

places, and what should be in the resulting photographs. For this reason, what I find in this book raises more questions than it answers. In common with many other books by and about photographers, there is almost no discussion of this social/cultural side of photograph production, except occasionally, as for example the interview with a man who hired his "Camera Girls" in a nightclub during WWII. Somewhat more of this kind of information can be found in another book by the photographic specialist at the Schomburg Center who assisted Moutoussamy-Ashe. This book is: *Black Photographers 1984-1940: A Bio-Bibliography*, by Deborah Willis-Thomas (NY: Garland, 1985). Unfortunately, Willis-Thomas mentions almost no female photographers, so her book can be used as a supplement to *Viewfinders*, but not a substitute for it.

Even though the book does not cover all that I would like, what it does show is another side to black life than the poverty-stricken one so often pictured in photographs of these time periods. The photographs included show black people as they *wanted* to be seen, well-dressed, in comfortable surroundings, as members of stable groups and families, in many parts of the country. The lives of the women covered, and the photographs they took, should cause us all to begin to ask new questions about their lives and to examine our stereotypes. For example: was photography an accepted profession for women? How was their work viewed by their communities? How did they get their technical knowledge of photography? How did they go about setting up their businesses? Who were their customers? How did they stand in relation to white female photographers of their time period?

I recommend this book for the stimulation that it will bring to those who will research their pasts and the new questions that they will raise about those pasts—and their own potentials.

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**Mark Naison. *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*. (New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1984) xxi, 355 pp., \$7.95 paper.**

The Communist Party and its relationship to blacks in the United States is a difficult subject to fully research. Necessary critical information must lie in still secret vaults in Washington and in Moscow. Naison's former dissertation is a praise-worthy effort to unravel fact

from fantasy as it applied to Black Harlem and the Party.

Readers, however, must be aware that more studies are required about other cities and other regions of the United States in order to fully understand what went on and what was planned in the U.S. For example, Nell Painter's *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life As a Negro Communist in the South* makes it clear that the forced inter-racialism of the Party in Harlem would have been suicidal in the South. Ethnic pluralism in New York, which affected the Party's behavior in New York, was not a Southern factor. So what were the conditions in the West, the Midwest, the Southwest, the South and the East for the Party and blacks? Naison is not being attacked for the book he did not write, but his work cries out for more works. Other writers on American communism slight the Party's relations to blacks.

The Party considered Harlem the center of black life in the U.S. Harlem was where the top Party people were sent. If the Party was successful here, the Party reasoned, then the other black communities would surely follow. The Party overturned the already existing radical black leadership in Harlem, warred with the black nationalist organizations, courted the black intelligentsia, promoted mass demonstrations, encouraged black cultural expression and pushed for black presence in the trade union movement. But the Party also supported the 1939 Soviet-Nazi pact after several years of promoting the Popular Front; vitiated black campaigns for economic justice in order to have a greater toe-hold in the unions; and, by involving itself in the electoral process, compromised its strength as a street-wise pressure movement for blacks. Finally, sending in whites, and insisting that the whites (largely Jews) be a part of all black efforts in Harlem, ensured that Party membership, which never rose higher than 1000, would become a revolving door.

What is even more critical is that the party of the oppressed was more successful with the middle class artistic and intellectual blacks than with economically marginal migrants who were nationalists and not really obsessed with inter-racialism. Many black leaders and artists (like Langston Hughes) stuck with the Party in its tortuous twists and turns when the black masses were dropping out. The Party sent black middle class leaders like William Patterson, Ben Davis, Jr., and James Ford to Harlem. They, in turn, worked easily with Paul Robeson and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and were able to fight civilly, but not always, with the middle class NAACP, the Urban League, and black business and church leaders. When the Party first moved into Harlem it went after the lower class, but by the end of the depression it was most successful with the most successful blacks. The question remains: was that by intent or was that a sign of its failure?

This work, the 1984 winner of the American Political Science Association's Ralph J. Bunche award, has pages of notes at the end of each chapter. While these notes are useful, they slow up the reader, making the book a chore to read rather than a pleasure. The bibliographical essay is

useful in depicting the enormous amount of interviewing done over a long period of time. The index is complete. The work would have been helped by the inclusion of photographs. The cover photograph showing a Communist funeral march through Harlem honoring an Italian-American comrade Alfred Luro is better than a thousand words. Count the few blacks and the many white comrades.

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**Peter Najarian. *Daughters of Memory*. (Berkeley, CA: City Miner Books, 1986) 157 pp., \$8.95 paper.**

*Daughters of Memory* is Peter Najarian's third work of fiction. The first, *Voyages* (1971) is a classic story of a young man born to immigrant Armenians beginning to come to terms with his family and communal past against the New Jersey backdrop. Written with lyricism and simplicity, it is one of the finest novels by an Armenian American writer. Najarian continued to explore the various parts of his psyche in the less accomplished second book, *Wash Me On Home, Mama* (1978). But it is only in this latest work that his growing maturity as a writer combined with his developing gifts as a visual artist produce an unusual story about the interweavings of personal and collective history.

As in earlier works, the narrator is on a quest for the eternal feminine. Yet it is only in this latest story that she enfolds all of history with her limitless capacity to arouse desire and inspire art. Although the narrator, Zeke, is ostensibly in love with a contemporary woman named Dolores, the most vital feminine force in the story is his mother, a splendid character who appeared in middle age as the Melina of *Voyages*. There her strength as an Armenian woman emerged not only through her survival of the genocide of 1915, but from her rare courage in coming to America and claiming a life for herself by doing the unconventional: divorcing herself from an arranged marriage and marrying the man she really loved. Here, this mother appears later on in life, and in prose that captures the beauty of aging as completely as any other passages in contemporary fiction, Najarian pays homage to the spirit of a woman who becomes increasingly identified with the universal the closer she moves to the end of her life: "She's an old woman with a face like Sitting Bull's, her lips disappearing as she takes her teeth out and brushes them with baking soda . . . [her nails] less nail than fungal crust, chthonic and recyclable, her feet like the ground itself, the bunions and calluses like a transition into the world of rocks and trees" (117).

This portrait of a woman who has anchored her son's life with the