

Photographs of Interpreters

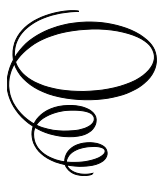
Photographs of Interpreters:

In Search of Lost Lives

By

John Milton

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



Photographs of Interpreters: In Search of Lost Lives

By John Milton

This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2024 by John Milton

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-0364-0654-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-0364-0654-7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright and Permissions	vi
Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1	17
The Diplomat – Arnold Vissière	
Chapter 2	40
The Shopkeeper – Julius Meyer: “Indian Interpreter”	
Chapter 3	62
The Interpreters of the SPI (Indian Protection Service)	
Chapter 4	86
Indigenous Interpreters in Brazil	
Chapter 5	101
Chang and the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter	
Chapter 6	121
John Brown: The Interpreter in the Devil’s Paradise	
Chapter 7	141
The Soldier – Vernon (Dick) Walters: Mr. Underground	
Chapter 8	164
The “General” of the Interpreters: Viktor Sukhodrev	
Afterword	180
Bibliography	182
Index	206

COPYRIGHT AND PERMISSIONS

The following photographs have been reprinted with permission as chapter images, and the respective copyright holders are explicitly stated below.

Chapter 1: (1) Archives diplomatiques, collection Collin de Plancy; (1a) Book cover reproduced with the permission of the Éditions Loubatières; (2) Public Domain; (3) Photo reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France; (4) Photo reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France; (5) ullsteinbild/TopFoto; (6 and 6a) Photo reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France; (Ill. 1) by George Hodan CC0 Public Domain; (7) © Archives municipales de Saumur.

Chapter 2: (1,1a, 2 and 3) Nebraska State Historical Society Photograph Collections; (4, 5a and 5b) Courtesy of Hindman Auctions; (6) From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection, Owned by KM3TV and on permanent loan to The Durham Museum; (Fig. 1) Photo by Dave Pape. Public Domain. (Fig. 2) Collection of Rob Niederman. Image used with permission. (7) “Lakota delegation to Washington May 13 1875”.

https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/pohrt/x-103/ste026_001. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. December 16, 2023. (8) Courtesy Western History Collections, Special Research Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Walter Stanley Campbell Collection, Box: Photo C-84, item: 58.

Chapter 3: (1) [BRMI SPIRel888 1938] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (2) Acervo do Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da UFPR; (3) [BRMI SPIRel888 1287] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (Fig. 1 and 1a) [76.2.79d] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (4) [CRNV0051] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (5) [RR203] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (6) [SPIa1992] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (7, 8 and 9) [CRNV0242], [BRMI CRICa2 723] and [BRMI CRICa2 724] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil.

Chapter 4: (1) Photo by Ricardo Beliel, reproduced with permission; (2) Photo by Didier Descouens (CC-BY-SA-4.0). Public domain; (3) Photo by

Alonso de Mendoza. Public domain; (4) Photo by Ricardo Beliel, reproduced with permission; (5) Photograph by interpreters Vivian Celia Arango and Heriberto Rayón, reproduced with permission; (6) John van Hasselt – Corbis/Getty Images.

Chapter 5: (Fig. 1) George Henry Mason. Illustrated by J. Dadley. The punishments of China: illustrated by twenty-two engravings: with explanations in English and French. London: 1801. Plate VIII. PUNISHING AN INTERPRETER. Page 45. (1 and 2) John Thomson, Illustrations of China and its people. A series of two hundred photographs, with letterpress descriptive of the places and people represented, London, S. Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1873-74. Plate XVII, no. 34-35, volume 3. Page 106. (3) [CRNV0468] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil; (4 and 5) [BRMI CRIcA1 352] - Acervo do Museu do Índio/FUNAI – Brasil.

Chapter 6: (1) © Programa de Cooperación Hispano Peruano, Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas and Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo; (2) Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (P.100400.WHI); (3a) Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (N.26773.WHI); (3b) © Programa de Cooperación Hispano Peruano, Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas and Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo; (4) Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (N.26769.WHI); (5) © Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas and Universidad Científica del Perú; (6) Photograph by Francois Dolmetsch, reproduced with permission; (7) Gómez, A. Lesmes, A. C. & Rocha, C. (1995). *Caucherías y conflicto colombo-peruano. Testimonios 1904-1934*. Bogotá: Disloque Editores. Coama.

Chapter 7: (1 and 2) Paul Schutzer/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock; (3) Gonzales/CPDOC JB/Folhapress.

Chapter 8: (1) The Washington Post/Getty Images; (2) Public domain. (3) Ben Martin/Archive Photos/Getty Images; (4) ZUMAPRESS.com/Keystone Pictures USA/Age Photostock; (5) Photo from the Sukhodrev family archives.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. We apologize for any errors or

omissions and would be grateful to be notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future editions of this book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank:

Jamilly Brandão for all her work on contacting the folders of rights to the photographs;

Renata Schinke for discovering and telling me about the photographs of the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter;

Telma São Bento Ferreira and Vera Lúcia Ramos at Editora Lexikos for publishing the Portuguese version of the book;

Marina Darmaros for helping me with the Russian interviews with Viktor Sukhodrev;

The USP postgraduate students who replied to the questionnaire on Chang and the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter;

Solange Pinheiro for her careful revision of the text;

Melina Valente for her eye-catching design of the cover;

Adam Rummens, Sophie Edminson, and Amanda Millar at Cambridge Scholars for all their hard work in the preparation of the book;

The Museu do Índio, Rio de Janeiro, and especially Luiza Zelesco, for allowing me to use a number of photos from the museum;

Ricardo Beliel for allowing me to use the very beautiful photo of the Korubo;

José Ribamar Bessa Freire, Pedro Libanio and Ana, curator of the “Civilized Indians” exhibition in Rio de Janeiro for the information on the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter;

Alisha Baginski at the Nebraska State Historical Society;

Céline Boudias of Bibliothèque nationale de France;

Didier Descouens for allowing me to reproduce the image he shared on Wikipedia;

Eric Duncan from Hindman Auctions;

François Dolmetsch for allowing me to use the photo of the *Colombia's Forgotten Frontier* cover.;

Haiden Nelson from The Durham Museum,

Helen Sutton at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, UK;

Heriberto Rayón and Vivian Celia Arango for allowing me to use their APIC photo;

Jackie Reese from Western History Collections,

Judith Grima at Archives Municipales de Saumur

Marisa Basso from Folha Press;

Maryline Garrabos at Editions Loubatières;

Regiane Pelaquini from Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil; and

Rob Niederman for allowing me to use the photo of the 1860s Scovill camera from his personal archive.

INTRODUCTION

1. *Studium* and *Punctum*

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) uses the Latin word *studium* for a certain type of photograph: not exactly a “study” “but application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity” (Barthes 1981:26). Thus it is a somewhat superficial photograph, lame, “without salt and sugar”, which delights and does not hurt, like a school book photograph, which presents the status quo, the official history of “good historical scene” through which the viewer will be able to “participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions” (Barthes 1981:26), seeing the scheme of the “Operator” of society; that is, “it is a kind of education” (Barthes 2015:28) in which the spectator will read and fraternize with the myths of the photographer though the spectator may not believe these myths, and, in the case of a conservative photo, they both will aim “at reconciling the Photograph with society”, with the functions “to inform, to represent, to surprise, to cause, to signify, to provoke desire” (Barthes 1981:28). In Chapters 7 and 8, we will see how this *studium* relates to *LIFE* magazine.

The second element presented by Barthes breaks the *studium*. This is the *punctum*, like an arrow, a sting, a puncture, a small hole, a small stain, a small cut “which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” and even punctuates (but also mortifies me, wounds me)” (Barthes 1981:26). The *studium* will frequently be “traversed, lashed, striped by a detail (*punctum*) which attracts or distresses me” (Barthes 1981:60), but when this fails to happen, we can call the photograph a “unary photography”, that is, “no duality, no indirection, no disturbance” (Barthes 1981:61). Thus, without this *punctum*, the “unary photograph”, the *studium*, would be a banal photograph, with a unit of composition, with just one unit, as in many reportage photographs, with no shock, injury or disturbance.

This division of Roland Barthes will be the basis for the analysis of a number of the photos in the following chapters.

2. Essence and Magic

One quality often present in commentaries on photographs and in interviews with photographers is that photography has a special ability to get to the “essence” of the scene or person being photographed. Siegfried Kracauer comments that nineteenth-century photographers such as Nadar (1820-1910), David Octavius Hill (1802-1870) and Robert Adamson (1821-1848), influenced by painting, tried to “bring out the essential features of any person presented [with] dignity and depth of their perception” (Kracauer 1980:260), attempting to decipher a difficult-to-understand text.

Similar comments have been made by several famous photographers, for example those by Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004):

I went to Marseille. A small allowance allowed me to get along, and I worked with pleasure. I had just discovered the Leica. It has become an extension of my eye, and I have never been separated from it since I found it. I prowled the streets all day, feeling very strung-up, and ready to pounce, determined to “trap” life – to preserve life in the act of living. Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes (in Sontag 1973:291).

Cartier-Bresson is always associated with expression “The decisive moment”, the possibility of capturing an event that is ephemeral and spontaneous, in which the image represents the essence of the event. The skill of the photographer will be crucial. Their eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers, and they must know with intuition when to click the camera (in Berger 2013).

In addition to “essence”, many comments on photography use words like “magic”, “soul”, and “revelation”. The target of the French photographer Robert Doisneau (1912-1994) is “an isolated image whose contents possess the magic power of remembrance or memorialisation” (Hill and Cooper (1992). The American photographer Edward Weston (1886-1958) notes that, if all the elements combine, there is the possibility of achieving that moment of epiphany photography may surpass other arts:

Photography’s great difficulty lies in the necessary coincidence of the sitter’s revealment, the photographer’s realization, the camera’s readiness. But when these elements do coincide, portraits in any other medium, sculpture or painting, are cold dead things in comparison (in Dyer 2007).

Under the right conditions, helping the subject to feel at ease, with the right skills, and the correct use of the camera, the photographer could portray this essence of the subject. John Szarkowski (1925-2007) mentions the photographer Holgrave, a character in the novel of American author Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), saying that sunlight will help him convey the subject's deep character with truth that no painter could, and after several attempts he will manage to unravel the normal appearance of "benevolence, openness of heart, sunny good humor [to show] a man, sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and withal, cold as ice" (Hawthorne Ch. 6, in Szarkowski 2007).

For the American photographer and photography professor Minor White (1908-1976), this "essence" or "presence" even acquires a religious element. "That presence is something sacred, it's our Creator, or it's another force. It's grace" (in Hill and Cooper 1992). "I'm trying to be in contact with our Creator when I photograph. I know perfectly well it's not possible to do it all the time, but there can be moments" (in Hill and Cooper 1992). The American photographer Sheila Metzner (1939-) puts herself in the position of a god:

This image, trapped in my trap, my box of darkness, can live. It is eternal, immortal. The child in the picture will not age like the living child. It is magic.

Who, then, having this power to stop time, as a god does, to create immortality, to arrest a moment in life, what is my responsibility? What am I looking for? What do I want to preserve, worship, retain, present as my legacy to the world at large, to myself, my family, my friends? (in Johnson 1995:116)

Steve McCurry (1950-), American photographer, whose most famous photo is the Afghan girl on the cover of the National Geographic, emphasizes that "Most of my photos are grounded in people, I look for the unguarded moment, the essential soul peeking out, experience etched on a person's face (McCurry: azquotes.com).

And for Edward Steichen (1879-1973), pioneer of fashion photography in the United States, photography is sublime and can reach the essence of life on earth: "Photography records the gamut of feelings written on the human face, the beauty of the earth and skies that man has inherited, and the wealth and confusion man has created. It is a major force in explaining man to man" (Steichen 1961).

Diane Arbus (1923-1971), an American photographer specializing in portraying people on the margins of society, comments on the magic and power of the camera: “There’s a kind of power thing about the camera. I mean everyone knows you’ve got some edge. You’re carrying some magic which does something to them. It fixes them in a way” (Arbus:azquotes.com).

Barthes mentions the term *satori* (悟り) (1981:49), a Japanese Buddhist term for awakening, understanding and understanding, and in the tradition of Zen Buddhism, *satori* refers to *kenshō*, “seeing true nature” (Ken = “seeing”, and *shō* = “nature”, “essence” or “enlightenment”).

The concept of magic is part of philosopher Vilém Flusser’s argument in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. Flusser emphasizes the magical qualities of images in traditional cultures. But the magic of photography is a new, posthistorical magic, “conjuring tricks with abstractions” (Flusser 2000). Whereas prehistoric magic is a ritualization of myths, modern magic is a ritualization of models that are “programmes”, including computer programmes, written by “officials”, people who work as a function of an apparatus or computer. These technical and superficial images enchant and attract like traditional myths and magically free the recipients from the need to think conceptually with a second-order imagination (Flusser 2000:16-17). Flusser’s conclusion is that the photographer should break this superficiality, “outwit the camera’s rigidity [...], smuggle human intentions into its program that are not predicted by it [...], force the camera to create the unpredictable, the improbable, the informative” (Flusser 2000:80).

Is there a way in which a photograph can achieve the “essence” of a subject? The above quotes show that it may; photographers themselves believe that photography, in many cases their own photographs, can reach this essence. In Chapter 5 I conduct research with a group of postgraduate students at the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo (FFLCH-USP) about two photos: the interpreter-guide of the Scottish photographer John Thomson (1837-1921) on the Yangtze in 1870 and the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter, who worked for the Brazilian army officer, Marechal Rondon, to try to find out if it is possible to agree on a possible “essence” of their characters. Will this “essence” be available to everyone, or will each person see different things? The American photographer Sally Mann mentions Samuel Beckett’s play *Endgame*, in which Hamm tells the story of visiting a madman in his cell. Hamm took him to see the beauty of the wheat growing and the fleet of herring fishing boats, but all the madman saw was ashes (in Johnson 1995:134).

3. The Density and the Multiplicity of the Photograph

On the other hand, the photograph's density, complexity and intertextuality are mentioned by several critics. For Susan Sontag (1933-2001):

The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, continuity, but which confers on each moment the character of a mystery. Any photograph has multiple meanings; indeed, to see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination. The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: "There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way". Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are in exhaustible invitations to deductions, speculation, and fantasy (Sontag 1973:38-39).

This complexity, for Sontag, what lies beneath the surface of a photo, will be one of the central themes of this book. For the Franco-Hungarian photographer Brassai (1899-1984) "Photography reflects the infinite variety of subject matter offered by the natural universe" (in Hill and Cooper 1992). In *The Photograph* (1997) Graham Clarke (1941-2007) says that photography develops a "complex intertextuality", to which the German artist Victor Burgin (1941-) refers. In the dense text of photography, ideology constructs meanings and stamps its own power and authority, but it would also be possible to read other codes and texts, and photography can be read as a series of complex and ambiguous simultaneities, containing the codes, values and beliefs, often conflicting, of various aspects of culture and inserting different discourses and references:

[...] in which is situated not so much a mirror of the world as our way with that world; what Diane Arbus called "the endlessly seductive puzzle of sight". The photographic image contains a "photographic message" as part of a "practice of signification" which reflects the codes, values and beliefs of the culture as a whole [...] Far from being a "mirror", the photograph is one of the most complex and most problematic forms of representation. Its ordinariness belies its ambivalence and implicit difficulty as a means of representation" (in Clarke 1997:28-29).

Brassai, the specialist in photographing the city of Paris, states that "What attracts the photographer is precisely the chance to penetrate inside phenomena, to uncover forms... He pursues them into their last refuges and surprises them at their most positive, their most material and true" (Brassai:azquotes.com).

Siegfried Kracauer emphasizes the tendency of photographs towards the disorganized and diffuse that marks them as records. Therefore, it is inevitable that they are surrounded by a fringe of multiple and indistinct meanings.

So the photographer will, often unconsciously, capture these subtleties and the multiple strands of life. For the pioneer of American photography, Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), there is a reality so subtle in photography that it becomes more real than actual reality (Stieglitz:azquotes.com). Vilém Flusser emphasizes the photograph's many points of view; it is thus hostile to ideology and the insistence on a single perfect point of view, thereby introducing "a phenomenological doubt". When a problem arises, photographers

discover that the viewpoint they have adopted is concentrated on the "object" and that the camera offers any number of different viewpoints. They discover the multiplicity and equality of viewpoints in relation to their "object". They discover that it is not a matter of adopting a perfect viewpoint but of realizing as many viewpoints as possible (Flusser 2000:38).

Photography is therefore complex; it has multiple connections and intertexts; a photograph can be full of subtleties, and it can penetrate phenomena and discover new forms. This complexity can be seen in a number of the photographs examined, which come from a variety of backgrounds, some of which were unfamiliar to me. In Chapter 1, we will see the complex network of meanings and discourses present in the relationship of the diplomat and sinologist Arnold Vissière with China and Chinese diplomats after the Sino-French War of 1884 to 1885 and, then, in the official visit to Paris in 1910 of the Chinese delegation. We will also see the friendship between diplomats, the beginnings of French aviation, its glamour, and the commercial competition between French aviation companies, clothing habits in France in 1910, especially in relation to men's hats, a young 12-year-old boy at work, chuchotage interpretation and, last but not least, the biographies of the main actors.

Likewise, in Chapter 2, we can point to this complexity that runs through the photographs: Jewish immigration to the United States and the history of Jews in the West; relations between capitalism and indigenous groups; the settlement of the state of Nebraska; relations and wars between the various indigenous groups, especially the Pawnee and Sioux-Lakota; the interpreters of the indigenous languages themselves; the history of the photographic studio, and the way in which the Washington DC government managed to take a good part of the lands of the indigenous groups.

Chapter 3 brings us to Brazil and the history of the SPI, the Indian Protection Service, the forerunner of FUNAI, the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples; we discuss the corruption of the organization, the history and characteristics of various indigenous groups, especially the Xetá and Kaingang from the southern Brazilian state of Paraná, the Xavante and Ariti from Mato Grosso, and the Ka'apor from the border between Pará and Maranhão, where we meet the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro on one of his first expeditions for the SPI, and then we follow the career of Major Libânio, from the Iriti group, guide-interpreter of Marechal Rondon, an important supporter of indigenous peoples in the early 20th century.

Chapter 4 shows early contacts with the Korubo group in the Amazon and continues through the 2012 Rio+20 Earth Summit, where, initially through the lens of a snaphooter, we meet Raoni and Megaron, important fighters for indigenous rights and forest preservation.

In Chapter 5, we follow the first photographic expedition into the interior of China and attempt to trace Marechal Rondon's indigenous interpreter, portrayed in a 1914 photograph, and initially found on Reddit, the social media site.

In Chapter 6, in the "Devil's Paradise", on the banks of the Putumayo River on the border of Peru with Colombia and Brazil, we confront the tragedy of the massacre of indigenous people who were rubber extractors working for the Casa Arana company. We follow the testimony of John Brown, interpreter for the explorer Captain Thomas Whiffen, and a witness in the report to the British government of Sir Roger Casement, who would die tragically in 1916, hanged by the British government for treason for having imported arms from Germany and exported them to Ireland to help the Irish separatist movement.

Chapter 7 takes us into post-World War II US policy and international diplomacy during this period. We see the policy of US domination in its "backyard", Latin America, and the resistance on the part of many Latin Americans, and especially the events in Caracas on 13 May 1958 when interpreter Colonel Vernon Walters and Vice President Richard Nixon managed to escape from a very dangerous situation, which, if it had gone the wrong way, might have led to an invasion of Venezuela by the United States. We also see the consequences of an army officer being the official interpreter for Nixon, the relationship between Walters and the "official" interpreters of the White House State Department, and the careers of Walters and Nixon as, upon his return to the United States, Nixon received a hero's

welcome, an event that also helped his career. Likewise, in the photograph of Walters with General Castelo Branco, *Photograph 3: Friends and Brothers*, there are several intertexts: the relationship between the United States and Brazil; the domination of Uncle Sam in Latin America; the role of the USA and Walters in the 1964 military coup in Brazil; and the personal friendship between Walters and Castelo Branco.

In researching Walters' "unofficial" life, we see connections with organizations, some Catholic, of the extreme right, and his possible involvement in various classified actions in the United States.

In the final chapter, Chapter 8, we accompany the career of the Soviet interpreter Viktor Sukhodrev. We follow his childhood in London during World War II and then his career as an interpreter for Soviet leaders Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gromyko, Kosygin, and Gorbachev. We discover details of the lives of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and we meet Richard Nixon again, now President of the United States. We witness several summit meetings, behind-the-scenes problems, and the relationship between Sukhodrev and Soviet and American leaders.

Geographically the study is wide. In Chapter 1, we start in China with Arnold Vissière, and then we meet up with him again in Paris. In Chapter 2 we are with Julius Meyer in the state of Nebraska in the United States. In Chapter 3 we arrive in Brazil, following the SPI in Paraná, Mato Grosso, and Maranhão. Chapter 4 takes us to the Amazon and Rio de Janeiro. In Chapter 5 we travel with photographer John Thomson to the interior of China, but we also discuss Portuguese interpreters in Africa and Macao and visit the Brazilian states of Amapá and Mato Grosso. Chapter 6 places us in Peru, on the border of Colombia and Brazil. In Chapter 7, we follow the US army officer Vernon Walters on his secret missions in many countries, but we detail his performance in the 1964 Military Coup in Brazil and analyze photos showing him interpreting Vice President Richard Nixon in Venezuela. In the final chapter, Chapter 8, we follow the interpreter Viktor Sukhodrev, initially in his childhood in London, and later in Moscow, and on several visits to the United States.

We also see a great diversity of types of photograph. In Chapter 1 we examine studio and newspaper photos. In Chapter 2 the photos are of outdoor and studio groups, and one of them is a staged scene. In Chapter 3 we analyze official photographs from the SPI collection, and in Chapter 4 a variety of photos: an "artistic" photo by the contemporary Brazilian professional photographer Ricardo Beliel, a snapshot, and a journalistic

photograph published on the Internet. The initial photos in Chapter 5 are by John Thomson (1837-1921), who would become one of the most famous British photographers, and then we analyze a 1914 Brazilian studio photo. In Chapter 6, we have a series of photos of John Brown, two photos taken by the Portuguese photographer Silvino Santos (1886-1970), a book cover, and four other snapshots. In Chapter 7 we use two *LIFE* magazine photographs, and a Brazilian press photograph. Finally, in Chapter 8, we have a variety of official photos of Viktor Sukhodrev, one of them from *LIFE*. In addition, we have an amateur photo taken by Walter Holloway, Uncle Jack, Sukhodrev's London neighbour and friend.

However, most of the preparation of the book was carried out during the Covid pandemic, and all the photos were found on the Internet. Never was I actually able to touch and handle any physical photograph. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart discuss the very different experiences and understandings of looking at the same image on a computer screen and as an albumen print pasted in an album as “the ‘grammar’ of both images and things is complex and shifting” (2004:2). I am reminded of my sorting through bags and boxes of photographs of my recently deceased mother and my intention of putting the best ones online: two completely different viewing experiences. Photographs can take on many material forms: “Postcards, albums, campaign buttons, decorated photographs carried behind the open coffin at Russian funerals, the photographic placards of mass demonstration or political processions, T-shirts or photographs of ancestors worn in the dance in a Native American community (2004:12). I wasn't able to handle the coffee table book *La Chine: une passion française*; touch Julius Meyer's carte de visite (Chapter 2); see John Brown's wrinkles on the original cover of *Colombia's Forgotten Frontier: A Literary Geography of the Putamayo*; and browse through the paper issue of *LIFE* with Viktor Sukhodrev on the cover (Chapter 8).

4. The Instant, Memory, History and Stories

For Siegfried Kracauer a photograph creates a fixed moment in time as a memory, an impression of an important moment; it is not tied to a specific time and does not have a specific purpose. The photograph captures the physicality of that moment but removes any depth that might be associated with the memory. Thus, a kind of artefact, the photography itself, is created (in Leslie 2010:123-135).

For the British art critic and novelist John Berger (1926-2016), memory implies a certain act of redemption. What is remembered was saved out of thin air. And what is forgotten has been abandoned (Berger 2013:59).

Berger emphasizes the way in which the words of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), referring to the actor's art, reflect this importance of the moment:

So you should simply make the instant
Stand out, without in the process hiding
What you are making it stand out from¹ (Berger 2013).

Berger emphasizes the momentary and the discontinuity of photography:

A photograph arrests the flow of time in which the event photographed once existed. All photographs are of the past, yet in them an instant of the past is arrested so that, unlike a lived past, it can never lead to the present. Every photograph presents us with two messages: a message concerning the event photographed and another concerning a shock of discontinuity (Berger 2013:62).

And for Henri Cartier-Bresson: "As time passes by and you look at portraits, the people come back to you like a silent echo. A photograph is a vestige of a face, a face in transit. Photography has something to do with death. It's a trace" (PhotoQuotes.com).

The photograph is a *memento mori*, which has ghostly qualities:

Unlike cinema, the photograph holds this recorded moment in stillness, capturing and offering up for contemplation a trace of something lost, lending it a ghostly quality. In this sense, the photograph confronts us with the fleeting nature of our world and reminds of our mortality (Kuhn and McAllister 2008:1).

Photography digs up and brings to light forgotten stories and lives on the borders of our culture and integrates them into new ways of being understood, with the possibility of including them in political action. In the words of Annette Kuhn:

Memory work is a method and practice of unearthing and making public untold stories, stories of "lives lived out on the borderlands, lives for which the central interpretive devices of our culture don't quite work" [...] As an

¹ Bertolt Brecht, "Portrayal of Past and Present in One", from Bertolt Brecht: Plays, Poetry and Prose, Poems 1913-1956, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim with the co-operation of Erich Fried, 307.

aid to radicalised remembering, memory work can create new understandings of both past and present, while refusing a nostalgia that embalms the past in a perfect irretrievable moment. Engaging as it does the psychic and the social, memory work bridges the divide between inner and outer worlds. It demonstrates that political action need not be undertaken at the cost of the inner life, nor that attention to matters of the psyche necessarily entails a retreat from the world of collective action (Kuhn 2002:8; and Kuhn and McAllister 2008:14; quote from Steedman 1986:5).

But nostalgia is also an element of memory and photographs. Siegfried Kracauer cites the melancholy that Beaumont Newhall (1908-1993) feels in *History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day* in Charles Marville's (1813-1879) photographs of the soon-to-be-broken streets of Paris, and Eugène Atget's street scenes (1857-1927) that contain "the melancholy that a good photograph can so powerfully evoke" (Kracauer 1980). The spectator gets lost and identifies with the photo, capturing the estrangement they themselves feel. Using the term of T. S. Eliot, the photo is a kind of objective correlative, an image that reflects the viewer's own feelings.

For Kracauer, the function of a photograph changes with the passage of time. After two or three generations, album photos take on documentary functions rather than memory aids: "The grandmother will re-experience her honeymoon, while the children will curiously study bizarre gondolas, obsolete fashions, and old young faces they never saw" (Kracauer 1980). The photos I myself see of my great-grandparents and even grandparents on my father's side are exactly that: generations I never met, and the photos I see of them are empty of any personal element.

This book is an act of remembering, of taking from oblivion the lives and careers of the interpreters Arnold Vissière (Chapter 1); Julius Meyer (Chapter 2); the boy interpreters of the Xetá, Tuca and Kaiuá (Chapter 3); the Xavante interpreter Euvaldo Gomes and Darcy Ribeiro's interpreter, João Carvalho (Chapter 4); Chang (Chapter 5); and even Vernon Walters, a key actor in the 1964 military coup in Brazil (Chapter 7). When I asked students and friends what they knew about Walters, few had any idea who he was and his importance.

In several cases we have information about fragments of their lives. This is the case with Arnold Vissière in Chapter 1, and with Julius Meyer in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 6 we try to unravel the threads of the various biographies of John Brown. In Chapter 7 we know a lot about Walters' official life, but there is much pertaining to state secrets that hasn't been revealed. Similarly, in Chapter 8 we know a great deal about Viktor Sukhodrev's life, but we

know little about his formative years between the ages of six and twelve in London, and nothing about the state secrets that were an integral part of his life. In other cases, we have almost no information at all, as with Chang and the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter in Chapter 5.

We use our imagination to invent stories for them, based on the information and clues we have in the photographs to fill in the gaps. We ponder over Vissière's passion for China and the Chinese in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2 what was the reason for Meyer's gunshot death in Hanscom Park, Omaha in 1909, under highly mysterious circumstances? Was it suicide, something to do with money, a love affair, or perhaps murder? Was there any connection to the links he had with the various Indian tribes? To what extent was John Brown involved in the torture and killings of the Indians in the Devil's Paradise in Chapter 6? We get involved personally with their lives as we shed a tear for Tuca, Kaiuá, and the lost Xetá tribe in Chapter 3 and are touched as the young Viktor improves his English by accompanying Uncle Jack on his postman's rounds in Chapter 8.

Humans have limited memory. We automatically delete data that is no longer needed. I forget, like all of us, people, books, events, places that are no longer interesting to me. This book is about the forgotten, for the most part, and it is a gesture to bring these human beings out of oblivion.

But there are certain photographs that we will always remember. In *Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Identity* and *Locating Memory* Patrick Hagopian emphasizes that photographs can be more powerful than any other medium. Despite being bombarded by feature-oriented and documentary films, "Yet it is the still photographs that most people remember" (Hagopian 2008:210). And Hagopian exemplifies with the famous photos of the war in Vietnam: the photograph of the Vietnamese girl running naked after the napalm bomb fell near her, and that of General Loan killing a Viet Cong suspect. These photos had a huge effect on the American public: "Senator Robert Kennedy said 'The photograph of the execution was on front pages all around the world – leading our best and oldest friends to ask... what has happened to America?'" (Hagopian 2008:212-213).

Steve McCurry argues that: "A still photograph is something which you can always go back to. You can put it on your wall and look at it again and again. Because it is that frozen moment. I think it tends to burn into your psyche. It becomes ingrained in your mind. A powerful picture becomes iconic of a place or a time or a situation" (McCurry:azquotes.com).

In this book there is no moment that shows anything similar to the violence of the Vietnam War, but there are certain tense, important and crucial moments, especially in Brazilian culture and history: in *Photograph 2* in Chapter 3, *The Interpreter at Work*, we see Tuca, a nine-year-old Xetá boy, helping anthropologist Loureiro Fernandes to identify an artefact found in the rubble of a Xetá village. Tuca is one of the last surviving Xetá, and without him this information about the Xetá culture would be lost forever. *Photograph 3* in Chapter 4, *A Tense Handshake*, shows one of the first contacts with the Xavante in 1949 after attempts at contact resulted in the deaths of most of those who tried to make contact. *Photograph 1: The First Contact with Civilization*, also in Chapter 4, shows the moment of the first friendly contact with the Korubo group in the Amazon in 1996. *Photograph 1: Nixon Speaks*, and *Photograph 2: Walters Interprets Nixon*, in Chapter 7, show Vernon Walters interpreting Vice President Richard Nixon at the US Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela, in May 1958. The initial impression is of a rather routine photograph; however, the photo was taken shortly after an incident that might have had a profound effect on US-Venezuela relations. I shall not give a spoiler here – go directly to Chapter 7! And at the summit meetings between Soviet leaders and US presidents, where most of the photos in Chapter 8 were taken, with Viktor Sukhodrev interpreting, the leaders were discussing matters vital to maintaining world peace, especially the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT).

5. Visual Grammar

For Henri Cartier-Bresson a visual grammar is necessary to understand photography in the same way that knowledge of verbal and written grammar is necessary to understand a language: “What reinforces the content of a photograph is the sense of rhythm, the relationship between shapes and values. To quote Victor Hugo: ‘Form is the essence brought to the surface’” (in Hill and Cooper 1992). Several of the photographs reproduced here are analyzed using a visual grammar, following the concepts of Erwin Panofsky (1951), Rudolf Arnheim (1974 and 1988), Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006), and the semiotics of Philippe Dubois (2019). The important elements that will be detailed in the analysis of the photos are the vectors representing verbal or non-verbal communication within the photo; the importance of left and right; and the positioning at the top, bottom and centre and in the foreground and background, and outside the photo at the vanishing point; the use of light; the depth of the image; and the angle at which the photo was taken: frontal, oblique or horizontal. And just as the poet uses words and language, perhaps breaking the rules of grammar to

create their poetry, the photographer uses the visual elements and grammar of the image to create a poetic image. For Robert Doisneau “The choice of words, the bouquet of words without logical construction, is the same as that within a photo” (in Hill and Cooper 1992).

I try to integrate the formal visual examination with other methods of analysis: the history based on news from contemporary newspapers and magazines, which helps to give a strong narrative element, as in the case of the visit of the Chinese delegation to Paris in 1910 in Chapter 1 and of the visit of Walters and Nixon to Venezuela in Chapter 7; the narrative of my own discovery of who the Indians were in *Photograph 5* of Chapter 4; the biographical, as in the life story of Julius Meyer in Chapter 2, John Brown in Chapter 6, and Viktor Sukhodrev in Chapter 8; the concept of “performance” in daily life, based on the work of Erving Goffman (1961 and 1990), especially important in the case of Julius Meyer in Chapter 2; the use of questionnaires to elicit opinions from other people about two photos, Chang and the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter in Chapter 5; and, in the absence of data, I resort to a speculative element, as in the case of the photo of Vissière with the Chinese diplomat Luo Fenglu, Chang and the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter in Chapter 5.

Likewise, I draw on a variety of sources, in addition to “traditional” academic books and articles, websites, documentaries, journals, autobiographies and biographies, interviews, popular magazines, especially *LIFE*, and of course, a few of the millions (or billions) of photos circulating on the Web.

Thus, the sources of each chapter were quite varied. I found little material about Arnold Vissière in Chapter 1, but it was possible to read the reports about the visit of the French delegation to the airfield of Issy-les-Moulineaux in May 1910 in contemporary French newspapers, on the website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. There was a little more material about Julius Meyer in Chapter 2, including a fictionalized biography, but his mysterious death has never been resolved. There is a lot of material available on the SPI, the Indian Protection Service, the subject of Chapter 3, and the archives of the Museu do Índio were very helpful. In Chapter 4, there is a lot of information about the Korubo on the Internet, and Raoni and Megaron are well-known figures in Brazil. In Chapter 5 the only information we have about Chang is what photographer John Thomson wrote about him, and it was difficult to obtain information about the Young Well-dressed Indigenous Interpreter. I was surprised by the number of publications on the Putumayo in Chapter 6, several of them on Sir Roger

Casement. Vernon Walters, subject of Chapter 7, played a central role in the 1964 coup in Brazil, but I was surprised to find no articles or theses about him as an interpreter, and there must be much classified material about Walters in the Pentagon archives. And, with the help of Marina Darmaros and Google Translate, it was possible to consult material in Russian for Chapter 8. However, the discreet Viktor Sukhodrev never revealed any state secrets.

6. Photographs of Interpreters

Several works published in recent years in Translation Studies, or rather Interpretation Studies, deal with memory and photographs. We can even say that there has been a certain visual turn in the discipline. One of the most interesting studies is the article “Interpreters, photography and memory: Rabinovitch’s private archive” (2016a), by Jesús Baigorri-Jalón, which analyzes several photographs from the history of the Rabinovitch family of interpreters, focusing mainly on Georges, who, in 1947, became Interpreter-in-Chief of the United Nations (UN), through an interview with Joana Rabinovitch, daughter of Georges. Baigorri-Jalón manages to extract information by asking about the photos in his private archive. describes his work as a micro-history study, admitting his debt to Carlo Guinsburg, and concludes that it “adds new geographical and institutional elements to our mapping of the sociological development of conference interpreting, including its incipient feminization, in the first half of the 20th century, an extended chapter of a larger history, the evolution of the interpreting profession microcosm” (Baigorri-Jalón 2016a:187).

In “The use of photographs as historical sources, a case study” (2016a) Baigorri-Jalón uses photographs to revive the institutional memory of the UN’s shift from consecutive to simultaneous interpretation. The images used are of the interpreters and the audience using the new equipment and the equipment itself. The photos are reminiscent of the change that brought about a new working environment and professional regulations that continue to this day (2016b).

Framing the Interpreter: Towards a visual perspective, edited by Anxo Fernández-Ocampo and Michaela Wolf (2014), recalls unknown performers in times of war and conflict, several of whom, seen as traitors to their native society, would die shortly after being photographed.

Differently to *Framing the Interpreter*, the sociopolitical situations of my study are quite varied. Initially, in Chapter 1, we have the contact between

two high-ranking diplomats after the Sino-French War of 1884-1885, then the Chinese military mission in Paris in 1910, which seems to have been successful, at least by the smiling faces we see in the pictures. In Chapter 2, the positive interaction between Nebraska Indians in Julius Meyer's photographs of the 1870s may be a little more questionable if we consider that the introduction of Indian groups into the capitalist system was negative; however, I believe this contact was inevitable and Meyer helped them integrate into the system.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 deal with photos of indigenous language interpreters in South America, especially in Brazil. Chapter 3 examines photographs of the Indian Protection Service (1910-1967) in Brazil, which was often criticized for its corruption and links with landowners, showing situations of both isolation and integration of interpreters. The interpreter who is closest to the interpreters we saw in *Framing the Interpreter*, rejected by their native society and unable to be part of the society they are serving, is John Brown, subject of Chapter 6, a black American who pretended to be from Barbados and who was the explorer-guide interpreter of Captain Thomas Whiffen.

The power of the interpreter is the theme of Chapter 7, which describes the interpreter and soldier Vernon Walters as a symbol of US power in Latin America, especially his role in the 1964 coup in Brazil, and the analyzed photos demonstrate elements of this domination.

Chapter 8 takes a very favourable view of the Soviet interpreter, Viktor Sukhodrev, whose interpretation often gave a more positive impression of Khrushchev's lack of sophistication and Brezhnev's boorishness. However, he did not use this modifying technique when translating "My vas pokhoronim!" into English at a meeting in Poland in 1956. Sukhodrev's translation of "We will bury you" shocked many people in the West and it was thought that nuclear war might be close at hand.

Luckily, it wasn't!

CHAPTER 1

THE DIPLOMAT – ARNOLD VISSIÈRE

1. La Chine: Une Passion Française

Arnold Jacques Antoine Vissière (微席葉) (1858-1930), a sinologist who was about to start working at the National Library in Paris, was sent to China by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work as an interpreter for the French delegation in Beijing. He began his career as an interpreter in 1880 when he was delegated to the Brazilian mission that was making a commercial treaty with China, and, naturally, French was the *lingua franca*. He later participated in the peace negotiations after the 1884 -1885 Sino-French Indochina War, which resulted in the 1885 Treaty of Tianjin, allowing France to not only annex the Tonkin and Annam regions to French Indochina, the path to the total colonization of what is now Vietnam by France but also to guarantee the opening of eleven new ports to the West, bringing freedom of movement for European merchants and Christian missionaries through various commercial treaties between France and China.

In 1899 Vissière accepted the chair of Chinese at the School of Oriental Languages in Paris, where he developed a method of transcribing Chinese into French, trained future interpreters, and wrote a large number of works on China and the Chinese language. He continued to play an active role in the Ministry, receiving Chinese delegations in France, and was appointed Secretary Interpreter of the Ministry in October 1899, Consul General in January 1907, and Minister Plenipotentiary in February 1916, thus combining his academic work with the responsibility of receiving diplomatic missions from China. Writing in 1899, the sinologist Edouard Chavannes declared that Vissière “was undoubtedly the man in France who

had the most profound knowledge of the spoken Chinese language and their way of doing business”² (in (Gaspardone 1930:650).

Ruth Roland stresses the importance that France gave to its foreign delegations. Napoleon created a school of oriental languages within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exams for joining the Foreign Service were difficult, and Roland emphasizes the French belief that “a diplomat ought to be a representative of the *best* that his country has to offer” (Roland 1999:139-140).



Photograph 1: La Chine: Une Passion Française

Luo Fenglu (羅豐祿) (1850-1903) entered the Fujian Arsenal Academy in 1867, and as the best student in 1877 he was elected to be one of the first students sent by the Qing dynasty to study in Europe. Luo arrived at King’s College London in May 1877. During his stay in the UK he also worked as a translator for the Chinese embassies in the UK and Germany. He was also naval secretary to Li Hong Zang (李鴻章) from 1880. Sarah Paine gives us an interesting description of Luo.

² “qu’il était incontestablement l’homme de France qui a la connaissance la plus approfondie de la langue chinoise parlée et du style des affaires”.

During the peace negotiations of the 1894-5 Sino-Japanese War at Shimonoseki, Premier Ito Hirobumi had questioned one of the Chinese translators, Luo Fenglu, a brilliant man who had been educated in the West and had a broad knowledge of western literature. Premier Ito wondered why China had not learned more from the West, to which Luo responded, “You see, in our younger days we knew each other as fellow students, and now you are Prime Minister in your country and I am an interpreter in mine”. In Japan, those with foreign expertise rose to the top while in China such persons were relegated to inferior position (Paine 2002:301).

However, it appears that Luo’s superiors were aware of this as he later became the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom (1897-1901).

Photograph 1 was used on the cover of the book *La Chine: une passion française* by Isabelle Nathan-Ebrard, published in 2014. It is a richly illustrated book based on the French diplomatic archives in China. This title gives us some clues about the meanings we can extract from the photograph, dated 1884.

Despite the hostility between France and China during the Sino-French War of 1884-1885, the photo conveys tranquility and affection. We can assume that the meeting has some connection with the war, but it seems more like a meeting between friends, interpreters and colleagues smoking together in a convivial relationship. Traditionally, smoking together with other people represents friendship, togetherness, and peace. In the next chapter, we will see the importance of the peace pipe in North American indigenous culture. France and China hope for peace and must develop a positive relationship. The photograph is a *studium*, following Roland Barthes, showing us that, with patience, affection and understanding, harmonious relationships can be developed with the mysterious and inscrutable Other. The photo also demonstrates a desire for the Other, a Europe drawn to the beauty and mystery of the East.



Photograph 1a: La Chine: une passion française - Cover

While the “chinoiserie” fashion was more of a mid-18th century phenomenon, the cult of the Chinese exotic persisted into the 19th century. Jonathan Spence describes these various exotic elements: “One was an appreciation of Chinese grace and delicacy, a sensitivity to timbre and texture, that spread from the initial stimuli of silk and porcelain and temple architecture to become the basis of an entire aesthetic”. And this is mixed with a sensuality that includes something more severe and aggressive, something unknowable, dangerous and intoxicating, composed of perfume