



## Unreasonable Behaviour: An Autobiography

*Don McCullin*

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'He has known all forms of fear, he's an expert in it. He has come back from God knows how many brinksmen, all different. His experience in a Ugandan prison alone would be enough to unhinge another man - like myself, as a matter of fact - for good. He has been forfeit more times than he can remember, he says. But he is not bragging. Talking this way about death and risk, he seems to be implying quite consciously that by testing his luck each time, he is testing his Maker's indulgence' - John le Carre

'McCullin is required reading if you want to know what real journalism is all about' - *The Times*

'From the opening...there is hardly a dull sentence: his prose is so lively and uninhibited... An excellent book' - *Sunday Telegraph*

'Unsparing reminiscences that effectively combine the bittersweet life of a world-class photojournalist with a generous selection of his haunting lifework... A genuinely affecting memoir that reckons the cost and loss involved in making one's way on the cutting edge of conflict' - *Kirkus Reviews*

'If this was just a book of McCullin's war photographs it would be valuable enough. But it is much more' - *Sunday Correspondent*

## Unreasonable Behaviour: An Autobiography Details

Date : Published June 6th 2002 by Vintage (first published October 18th 1990)

ISBN : 9780099437765

Author : Don McCullin

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Art, Photography, Nonfiction, Biography, Autobiography, Writing, Journalism, History, Biography Memoir

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### **Kyle Law says**

As a huge fan of Don's work, I found this book to be thoroughly enjoyable, insightful and engaging. It added a depth to his images that I previously didn't see, due to understanding the circumstances further. Just a shame it wasn't longer!

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### **Mika Lietzén says**

An amazing photographer and not half bad as a storyteller either. However, the book suffers slightly from its episodic nature, short chapters follow short chapters, one war follows another, and so on. I assume it's just the way the world presents itself for a travelling war photographer, but one cannot help hoping that the story would've dwelled slightly longer in some places rather than zooming quickly from place to place to place.

Even so it's solid material, and the no-nonsense tone is perfect. A bummer of an ending though.

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### **Alexander says**

I found this book to be entertaining from start to finish. It is written very eloquently and the style of writing kept me interested throughout. McCullin knows how to build tension. The many illegal border crossings, threats to the life of the photographer and intense firefights go on and on without getting boring. At times the book is very dark, but that is to be expected from a book about a war photographer. McCullin says that he wanted to shake up the Brits sitting at home on their sofa's. Evidently he has done so with his photographs, but he accomplishes the same thing with this book. There are many interesting historical facts embedded in the story and McCullin does not shy away from expressing his opinion. The man has seen a lot of history first hand and the book definitely shows that to be a war photographer you have to have sharp instincts and a thick skin. But even then, your experiences will most likely haunt you. Despite many of his trips, McCullin also describes the impact of his work on his personality and personal life and is very honest.

For those who are interested in a book about war journalism and photography this book is a recommended read.

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### **Dolf Patijn says**

The job that war reporters do is an important one and I admire them for it. I'm a photographer myself but I don't know if I could do that job. The camera creates distance but Don McCullin also saw a lot without the camera in front of his face. I do not envy Don McCullin and other war reporters because the horrible things they have seen will always stay with them. It is admirable that he didn't become more of a cynic and very

bitter. This autobiography shows that you can still stay human in inhumane conditions.

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### **Katariina Jarvinen says**

It's a personal thing, but I just can't stand Don McCullin's personality. I know a lot of photographers speak of him as a hero, but he kind of makes my skin crawl and I can't help it. Can't remember exactly why - would need to re-visit this book for specific examples.

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### **Matthew says**

An incredible book. McCullin guides us through his life and what led him to become a war correspondent (more accurately a war photographer although for comparative purposes I have classified him as a correspondent). From his traumatic childhood (which forged his renowned fortitude), to his difficulty in maintaining peace-time relationships, McCullin provides a brutally honest account.

McCullin's lucid style and gripping anecdotes make it a captivating read. As the archetypal war correspondent/photographer autobiography, it sets the bar for the industry. It also expresses a theme of self-loathing that seems prevalent in the accounts of war correspondents. McCullin, like many others in his field, has a parasitic self-view, perceiving himself as feeding off the suffering of others.

The overwhelming message that I took from the book was that, whilst working in a warzone may seem enticing, the cost is extreme. McCullin details how he has suffered irreversible damage from war and yet is stuck in a self-destructive cycle of returning to conflict zones, almost as a form of escape.

I would thoroughly recommend reading this book to anyone with an interest in words on pages. It is outstanding.

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### **Luca Trovati says**

*"Devi pensare che stai rubando qualcosa che non ti appartiene di diritto. Stai rubando le immagini di altre persone."*

Ho impiegato più di sei mesi per finire questo libro, mi ha letteralmente spaccato in due. La domanda che alla fine di ogni capitolo mi martellava in testa era: "Ma come fa?" Rimanevo interi minuti a fissare le fotografie e a pensare a quanto aveva appena scritto.

Don McCullin è un uomo che per sua stessa ammissione non riesce a stare lontano dalla guerra. In più di cinquant'anni di fotografie senza tempo Don è riuscito a realizzare con un'onestà che ti prende a schiaffi reportage che immortalano catastrofi e conflitti come la guerra in Vietnam, il Conflitto nordirlandese, i Khmer rossi in Cambogia, il conflitto israelo-palestinese e l'epidemia di AIDS che ha colpito l'Africa, catturando momenti di indicibile sofferenza con incredibile lucidità.

*"Mi sono innamorato della fotografia per caso. È stata lei a scegliermi e non io a scegliere lei. Allo stesso*

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*tempo, però, la fotografia è stata un tormento."*

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### **Laura Weck says**

extremely moving and eye opening on many levels

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### **Shu-ning says**

It's not words, but the images and photos that's beyond what words can describe that haunt me the most. How can any killing be justified in the name of justice or liberation? Who is to decide another human being's destiny? And how can any sacred goals be achieved through the most heinous means? There is no hero in killing. The killed are victims of bodily violation because their lives are taken away involuntarily. The killers are victims of mental torment because they have to suppress their humanity during the killing and live with the image of it throughout the rest of their lives. If killing must occur, let it be for survival and nothing more, rather than out of fear, hate, greed or an ideology. Peace!

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### **Patrick Dinneen says**

Extremely repetitive & no insight into photography or photography techniques.

The vast majority of the book is Don going to wars, him accessing the front line, seeing horrors, in danger, getting out. This quickly gets repetitive and the book lost my interest then.

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### **Brian Page says**

Brilliant, and heart rending, both for the victims Don McCullin reports on in UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, and for the tale of his own life. His work is some of the finest photojournalism of the 20th century. If ever anyone thinks there is glamour in conflict reporting, McCullin's account should strip them of that notion. Still the work must be done; and our civilization is better off for the uncovering of these dark deeds. We owe a debt of gratitude to those such as McCullin who are willing to do it. But there is, of course, a cost: "You cannot walk on the water of hunger, misery and death. You have to wade through to record them. I was chilled, numb and lonely. My head ached with the intensity of my experience, the intensity of my thinking." (p. 218)

There is another cautionary tale in how McCullin came to leave newspaper work that I wish the board of the National Geographic Society had considered last year: "...Murdoch's first choice as editor. He was appointed, it was said, to shake up the newspaper, to get those staff who would serve the new Murdoch purpose hopping in fear of their lives, and those who would not on the road. The idea was, in business parlance, to emerge with a leaner, fitter and more profitable enterprise, stripped of all unserviceable assets." (p. 268)

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**Sean Sequeira says**

A riveting read.

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**Suzy says**

Overall I liked the book and listened to almost all of it. Don has had a unique life as a war photographer with national newspapers. He has visited many places at times when they are most vulnerable. We get a bit of background story which helps reveal his character, but then we follow individual exploits in different countries. Some of these stories are more interesting than others and the structure gives a disjointed feel to the memoir. The narrator was fantastic. He has the right tone for such a serious subject and doesn't seem to rush. I just felt the book was a bit too long, and because of the structure, there is no incentive to keep going until the end so I stopped with about 2 hours to go.

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**Alan Lund says**

Excellent honesty

A man drawn to the worst mankind does to itself is finally torn by the realisation of his own flawed humanity

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**Louise says**

Wow.....

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