



INTERVIEWS WITH MASTER PHOTOGRAPHERS

James Danziger and Barnaby Conrad III
Paddington Press

Photographers are like most people. Every now and again they need some inspiration or encouragement. With this in mind I started reading *Interviews with Master Photographers* by James Danziger and Barnaby Conrad III.

The interviews are about people and how they approach their work. Photographers like Yosuf Karsh and Snowdon feature alongside Arnold Newman and Brett Weston. But the photographer who made me think in a fresh way about photography was Imogen Cunningham. She was born in 1883 and first started work printing on platinum paper the Indian pictures

of Edward S Curtis. Later she opened a portrait studio in Seattle photographing in a romantic soft focus style. She married in 1915 and, restricted by the responsibilities of marriage, her photography became directed towards the plant forms around her house. She later divorced her husband and returned to portraiture and nudes.

When asked how she dealt with criticism of her work she replied: 'If anyone I ever photographed disliked my work I'd throw it in the waste basket in front of them and say nothing. I will not defend anything. . . . Wait a hundred years. You'll never hear of me then. The scene will be relieved of one object more'. I know this not to be true of Imogen Cunningham, as she will be remembered for long time especially for her attitude at the age of 93 when asked for her favourite photograph. She replied, 'The one I'm going to take tomorrow'.

Eamonn McCabe, photographer

THE COUNTRY BETWEEN US

Carolyn Forché

Harper and Rowe

The Country Between Us is rare reading, a truly political poetry that refuses the glib and mandatory separation of private from

public upon which so much contemporary verse writing is predicated. Eight extraordinary poems in this slender volume recover the author's three years in El Salvador: death squads, dismemberments, tortures, US complicity, peasant endurance, revolutionary courage, all memorably imaged in language as natural as breathing.

'The colonel returned with a sack used to bring groceries home. He spilled many human ears on the table. They were like dried peach halves. There is no other way to say this. He took one of them in his hands, dropped it into a water glass. It came alive there. I am tired of fooling around he said. As for the rights of anyone, tell your people they can go fuck themselves. He swept the ears to the floor with his arm and held the last of his wine in the air. Something for your poets, no? he said. Some of the ears on the floor caught this scrap of his voice. Some of the ears on the floor were pressed to the ground.'

This is not easy reading. In *Return*, addressing a friend in Los Angeles who has given up the struggle, she addresses to all first world activists who fall to whining about impotence:

'Your problem is not your life as it is in America, not that your hands, as you tell me, are tied to do something. It is that you were born to an island of greed and grace where you have this sense of yourself as apart from others. It is

TO BUILD JERUSALEM

'Probably the best pictorial essay on working class life ever produced' *Yorkshire Miner*

'Reminds backsliders why the Welfare State came about' *Guardian*

'This book will spark off interest and encourage study beyond its pages' *Tribune*

This book is easily the most expertly presented and richly chronicled record of its subject' *Arts Review*

John Gorman's much acclaimed photographic remembrance of working class life 1875-1950 is now reprinted and available in hardback only from the publisher Scorpion Books Ltd
377 High Street, London E15 4QZ. Price £12.95 plus £1.80 post and packing.

The paperback is available from the publisher at £6.95 plus £1.65 p & p or from any good bookshop.

REVIEWS

not your right to feel powerless. Better people than you were powerless.

You have not returned to your country, but to a life you never left.'

There is something of Akhmatova here, something of Neruda. And there is something of a new original and ancient voice for which, as for the Haida Indians of North America, the verb to breathe and the verb to make poetry are the same world. Good news in a grim year.

Trevor Griffiths, playwright

WILL OF IRON

Gerard Melia

Longman

The working class hero found little place in books published for children and young people until the 60s, but authors are showing a growing confidence and skill. *Will of Iron* by Gerard Melia, is about the childhood and youth of Will Thorne who battled his way (literally) through poverty, illiteracy and the brutality of the employers of the unskilled, to become union leader and MP. Done with humour and sympathy as a play-script with short sharp memorable scenes which can be acted out easily in class, this is highly readable. It's published

by Longman in their Knockout series — intended for reluctant readers. That, some 80 years after his first Parliamentary efforts for working class education, should give the ghost of Will Thorne a grim smile.

Bob Leeson, author

THE JUNGLE

Upton Sinclair

Penguin

The place of fiction in catalysing political change is rarely emphasised. The impact of a powerful narrative, based on well researched material, can often reach people who would not conceive of opening a book on political theory. It is therefore somewhat to my shame that I was unaware of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* before this year. We who fight today's inequalities still have giants to battle with but they are dwarfs compared to the tyrants of 80 years ago. Chicago of the previous century exploited the poor and the weak — particularly the immigrants to whom the USA had been presented as a haven of idealism — systematically and devastatingly. Upton Sinclair's passionate tale of the exploitation of a Lithuanian immigrant and his family, and the cynical flouting of even the

meagre regulations that then existed in the huge meat stockyards is the kind of book that one devours and yet is frightened to turn the page for fear of the next hammer blow.

The impact of *The Jungle* was immense. Upton Sinclair lived long enough to see the transformation of the meat trade and a substantial clearing-up of political and union abuses. He deserved his recognition.

Michael Meadowcroft, Liberal MP

FORWARD EVER!' 3 YEARS OF THE GRENADIAN REVOLUTION.

Speeches of Maurice Bishop

Pathfinder Press


Well, the psychological torture applied by the Pentagon to the New Jewel Movement produced the sudden loss of nerve (if not the collapse of morale) intended. Meanwhile, BBC TV's *News* blends smoothly into the 'Great White Warrior Rescues The Natives From Themselves And Saves Civilisation As We Know It' movies which envelopes it. (Where is the Deerhunter Soap Opera being filmed *this* week? Guatemala? Zaire? Pakistan? East Timor?)

But history needn't only be the propaganda of the Top Dog: the New

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Louis Dupré £18.00 hbk

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MARX'S SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF CULTURE
LOUIS DUPRÉ

REVIEWS

Testament has done nothing if not focus our attention on the loser in history. Fennis' Augustine, fired, effectively, by Fleet Street hacks from his post as high commissioner for Grenada and the Grenadines, has said, 'This is not the time for tears'. Maurice Bishop and his friends' work will surely develop and flourish, like the phoenix from the ashes, as long as we all remember their New Jewel Movement. This inspiring collection of some of the speeches of Maurice Bishop is a moving record of the dedicated attempt to explain and convey their problems, decision, actions — and their predators' reactions — to their fellow Grenadians during the first three fruitful years of their revolution. This is the real thing. Backward? Never!

Robert Wyatt, musician

THE BLACK JACOBINS

C L R James

Allison and Busby

My favourite book? An impossible choice, for there are so many books jostling for priority. Therefore, I have settled for the most compelling book that I have read recently. *The Black Jacobins*. This historical study of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the

outstanding black leader of the slaves in the French Colony of San Domingo (now Haiti) in the period following the French Revolution of 1789, was written by C L R James in the 30s.

Why does the book have such an appeal? It is a damning indictment of slavery, and inspiring in its account of the revolt of the slaves. But it doesn't present an idealised picture, and helps to explain why the 20th century outcome was the rule of Papa Doc and Baby Doc. The special feature of the book is the brilliant characterisation of Toussaint L'Ouverture. We see the way he was moulded by history and his unique influence on it. We see his great qualities and his weaknesses.

**Betty Matthews,
Marxism Today editorial board**

MARX AND HUMAN NATURE

Norman Geras

Verso £2.95 pbk

In one sense, I got most pleasure this year from re-reading Hazlitt's essays, which I hadn't even looked at since student days; in another, from Tony Gould's biography of that modern Hazlitt, Colin Maclnnes. The latter may largely have been the result of

identification: I was bound to enjoy the life-story of anyone who lived off weekly essays, and demanded to be paid for them in cash. In fact, it surprises no one more than myself that I am finally selecting Geras's slender, theoretical text. It is hardly entertaining; at times it seems impossibly pedantic, and it sets out to make a-point which Geras himself says should not really need to be made: namely that Marx did not reject the idea of human nature, and further that he was right not to do so. Still, the pleasure for me in this book was one of the strongest the reading of literature provides: the joy of corroboration. Geras demonstrates that 'historical materialism itself, this whole distinctive approach to society that originates with Marx, rests squarely upon the idea of a human nature'. Whether an idea is 'Marxist' has always interested me less than whether or not it is true: but since Geras shows the idea of human nature is both of these things, perhaps we can now get on with the business of building in theory and practice a socialism which takes account of man's enduring ethical, aesthetic, and ecological needs.

Peter Fuller, critic

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BABYLON

Jill Payton Walsh
Andre Deutsch

For the last few years it's been hard to find time to get through a daily paper during the week in which it's been printed. Usually they lie under the dining table for weeks. I haven't read many books, and the ones I've enjoyed most were printed years ago for the most part, like A H Halsey's *Change in British Society* or *Roll of Thunder, hear my cry* by the American writer Mildred D Taylor. But the most memorable thing I've read this year was *Babylon* by Jill Payton Walsh, a picture book supposedly for under-8s. Three small black Londoners wander around their neighbourhood, beguilingly depicted by Jennifer Northway. David leads the singing of 'By the waters of Babylon', which he learned at the Sunday Mission. His father has told him that the Zion in the hymn is Africa, but he reckons it's Jamaica which he remembers. Dulcie, the English-born youngest, is sad because 'I ain't got no Zion' to weep for.

When they rejoin their mother she reassures Dulcie that she will have something to weep for, by and by. Dulcie cheers up and runs home happy. Jill Paton Walsh, a white Briton, presents Jamaican

speech rhythms accurately, and her story is pointed and funny. I think it's a book for adults.

Beverley Anderson, broadcaster

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD

G E M de Ste Croix

Duckworth

Enjoy may not be quite the right word — except in the sense of the enjoyment one derives from a beautiful and rigorous piece of analysis. Here is an immensely long and immensely learned book which is equally remarkable as an example of Marxist methodology and as a contribution to our understanding of the ancient world.

Having demonstrated that Marx's class-based analysis is applicable to that world, Ste Croix turns to specific problems, most importantly, perhaps, that of slavery. His thesis is that the Greek world (of which he regards Rome as an integral part) can properly be regarded as a slave society because it was from the possession and exploitation of slaves that its ruling class drew the bulk of the surplus on which it depended. The fact, which he fully recognises, that most production was

carried on by others — peasants and free artisans — is in this context irrelevant. In a short note it is not possible even to indicate the wealth of this book — I can only say, read it and give yourself an intellectual treat.

A L Morton, historian

THE FOREST

William Pomeroy

International Publishers New York

Truth is indeed stranger than fiction. This is the story of the outstanding courage and heroism of the people's army, the Huks, fighting against a puppet government set up by the Americans in the Philippines at the end of the second world war, written by an ex-army officer who had fought the Japanese and later returned to the Philippines to teach. He met and married a young woman whose lifetime had been given to the liberation struggle against the Japanese. Victory however had not brought the people freedom and prosperity.

The story recounts the small beginnings of a group of patriots, leaving civilisation to live, work and fight in the forest, growing in numbers by constant political argument and encouragement in the villages. The

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Keith Weller Taylor
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The Birth of Vietnam
Keith Weller Taylor

REVIEWS:

author and his wife, Celia, joined the group and William tells at first hand of the years setting up camp after several days long trek, only to be discovered, and so repeating the process, in the damp sunless depths of the forest. The hardships endured — shortage of food, lack of medicines, difficulties in communication and eventual capture when near to death — make compelling reading. Their love for each other was only equalled by their love for the country and the cause for which they fought. This book is a must for anyone wanting to understand the history of people's struggles for liberation.

Marian Easdale,
TUC woman of the year

has a private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks.'

The book, written during the Second World War, sets out Orwell's ideas on 'the British people' and the 'modes' that they live by. One of the book's beauties is the way in which Orwell makes his views so accessible to the reader, almost as though they were common thought. (Maybe they are?) He makes a distinction between culture and nationalism, which so easily get placed together, and argues that the English people do have some sort of common ground, culture, which he himself identifies with. However, he also argues that the 'very common source of identity' that we have is abused to divide the nation by the adoption of different modes/stratas of working, culture (theatre, bingo etc). Orwell calls it class: 'England', he says, 'is the most class-ridden country under the sun.' But he also says that England, or rather the people, do have an 'emotional unity'.

This book is a must for those who respect others' ideas and ideals. But perhaps most importantly this book is a must because it touches on some very basic

questions, like responsibility, roots and the involvement of ordinary working people in politics, so that they have some say and responsibility for their own lives.

Annajoy David, YCND

SWEET AND SOUR

Stephen Mo Sphere

This book gave me my first and only insight into the nature of the Chinese community in Britain, and into the extraordinary culture of the Chinese secret societies. These 'triads' now feature largely in *News of the World* exposes of the international drug ring, but their history is much deeper — they were originally a form of self protection against colonisers. The triads' own view of the police as — in their words — 'official bandits' provides a new perspective on a venerable profession.

Mo's book has an unusual, almost sweet and sour rhythm to it. Some reviewers describe it as severe; it is not exactly a stream of consciousness but it is a compelling and enjoyable read, and an important piece of social commentary.

Jack Straw, Labour MP


THE LION AND THE UNICORN

George Orwell Penguin

'England . . . resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons. It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of family income . . . Still, it is a family. It




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