

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

September 12, 2006

Hero or Snake?

Filed under: [photographs \(mine\)](#) — alecsothblog @ 10:26 am

John Irving says [hero](#), Chirstopher Hitchens says [snake](#). I'm just wondering if anyone has ever photographed him without his pipe:



Günter Grass, 2004. © Alec Soth

8 Comments

1. Let's call him hero with a past. And of course a lot of [people photographed him without his pipe](#) (he smoked cigarettes in early years)

Comment by [creezy](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [2:35 pm](#)

2. I prefer this one:

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [2:43 pm](#)

3. Great portrait! Your blog rocks, Alec!

Comment by [Bill](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [5:10 pm](#)

4. Hero or snake? No, too black & white for me. I prefer a description with more colour: tainted hero, snake with a conscience, something more along those lines.

Whatever, The Tin Drum was a damn fine book.

Comment by [Dan Sumption](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [5:25 pm](#)

5. Snake. If his transgression had not been in such direct contradiction to his virtue, then maybe it wouldn't be such a big deal. Words are fine, but a person's beliefs are exhibited in their actions.

Comment by [Todd W.](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [6:13 pm](#)

6. Great portrait of my favorite author. I think as Dan said it, "tainted" might be a good way to describe his biography. His work is still there and it's still fabulous. Didn't we all do something when we were 17 which we regret now? His bad decision was a really bad one, but he was young then.

How did you get to take this portrait? What was the situation?

Comment by [jan](#) — September 13, 2006 @ [2:02 am](#)

7. My publisher, Steidl, is also the publisher of Grass. He happened to visit Steidl while I was there in 2004. A lot of well known people come through Steidl's doors. But Grass has such a large presence in Germany, it felt like a major event. I took a picture of Grass with Gerhard Steidl:

<http://alecsoth.com/portrait/pages/Portrait7.html>

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 13, 2006 @ [7:57 am](#)

8. Jan, it's not what he did/didn't do as a 17 year-old that has everyone up in arms. It's the combination of pressing his country (and others) to own up to transgression while at the same time covering up his own for nearly his entire life.

Comment by [Todd W.](#) — September 15, 2006 @ [9:13 am](#)