

A Listening Eye: The Films of Mike Dibb
Part Three: Conversation Pieces

Week One

Available to view 26 February – 4 March 2021

For the eighth week of *A Listening Eye*, we move into the final phase of Mike Dibb's films, focusing on his dynamic films with writers, thinkers, activists and public intellectuals. This programme demonstrates the sheer range of engaged lives and ideas that Dibb has documented. CLR James, Stuart Hall, Edward Said and Colin Ward were all subjects of extended, career-spanning interviews not long before they passed away, each of which is available to view here in full.

Available to view 26 February – 4 March:

CLR James in Conversation with Stuart Hall, 1985, 52'

Personally Speaking: A Long Conversation with Stuart Hall conducted by Maya Jaggi, 2009, 254'

Edward Said Profile, 2003, 30'

Edward Said: The Last Interview, 2003, 206'

Personally Speaking: Colin Ward in conversation with Roger Deakin, 2009, 155'

CLR James in conversation with Stuart Hall

The first version of this conversation in fact took place in the corner of a BBC studio at the Television Centre in White City, at the same time that I was making the film of *Beyond a Boundary*. Having had so many fascinating conversations with CLR along the way about the many things he was interested in beyond cricket, his broad cultural and literary interests and, in particular the singular trajectory of his life and the development of his political ideas after leaving Trinidad at the age of 30, first to England and later to the USA, I approached Barrie Gavin with the idea of recording a long conversation between CLR and another great West Indian intellectual, the Jamaican cultural theorist and political activist Stuart Hall, who I also knew.

Barrie thought it was a great idea and we booked a huge TV studio that happened to be empty and invited them both along, CLR as always wearing his distinctive trademark wide-brimmed hat! Their wide-ranging conversation, lasting almost two hours, went extremely well and completely gripped everyone in the studio who was lucky enough to hear it. Topics ranged from Shakespeare and William Hazlitt to Calypso and Paul Robeson, with particular reference to *Black Jacobins*, CLR's landmark book about Toussaint L'Ouverture and the slave revolution of San Domingo.

We immediately offered it to the then BBC 2 Controller Aubrey Singer as something that (cut down to 50/60 minutes) he might like to screen on his channel during the week *Beyond a Boundary* was being transmitted on BBC 1. In an internal memo to the Head of Music and Arts, of which I still have a copy, Aubrey's answer was unforgivably short but alas not sweet: "I'm sorry, I have no interest in CLR James" - a perfect example of the ignorance of power and the power of ignorance!

But the story doesn't stop there. A year or so later we wanted to revive the proposal, but, to our horror, discovered that what we thought was just a temporarily rejected tape had in fact been wiped...and thus this historic conversation was no more. Ten years later however, we were thankfully able to film a shorter version of it again for Channel 4. And this is the documentary record that fortunately remains. CLR was of course much older and more frail, but his mind was still extremely sharp and this later conversation still wonderfully eloquent.

Personally Speaking: A Long Conversation with Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall is a foundational figure in the influential interdisciplinary field known as cultural studies. In this stimulating and eloquent interview, conducted by the literary journalist Maya Jaggi, Hall reflects on his life and career, talking personally and in depth about the trajectory of his work and how it has intersected with broader political movements. In a conversation both intimate and sweeping in scope, Hall describes his migration from Jamaica to England, his immersion in left-wing politics in London, the influence of Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson on the evolution of his thought, and the context within which the early classic texts of cultural studies was written. Hall also shares his pessimism about the economic recession and his optimism about Barack Obama's victory. Future analysis of Hall's work, and of cultural studies in general, will be enriched by this fascinating and indispensable first-person account of his life and ideas.

Edward Said

BBC4 Profile with Charles Glass of the Palestinian intellectual, writer and political activist.

Edward Said – The Last Interview

Complete version of the original Charles Glass interview, produced by DG Guttenplan.

Glass is a writer, journalist, broadcaster and publisher, who has written on conflict in the Middle East, Africa and Europe for the past forty-five years.

Edward Said, University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, was one of the most important literary critics of the late 20th century, and for many years the most prominent spokesperson for the Palestinian cause in the United States. Born into a Palestinian family in Jerusalem in 1935, in 1948 Said and his family were dispossessed and settled in Cairo. Long a member of the Palestine National Council, after resigning from the PNC in 1991, Said wrote critically about the post-Oslo peace process and the political failures of Yasser Arafat and the PLO.

Said was diagnosed with incurable leukaemia in 1991, and struggled with the disease throughout the decade, while continuing to write and teach. Towards the end of his life, as the disease and chemotherapy treatments sapped his energy, he stopped giving interviews. However, less than a year before his death in September 2003, he made an exception and over the course of three days spoke at length with the filmmakers about his illness, his work, Palestine and politics, his life and education, and his continuing preoccupations. This is the remarkable final testament of this passionately committed intellectual.

Personally Speaking: Colin Ward In Conversation with Roger Deakin

Colin Ward was born in East London in 1924. After wartime conscription he worked in architecture for several years, then briefly as a teacher, and for the Town and Country Planning Association in the 1970s. His encounter with Anarchist ideas in 1944 led him into a parallel career as a propagandist for the cause, most notably as the founder editor of the journal *Anarchy* from 1961 to 1970, and through many years as a provocative contributor and columnist in the Anarchist and mainstream press. In over thirty accessible and lucidly written books he has explored and demonstrated the practical relevance of Anarchist ideas to everything from inner-city congestion to the global water shortage, as well as celebrating unofficial uses of the landscape, from garden allotments to squatter communities.

Among Colin's works are: *Anarchy in Action* (1972, re-issued 2008); *The Child in the City* (with Dennis Hardy, 1978); *Arcadia for All* (1984) and *Welcome, Thinner City* (with David Crouch, 1989); *The Allotment* (1988); *Reflected in Water* (1997); *Cotters and Squatters* (2002) and *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (2004).

Roger Deakin died in August 2006, shortly after completing the manuscript of *Wildwood*, his wonderful and much-praised 'journey through trees'. Roger was a writer, broadcaster and filmmaker with a particular interest in nature and the environment. He lived for many years in Suffolk, in an old wood-framed farmhouse that he personally restored from ruin and where he swam regularly in its ancient moat. *Waterlog*, the predecessor to *Wildwood*, recounts his swimming adventures around Britain and has been hailed as a classic of nature writing. *Notes from Walnut Tree Farm*, published posthumously, is an edited selection from Roger's lyrical and entertaining notebooks, capturing his restless curiosity about nature and idiosyncratic impressions of our changing world.