Andy for

years and it's nothing new to hear people put him down and argue over his manners and motives. When he began filming I used to go along to hold the microphone, get everybody stoned. It was just a lot of fun watching him learn how to make movies. A true originator he would always do something new ("Warhol" a critic once said, "never does anything the same way once") and so the people around him did things differently too. With the camera on them burning up film at the rate of \$1 000 a minute his superstars were forced to improvise and it was true improvisation, real life in fact, not something rehearsed in advance.

Gradually Andy learned about film and introduced new tricks, gradually, too, he became more proficient and hence more commercial. Now he operates what amounts to a 1970 Hollywood-type studio. But his films are still "realer" than most, still rarely scripted, and his stars are still mostly being themselves.

There isn't the freedom in England for this kind of thing. Firstly, film-makers don't have the incentive to be particularly experimental; secondly it takes a lot of money (Warhol was a \$60,000-a-year commercial artist long before he became the king of pop art); and lastly, radically new departures of this nature make the English public nervous and rivals jealous.

It's a pity, I think, but the creative atmosphere in England is stifling and I don't see it likely to change very much.



Sheffield, the city in which I was born and where I worked until migrating across the Atlantic 20 years ago, would seem to be an unlikely candidate for an international city – the Istanbul of the North. But while I've been touring the world; writing travel books about India, Mexico and Japan; publishing in New York and editing underground papers in California, smoky, sooty Sheffield (as we always knew it) has been changing too.

Sheffield still boasts of selling its specialised steel by the pound where other smelters sell by the ton, but today other products – stainless steel, jewellery, pewter, licorice allsorts – also boost its export trade. Sheffield is flourishing and I found it's atmosphere stimulating.

Vulcan, the Roman god of fire and metal-working who peers down from atop Town Hall, now overlooks a centre whose conversion to smokeless fuel has eliminated almost two-thirds of the soot ("only" 17 tons per square mile now drops on the city monthly) and which, civic officials claim, is "the cleanest industrial city in Europe." Hungarians and Hindus, Swiss and Sengalese all have been visiting to see how it's done.

From Hong Kong and Helsinki, Costa Rica and Chicago delegations arrive to admire the massive housing projects which have transferred 2,000 families at a time out of dingy slums and into imaginative self-contained complexes with trucks delivering milk on 14th floor "decks", and near enough to the city centre for residents to walk to work.

The latest influx has been from Sweden. Since Sheffield participated in an international fair at Goteborg this winter there have been half-a-dozen excursions, with 300 or 300 people at a time, spending 25 hours on a boat each way just for the pleasure of bargain shopping in Sheffield stores, spending two nights in the city, seeing a football game and rushing back home.

"The Swedes love English

football", explains city publicity chief Peter Wigley. But even he concedes that the city which invented organised football back in 1857 hasn't managed to win an FA cup since 1935.

Walking down one of the midtown streets I peered into a sculptured hole which serves as a combined traffic roundabout and air vent into an underground city of shops and flower-lined passageways — an imaginative version in miniature of Tokyo's vast subterranean shopping centres. Fargate, which runs from the town hall to the cathedral, has been turned into a pedestrian mall, blocking off traffic in the progressive style of many American cities.

My niece Sally proudly showed me around the Crucible, the city's elegant arena theatre where she designs costumes, a controversial drama centre modelled after Sir Tyrone Guthrie's proscenium at Canada's Stratford.

But then Sheffielders have always taken their inspiration from abroad as well as exporting many of their products (is there a Sheffielder anywhere in the world who doesn't inspect the cutlery when he sits down in a strange restaurant?). My grandfather worked for that turn-of-the-century tycoon J.G. Graves who was so turned on by the romance of the West (all those pioneers opening up virgin territory and sending back to Sears, Roebuck for their rolls of calico, pianos and tubs of butter) that he became Britain's first mail order magnate.

Grandad told me how Graves challenged a bureaucratic post office that wouldn't pick up his parcels by sending all his employees down to the post office carrying one parcel apiece. The lines stretched for blocks until the post office capitulated and adapted their rules to suit the new-fangled mailers.

Sheffield was good to Graves and in gratitude he donated much of the land that still forms the city's famous "Green Belt" (one-tenth of the city is open parkland),

one of whose delights was that I used to take nine-mile walks through woods and parks — *all within the city* — and still can today.

Of course there are black spots: Attercliffe, the ill-named Brightside, Grimesthorpe (more appropriate), Pitts Moor, all display miles of ugly factories, squalid dingy sheds and shacks. "Behind those shabby walls", a local reporter told me over a beer, "is often sophisticated machinery worth millions of pounds. The factory owners make huge profits but won't even spring for a coat of paint to brighten things up. It's still true that where there's muck there's money.

"What's more, he added pointedly, "for a city that's had a Labour council for most of 30 years, there's precious little Socialism to be seen."

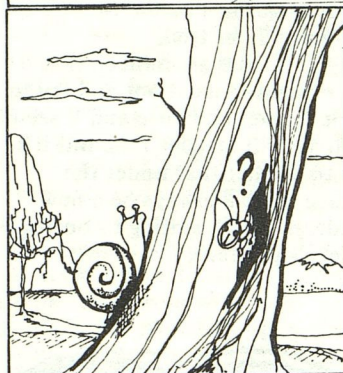
I had to agree with him. But despite all that I enjoyed my trip.



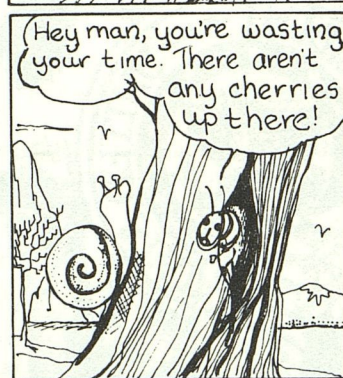
The underground press hasn't made many waves lately but it's still very much alive. In fact there are probably more angry publications to the square mile in England today than there are in America where, in a dingy office on New York's Lower East side, I helped to

ZEN COMICS

One cold winter morning on the side of a frozen cherry tree



(Hey man, you're wasting your time. There aren't any cherries up there!



There will be when I get there



found the Underground Press Syndicate just six years ago.

What exactly is the underground press? is a question that still gets asked. And, though it may not be the best of terms, it does cover almost any non-commercial publication that deals in dissent, non-conformity or unpopular opinions with no other outlet.

To the professional eye undergrounds are sloppy, hard to read and sometimes repetitive. But it is important to look beyond the ragged type, the technical imperfections and listen to what these angry voices are saying. At present they are all very much into how to deal with those problems that bother everybody but the rich: housing, escalating rents and prices, squatting, police brutality.

The fast-growing North Devon *Snail*, for example, has initiated a squatting campaign aimed at "landlords who keep their cottages and houses empty solely to cash in on the ever higher property prices". Manchester's *Free Press* and *Mole Express* both concentrate heavily on tenant's rights, the *Mole* adding: "We believe in the self-organisation of the people, where they live and where they work and not in 'socialism' being brought to them by any outside group."

Originally the underground press came to prominence, in both England and America, for it's cynically anarchistic comment on national and international issues. But today — whether it be Durham's *Mother Grumble*, Edinburgh's *Roots*, Barnsley's *Playgue*, Cardiff's *Broken Arrow*, the Rochdale *Rap* or Hackney's *Gutter Press* — they are mostly concerned with their own communities or specific injustices.

Streatham's *Street* suggests that police are guilty of "racism and prejudice against minority groups in evicting squatters; the stylist *Gay News* echoes this alleg-

ation but adds philisophically: "What is considered brutal on this side of the Atlantic would be welcomed as positively benevolent on the other." The femlib *Red Rag* explores what it calls women's inferior role in the trade unions. The *Progressive Student* is aimed at those "who want to change the world."

Dozens of radical, political tabloids — Marxist, Stalinist, Trotskyite, Maoist (doesn't the right wing know about underground publishing) — flood the counter culture bookstores, but most of them are too narrowly ideological to appeal to a general audience. Indeed, it's hard to see how they ever increase their readership. But the *Socialist Worker* with its bold headlines and provocative make-up proves, as Fleet Street has always known, that the dullest story can be packaged for appeal.

In general it's true that the more professional the appearance, the greater the chance for success (*Time Out*, for example) but there are exceptions. BIT, London's subcultural information and referral service, produces infrequent surveys of legal advice, hitch-hiking data, crash pad listings and up-to-date news of campaigns to legalise marijuana. *Bitman* letters, though mimeographed, are always fascinating and sell well — a communications media, it boasts, "that it is totally programmed by it's users."

The difficulties of underground publishing can hardly be exaggerated. Papers are beset with constant money worries. Advertisers are wary. Newstands downright abusive. Local authorities apply pressure through random police, fire and building inspections. And unlike in the States where printing is fast and cheap, and censorship now almost non-existent, British undergrounds are turned away or harried by censorious printers who

often please their own prudish moral standards before business. (Sex and porn mags, on the other hand, seem to have comparatively few troubles).

London's *International Times (IT)* has survived the longest. It has been busted on obscenity charges but has come through with it's sense of humour only slightly bruised: "Last Tango — the unbutt-ered facts" proclaimed a recent IT review; "Hiya Justice Lovers!" began an ad for *Cozmic Comics* on the *Nasty Tales* trial.

IT has announced that it will straighten itself out and try to reach a larger audience and it seems likely they'll manage this. But it's safe to predict that under the surface there'll always be a new "underground" waiting to outrage society's puritans.



R. Pinger

SHELLEY'S POETS

T R E E

A silver tie and a diatribe on Art were the catalysts that sparked my friendship with poet-artist-photographer, Gregory-John-Martin Portley. I was at an East Side literary party when this brown eyed, dark haired young man walked in wearing a reflecting tie that bore the invisible inscription..... NOTICE ME. He read his biting commentary on a Dali opening and when I asked permission to publish it in my *Other Scenes* column it was the beginning of a conversation that has lasted years.

This Gemini whose Harlem childhood made Oliver Twist's struggles seem like they were written by Hans Christian Anderson spent two of his formative years in a Catholic orphanage. He can still remember the nuns holding his head down the toilet flushing constantly till they had subdued him. But the revolutionary spirit of his Spanish grandfather who had fought in the Mexican revolution combined with a grandmother who was descended from Robert Burns was stronger than the trauma of broken home and Greg was not to be subdued.

His genius survived a limited parochial school education and after attending Columbia he opened up to the influences of Yeats and Hopkins in poetry, Bach and Purcell in music, the films of Dreyer, the novels of Stendhal, the photography of Oleksak and the paintings of Matisse.

Before puberty his mother gave him his choice of religions so he decided to worship at the Museum of Natural History. There he developed a feeling for nature and found he liked collecting butterflies while other boys his age were out collecting fly balls.

He sees himself as a 'religious' man and his belief includes the words of Christ, Freud, Marx, and the I Ching and the holiness of love and fraternity.

'There's only one problem facing mankind. That's its reunification and mankind can't be reunified until it can see Christ and Freud speaking the same words', says Greg. Even his views on writing have a metaphysical quality when he states.....

'Originally I wrote to chronicle myself. It has become Frankensteinian. I would burn everything I've ever written if I wouldn't have to face my conscience. Sometimes I feel I continue to write in order to justify the time I wasted trying to. Occasionally I feel I am a poet. It is what I must say in order to be silent. I have a great desire to forswear the verbal. Poetry is X, the unknown factor, notation for a primal vitalistic force or substance. It makes living with question marks easier. The poet is the companion of the articulate emotion'.

Though one of his favourite poetic lines may be Brooke's 'I have need to busy my heart with quietude', his life certainly hasn't taken that direction. He's managed to squeeze into his twenty-seven years a one man art show, a WBAI radio programme, seven protest arrests, publication of his poems, a turn at naturalism, an editorial career and in his role as photographer he's currently negotiating to make a documentary film in Brazil.

'We are all a little bit like glass', he's said and perhaps it's because of his 'willingness to believe in the illusory grief of love' that his paradoxical personality won't let him rest. His life is a constant struggle against definitions of sanity, equivocators, the *old* and the *new* in politics, kings and despots, engine noise and dirty dishes.

Shelley Lustig

AAK 7870

notes

The British must be the most petty-minded little creeps in the world. I can't count the times I've been *sold* a bag in a store so that the things I had just paid for could be carried home. Most stores complain they can't afford to give away cheap plastic bags (this after you've just spent two or three pounds in their premises). And yet shops in Greece and even poorer countries can afford to give their customers bags. Odd. To add insult to injury British stores usually charge 2p per bag (about a nickel) so they're not only making a profit on the goods they sell you but also on the bag they sell you to carry the goods.

And this isn't an isolated example of meanness. Many's the time I've tried to find a public phone and, in desperation, gone into a cafe or pub to use their public phone only to be told that 'this phone is just for the use of customers'. Usually the proprietor literally takes the phone out of your hand. How petty can people get?

Urban Gwerder, the nicest guy in Switzerland, has found the lure of publishing too hard to resist and despite having no money and despite having taken a financial hammering over *Hotcha!* (Zurich underground paper) is now presenting *Hot Raz Times*, a graphic-oriented paper so unusual that even the shape is unique. He calls it a *Z'* almanach and accompanies it with an offbeat *Zalender* (with months named *Fanzy*, *Nifty*, *Fuck*, *Clown* and *Big Note*) and rare material from the *Zapparchives*, his collection of documentation about Frank Zappa. Send one dollar (or 50p) for sample copy or 10 dollars (£4) for annual subscription to Zark, Box 2468, CH-8023, Zurich, Switzerland.

Yale University Library expressed interest in buying a complete

set of back issues of *Other Scenes*. There are only 19 sets in existence, despite the fact that about 10,000 copies a year were given away for at least one third of the magazine's six-year existence in New York. At any rate, when well-endowed Yale found that a set would cost 100 dollars they screamed with rage about the price being 'exorbitant' and asked for their invoice to be cancelled.

In the lull between England's spring and fall soccer seasons an enterprising outfit called *Investapools* came up with something for the country's hordes of incurable small gamblers to play with: a weekly betting form in which *Stock Exchange* names take the place of the more familiar football teams. "For example, *Allied Breweries* instead of *Arsenal*, and *Woolworths* instead of *West Ham*" as the promoter archly puts it.

Bettors on *Investapools* choose their shares from fifty big name companies listed on the *Stock Exchange*, attempting to forecast which will make the highest profit (or lowest loss) on an imaginary £100 invested for that week.

Accompanying the multi-colored betting forms each week is a mimeographed table listing which companies showed the biggest profits in previous weeks. Dividend payoffs have been relatively small so far — a recent winner made about \$350 profit on his 3¢ stake — but *Instapools* (forms free from Box 50, *Enfield, Middlesex, E.N.I.*) often produce a proportionately bigger payoff than investing in the shares

OTHER SCENES is the collective name for all items published by John & Amber Wilcock whose permanent address is BCM-OSCENES, London WC1V, U.K. Subscriptions begin with the *Witches' Almanac* each spring and run for one year, \$10. *Nomad*, included in the OS sub, appears irregularly and is available to non-subscribers at any time for \$1 for current issues; a *Nomad* press card "good for what you can get away with" is included for \$2.