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**A PRACTICE-LED INVESTIGATION INTO  
THE ROLE OF THE PHOTOBOOK  
IN REPRESENTING THE BRITISH  
WORKING CLASSES  
SINCE 1975**

**RUTH WHITE**

**PhD     2018**





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THE ROLE OF THE PHOTOBOOK  
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WORKING CLASSES  
SINCE 1975**

**RUTH WHITE**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the Manchester Metropolitan  
University for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

Postgraduate Arts and Humanities Centre  
Manchester Metropolitan University

2018



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## Abstract

Driven by my working-class upbringing during the Thatcher period and a desire to communicate something about the 'psychic landscape' (Diane Reay, 2005) and 'hidden injuries' (Sennett and Cobb, 1972) of class, the aim of this research is to demonstrate how photobook practice can be used as a method for investigating the lived experience of class. It further aims to highlight the important role that photobooks have played in documenting and contributing to our understanding of the impact of Thatcherism upon working-class lives.

Thatcherism marks a period of significant socio-economic upheaval and change in Britain which has had a profound effect on the life trajectories of the British working-classes. Many of the changes brought about and accelerated by Thatcherism can be seen within a small number of photobooks produced within the period. Yet, a comprehensive account of the significant contribution these photobooks have made to our understanding of the lived experience of class within the Thatcher period has not yet been written, therefore, this research fills this gap.

The research is practice-led and inter-disciplinary, culminating in the production of a collection of eight photo zines about the main areas of working-class life: family, relationships, work, leisure and to a lesser extent – formal politics. The accompanying thesis draws upon a broad range of scholarship from across the arts and humanities.

The thesis is divided into three related parts: Firstly, in order to understand who the British working-classes are and to get a sense of working class identity at this particular historical juncture, the history of British class analysis, as mapped out by Mike Savage in *The Fall and Rise of Class Analysis in British Sociology, 1950-2016* (2016), is examined. This is followed by an exploration of Thatcherism and its socio-economic impact on Britain and the life trajectories and lived experience of the British working-classes. Secondly, in order to understand how Thatcherism and the lived experience of class has been represented by the photobook, a collection of seven British

photobooks are critically analysed and the influence of these books on the photo zine practice is discussed. Finally, the photo zine practice and what it reveals about the lived experience of class is critically analysed through discussions of both the production process and a content analysis of individual photo zines.

**Key words: the photobook, photo zines, photography, British photobooks, Thatcherism, the British working-classes, working-class identity, the lived experience of class, practice-led research.**

## **List of Photo Zine Production Dates**

1. Phil Manion North End Bakers and The Workers (July 2016)
2. If They don't Want to Get Behind Him They Know Where They Can Go... (August 2016)
3. Homebaked (December 2016)
4. Lavinia's Christmas Party (July 2017)
5. Funland (September 2017)
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## Introduction

This research examines how seven British photobooks have represented the lived experience of the British working-classes during the Thatcher period and demonstrates how photo zine practice can be used as a tool for the investigation and analysis of the lived experience of class.

Although articles have been written about the British photobooks that are analysed within the thesis, to my knowledge, nobody has yet written an in-depth account of their significant contribution they have collectively made to the representation of Thatcherism and its impact on working-class lives. Therefore, this is one of my main contributions to knowledge.

Much has been written about narrative forms such as the novel and the film, yet because scholarship about the photobook is a relatively new field of inquiry, far less has been written about the scope of what the photobook is able to deal with and its contribution to our understanding of history. In the words of Martin Parr, 'in terms of researching the history of photography, the photobook is the final frontier of the undiscovered' (Parr in Parr and Badger, 2004, 2006 pp 5,4).

The breadth of what the photobook can do, particularly its capacity for exploring under narrated experiences, makes it an artform that is uniquely suited to revealing something about class identity and the lived experience of class. The photobook can represent not only the minutiae of everyday life, but also the historical and the passage of time – ranging from hundredths of a second to years; it can represent the individual and the deeply personal, the collective and the public; it can be supplemented with titles, captions or essays, it can make use of found photographs or photographs from archives and can use a wide range of printing materials which reflect and reinforce its subject matter.

The term 'working-class' refers to both a relationship to the economy and to a cultural identity which is shaped by that position and by the struggles of

generations that have gone before. Therefore, to understand the lived experience of the working-classes and class identity in any historical period, the economy and governments of that period must be understood.

Thatcherism marks a period of significant socio-economic upheaval and change in Britain, which has had a profound effect on the life trajectories of the British working-classes. Thatcherism is a term that describes not only the ideology and rhetoric of the woman herself but also a neo-liberal approach to the economy, which by the end of the 1980s had become deeply embedded within the centre ground of politics. Thatcherism drew upon ideas that had been in circulation long before Thatcher became prime minister, yet it was only because of the perceived failure of social democracy to deal with Britain's worsening economic crisis that those ideas were able to gain traction. By the late 1970s, the manufacturing industry was already in decline and unemployment was rising, but it was through the agency of Thatcher and her government that de-industrialisation and the transformation of the British economy was most dramatic. Her weakening of the trade unions and the transformation of the economy from one based on skilled and relatively well-paid manufacturing jobs, with high levels of worker autonomy, to one based on the financial services and low skilled, low paid service jobs, with low levels of worker autonomy, destroyed many working-class communities and lives.

Not only under the Thatcher led government were the British working-classes under attack economically, they were also under attack symbolically, through the Conservative party's anti-social democratic, anti-union, anti-collective, anti-welfare rhetoric. In what can be described as one of the British working-classes' greatest hours of need, intellectuals across the humanities were abandoning or side-lining class within their research and writing. This was not only because of a misconception that because manual labour was in relative decline, that it was no longer possible to 'talk about the working-class as the central industrial organising force for socialism' (Roberts, 1990: 88), but also because of a hegemonic shift across the



humanities, from a focus on economics as the basis of inequality, to a focus on gender, race and sexuality as the axis of inequality. Or in the words of Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, when describing 'the artists ethnographer' (Foster, 1999:172) paradigm which emerged in the 1980s, there was a significant 'shift from a subject defined in terms of *economic relation* to one defined in terms of *cultural identity*' (1999:173).

As Mike Savage observes, it was 'remarkable' how the study of class 'almost entirely disappeared' from the agenda of Cultural studies - a discipline which had emerged in the 1960s 'as a set of intellectual reflections on class cultures' (Savage, 2000:31). Warren Carter also observes, that 'just as the focus upon class at the Centre for Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, gave way to a discursive practice that would go on to privilege race in the process of identity formation, then *Screen* [a highly influential journal of film studies] would increasingly become preoccupied with gender and sexuality' (Carter, 2013:21).

Within photographic theory in the 1980s and 1990s, the political function of photography was undermined by a critique of realism which led to the view that documentary photography is positivistic and deeply problematic. Yet many of the societal changes brought about by Thatcherism were captured by photographers such as Martin Parr and Paul Graham and can be seen within a small number of photobooks produced within the period. To my knowledge, nobody has yet written a comprehensive account of the significant contribution these photobooks have made to our understanding of the lived experience of class within the Thatcher period and so this research fills this gap.

The way in which each of the seven British photobooks identified represent different aspects of the lived experience of class during the period covered is investigated in part two of the thesis through a visual and textual analysis which draws upon a range of concepts from across the arts and humanities. The photobooks have been selected, not because all their producers

deliberately set out to make work that revealed the impact of Thatcherism on working-class lives, but because of the way in which they inadvertently do so. The production methods used are analysed and have fed into the development of the photo zine practice.

## **Motivation**

The driving force behind both the photo zine practice and the written element of this research has been a desire to communicate something about what Diane Reay terms the 'psychic landscape of class' – class thinking and feeling, and what Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb term 'the hidden injuries of class' (1972) – the suffering caused by a meritocratic society which leads working-class individuals to believe that dignity is something that has to be worked towards and is available to only the most able, rather than something that all men and women automatically have a right to (Sennett and Cobb, 1972:77-79).

Much like the aims laid out so eloquently by James Agee in the preface of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939), through the research an effort has been made: 'to recognize the stature of a portion of unimagined existence, and to contrive techniques proper to its recording, communication, analysis, and defence...' (Agee, 1939).

My own working-class upbringing in the 1980s and 1990s will undoubtedly influence and inform my reading of the seven British photobooks selected for analysis and the individual photographs within them. I was born in Liverpool in 1978, where unemployment in the mid-1980s ran at 'more than twenty-five percent (and much higher in many council estates)' (Jacks, 1986:235). My parents were fortunate to be employed and for my mum who had grown up in abject poverty, owning her own home and escaping her abusive mother was a "step up". Yet despite my father having a relatively skilled job as a surveyor for Knowsley council, and my mum working as a part time administrator for a youth centre, our family struggled. Both of my parents smoked, my dad went to 'the match' at weekends and for 'last orders' every

night in the pub across the road and my mum played Bingo once a week. Yet my sister and I wore hand-me-down clothes and when we were treated to new outfits, they were bought from a catalogue not a shop, and even then, only for special occasions like Easter or Christmas. Our terraced house was single glazed and without central heating, so during the winter months my sister and I would fight for a place to get dressed in front of the gas fire in the living room. We had one annual holiday, usually a week in a caravan in Wales, we never ate out and rarely went to the cinema, occasionally we had takeaway meals from the 'chippie' and spent many hours in front of the television. We attended the nearest secondary school, where my sister and I were both bullied, to the extent that my sister had to move to another school, and as teenagers we didn't feel safe walking around the streets near where we lived.

I include some of these autobiographical details, not to be self-indulgent, but because they are the driving force behind this research and what I consider to be some of the 'hidden injuries of class' that Sennett and Cobb refer to. Many of these experiences, like becoming a parent, cannot be fully understood by reading about them in academic text books. This is not to say that all working-class experiences are the same, because they obviously differ, but what is the same, are the similar levels of struggle for the necessities of life which impact on the lives of working-class individuals in a myriad of ways.

Autobiography has not only driven the research but has also been an integral part of the research process. The emotional labour, ethics and values involved in producing photo zines is not something that is visible in the zines and so it is important at this point to analyse my relationship to the subjects of the photo zine practice and the loosely ethnographic methods that were used.

## **The Use of Informal Ethnographic Methods for the Research**

There are some fundamental differences between the disciplines of art and anthropology according to Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz in their article 'The Ethnographic Turn – and After: A Critical Approach Towards the Realignment of Art and Anthropology' (2015). 'Art is 'not about knowing more, but knowing differently' (Grimshaw, Ravetz, 2015:429), 'art does not describe or explain but instead "presents" or "enacts" (Johnson, 2011:147 in Grimshaw, Ravetz, 2015:430). Whilst pointing out these differences however, they also acknowledge common ground between the two disciplines, whereby some artists and anthropologists utilise ethnographic approaches to make sense of what it is to be human. Similarly comparing my loosely used ethnographic methods (i.e. unrecorded conversations, a questionnaire and consent forms) with anthropological approaches has provided me with a way to understand what I have done and the values of my practice.

Grimshaw and Ravetz observe that since 2000 there have been numerous 'international conferences, workshops, exhibitions and projects about art and anthropology' (Ravetz 2007; Rutten, et al 2013; Sansi 2015)' (Grimshaw, Ravetz, 2015:418) in response to what was identified as 'the ethnographic turn' by James Clifford in 1988 and Hal Foster in 1996 (Grimshaw, Ravetz, 2015:418). Therefore, to draw comparisons between the disciplines is not something new. In *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (1996), Foster rightly points out that many artists engage with ethnography in only a superficial way, falling short of the ethical standards adhered to by those working in disciplines that use formal ethnographic methods – '[f]ew principles of the ethnographic participant observer are observed, let alone critiqued, and only limited engagement of the community is effected' (Foster, 1995:196-197). I am not one of those artists.

Throughout my research, despite the informality of my ethnographic methods, the ethics of what I was doing was always at the forefront of my mind. An important example of this was the decision to not to photograph

my father-in-law when his dementia progressed to the point where he could not give consent. To have done so would not only have risked making him feel uncomfortable but would also have made me feel ashamed because of the clear imbalance of power. Even if there were valid reasons for doing so (i.e. if my research and practice was about dementia) it still would have felt like an unnecessary violation of him and my relationship with him and his family.

Because autobiography underpins all my research, it is useful to compare my working methods and values as a researcher, photographer and photobook practitioner more specifically to autoethnography – an ethnographic method which draws upon the lived experience and relationships of the researcher in relation to the wider socio-political context of the period in which they live.

Autoethnography developed as a discipline from the 1970s onwards.

According to Tony Adams, Stacey Holman Jones and Carolyn Ellis in *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* (2015), the term was first used by Karl Heider in 1975 'to describe a study in which cultural members give accounts about their culture' (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis, 2015:16). In 1979, David Hayno used the term 'to describe anthropologists who "conduct and write ethnographies of their 'own people'" and who chose a "field location" tied to one of their identities or group memberships' (ibid, 2015:16). Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis observe that autoethnography developed in response to three 'interrelated concerns':

(1) New and changing ideas about and ideas for research, a recognition of the limits of scientific knowledge, and an emerging appreciation for personal narrative, story, the literary and the aesthetic, emotions, and the body; (2) a heightened concern about the ethics and politics of research practices and representations; and (3) the increased importance of social identity and identity politics.

(Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis, 2015:8)

Reading Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis's list, it becomes clear that within the same period artists and art criticism also shared many of the same

concerns and evolved in response for the same reasons. In the 1970s and 1980s much was written about the ethics of documentary photography and there was a proliferation of art and cultural criticism about social identity and identity politics (Roberts, 1998:159).

In making a comparison between my research and autoethnography I must stress that I do this only because it helps me to describe the methods and values of my research better than anything I have read in the relatively small number of texts written about the production of art as research. I do not want my research to be reduced 'to an instrumental purpose equivalent to that of anthropology' (Grimshaw, Ravetz, 2015:431), or, as Jennifer Gonzalez has warned, 'reduced to the status of an additive rather than critical intervention' (Gonzalez in Grimshaw, Ravetz, 2015:431).

The autobiographical is a key aspect of the photo zine practice and the written element of the PhD. The photo zines are both an exploration, a presentation and an enactment of the research and ideas contained within the written half of the thesis. The analysis of the photo zines and photobooks allows me to draw out and analyse my own lived experience and that of my family (and friends) in a way that uses the particular of their lives, experiences and emotions in order to say something more general about the lived experience and hidden injuries of the British working class.

My research has been a process of shared understanding – of not only understanding more about working-class identity (and in turn my own working-class identity) but also to a lesser degree, a way of helping my own family (and others who I photographed and made photo zines about) to understand their lives in terms of the bigger societal picture of class and inequality.

Through the thesis I have explored how British working-class identity in the present has been shaped by the past and by past experiences. I have used a form of narrative and storytelling in the production of photo zines about different aspects of working-class life and through the writing and the photo

zines, have created relationships between the past and present, between myself and the subjects of my work and between myself and the audiences of the work – both academic and non-academic (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis, 2015:23). My informal conversations with my family about their lives and my research has been a mutually beneficial process, allowing us all to reflect on the meaning and value of our experiences. The distribution of copies of the photo zines to the subjects of the work is a key part of that. Although not empirically measurable, I hope that my probing questions about their lives (which encouraged them to open up and talk about their lived experiences) and my sharing of my observations and research with my family as I have progressed on the PhD, has given them “food for thought” and has provided them with more of a sense of and understanding of the meanings of their identities, relationships and experiences.

My relationship to some of the individuals and groups I photographed and have written about is also comparable to that of a ‘participant observer’, in that when taking the majority of the photographs for the photo zines, I was recording situations in which I was taking part and documenting my own life as well as that of close family and friends. According to Danny Jorgensen, participant observation ‘is a very special strategy and method for gaining access to the interior, seemingly subjective aspects of human existence (see Krieger, 1985). Through participation, the researcher is able to observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people from the role of insider’ (Jorgensen, 1989:21). This ‘strategy and method’ are not what is visible in the photo zines but were part of the circumstances surrounding their production. In order to gain access to the more ‘seemingly subjective aspects’ of working-class identity and lived experience I documented people I knew or who had a connection to people I know.

Jorgensen also states that the role of the participant observer ‘provides access to the world of everyday life from the standpoint of a member or insider’ (Jorgensen, 1989:20) and it is this sense of intimacy and of being an insider (as opposed to a detached observer or someone from a culturally

different background) that is at its strongest in the photo zines of my own family and which is present within all of the photo zines.

The status of being an insider covers a wide spectrum (Jorgenson, 1989:21) and having enough distance from the object of study to be able to objectively examine the environment is important for research. For example, as the daughter-in-law who is very close to my in-laws, I am an insider but not as much of an insider as my husband and his brother and sister who grew up in his family. The distance I have from my in-laws meant that the poor material conditions of their home and the way they neglected their own material and emotional needs in order to provide for their children has always been glaringly obvious to me but less obvious to my husband. His closeness to his parents and their home environment prevented the level of distance needed to see things as objectively. The use of a camera is also a way of defamiliarizing an familiar environment in order to see things more objectively and this is part of the knowledge generating aspect of what John Roberts has described as 'the violation of photography' (2014) which I will go on to discuss in more detail.

In terms of my own research, I was an insider who selectively provided those I photographed with details about what I was doing and why I was doing it. As Jorgensen notes, this is one of the most common strategies amongst participant observers '(see Adler and Adler, 1987; Adler, Adler, and Rochford, 1986)' (Jorgensen, 1989:21). I revealed information about my research in a simplified and selective way, not because I was trying to deceive anyone but because I wanted to explain it in a way that I thought that anyone would be able to understand and in a way that did not risk causing offence. This simplified explanation usually took the form of casual conversation but was more formal for *Phil Manion North End Bakers* and *Lavinia's Christmas Party*, in the form of a written explanation, which I will discuss in more detail in my content analysis of the photo zine in part three. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, because I was dealing with a larger number of people and secondly, because I didn't know all of those involved.



For *Lavina's Christmas Party* I also used consent forms which were given to the parents of children attending the party to sign before the day of photographing.

Jorgenson notes that in participant observation data is often collected 'through casual conversations, in-depth, informal, and unstructured interviews and questionnaires (see Fine, 1987; Wallis, 1977)' (Jorgensen, 1989:22). Because of my life long interest in the history of people's lives this is something I did naturally, particularly with family members. For example, for many years before my father-in-law's dementia progressed and before we even knew he had the disease, I would sit talking to him and would ask him questions about his life and the jobs he had done. It was through what I learned and thought about as a result of these casual conversations that I eventually decided I wanted to produce a photo zine that would somehow encapsulate and distil the things my father-in-law had told me about his life. And so, this is what led to the production of the last photo zine in the series - *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*, after he had passed away. As Jorgen states 'The relationship between the participant as observer, people in the field setting, and the larger context of human interaction is one of the key components of this methodology. The character of field relations heavily influences the researcher's ability to collect accurate, truthful information' (Jorgensen, 1989:21). My close relationship with my father-in-law meant that he was more likely to be open and truthful (up to a point) about his life experiences with me. My positive relationship with him and my ability to ask questions sensitively meant that I was able to find out things about his life that even my husband didn't know about. This, and my closeness to my in-laws, which I had built up over years of visits and conversations also meant that I could take photographs of my in-laws and my father-in-law's bedroom after he had passed away. I had built up a level of trust (and love) over many years which meant I could ask my mother-in-law if I could photograph my father-in-law's bedroom without it being embarrassing or upsetting and without her feeling I was in some way trying to exploit her family.

Jorgen observes that in participant observation '[t]here is no necessary conflict between personal, subjective interests or values and the scientific goal of truth (see Psathas, 1973; Rabinow, 1977; Hunt, 1984; Krieger, 1985). Personal interests hold potential for new insights and creativity inspired by emotional and intellectual identification with the topic of study (Johnson, 1975, 1977)' (Jorgensen, 1989:27). It is my own emotional and intellectual identification with the subjects I photographed which led me to want to photograph and write about them in the first place. As noted in my introduction, the insights I gained from growing up in a working-class family, and from my own working-class identity and experience of the work place have been the driving force behind the research. As Jorgen also notes, the participant observer is open and reflexive about how 'personal interests and values' has influenced their research (Jorgensen, 1989:27).

Having mapped out the background to the research I will now move on to outlining the key analytical concepts that will be applied throughout the rest of the thesis.

### **Key Analytical Concepts**

The analysis of all photobooks referred to in the thesis will be interpreted with the aid of several concepts from across the arts and humanities. John Roberts' 'violation' which explains how the intrusive nature of photography unveils that which prefers to be hidden and in doing so produces knowledge (Roberts, 2014:1-2), is used to analyse the ethics of the photobook and the photo zine practice. Roberts' 'secondary ostension' - the way in which photographs can point at one state-of-affairs to reveal another (Roberts, 154-155) is used to analyse how photobooks are able to make visible the macro by focusing on the micro. Raymond Williams' 'structures of feelings' – the practical and lived experience of a period (Williams, 1977:128-135) will be used to discuss how the British photobooks that have been selected for analysis, embody the structures of feeling of the Thatcher period. Walter Benjamin's 'redemption' – how art and criticism can rescue what has been

lost or is at risk of being lost to history (Benjamin, 1940: no page number) will be used to analyse how the photobook can be redemptive. Pierre Bourdieu's related concepts habitus (1984:165-222), the taste of necessity (1984:373-397) and cultural capital (1986:47-51) will be used. 'Habitus' – the schemes of perception which are both a consequence of class position and also shape the perception of individuals (Bourdieu, 1984:166); 'the taste for necessity' – class practices which are shaped by a lack of or a struggle for the necessities of life (shelter, food etc) (Bourdieu, 1984:373) and 'cultural capital' – which includes things such as educational qualifications and social networks and can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984:47-51). All of which will be used to analyse class throughout the thesis and to explain how the class practices which appear within the photo zine practice were selected. As already noted, Diane Reay's 'psychic landscape of class' (2005) will be used to discuss how the photobook is able to represent the affective aspects of class. Jonathan Cobb and Richard Sennett's 'hidden injuries of class' (1972) will be used to discuss the everyday hidden injuries and suffering caused by our British meritocracy and will also be discussed in relation to the way in which photobooks can make visible some of these injuries.

Through the photo zine practice, the lived experience of class has been investigated through the photographing of working-class practices using 35mm black and white and colour film photography. The range of working-class practices which have been photographed have developed organically through the opportunities that have presented themselves or been sought after during the last four years because of my network of friends and family, most of whom are from working-class backgrounds. What links many of the working-class practices chosen, such as a preference for caravan holidays rather than for example skiing holidays, is what Pierre Bourdieu terms 'the choice of the necessary' or 'the taste of necessity' - the working-classes taste for practices which relate to their economic circumstances, even though individuals may not recognise it as such (Bourdieu, 1984:373-397). That is why, based on his extensive empirical research, it was possible for Bourdieu

to generalise about what working-class practices were in 1960s France, which is not to say that a preference for specific practices or the content of those practices can be completely reduced to economics. How lived experience has been represented and the methods used within my practice will be analysed and related to other British photobooks and the history of documentary photography. One of the second claims to knowledge this research makes, is for a practice methodology which could with relative ease, be replicated in a wide range of contexts and for many different purposes. Within the history of the photobook, there are many examples of sociologists, anthropologists and writers working and collaborating with photographers, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century. My hope is that this research will encourage more of this at an institutional level.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into three related parts. In the first, key concepts that will be applied throughout the thesis are outlined, this is followed by an examination of the history of British class analysis and then an analysis of Thatcherism and its impact on working-class lives. This is done to not only understand how British sociology has influenced working-class identity and common-sense understandings of class but also to provide the socio-economic background of the British photobooks from the period and to understand how Thatcherism has impacted on the life trajectories of the working-classes since Thatcher left office. In part two, a visual and textual analysis of seven British photobooks which each document different aspects of the impact of Thatcherism on working-class lives is conducted and their influence on the photo zine practice is analysed. In part three, the photo zine practice is critically analysed in relation to the analysis of Thatcherism and how it has been represented by the photobook in parts one and two. Conclusions will then be made about how well the photo zine practice has been able to communicate something about the lived experience of class and about how the project can be taken further.



# **Part I: Key Concepts, the History of British Class Analysis and the Impact of Thatcherism on Working-class Lives**

## **Key concepts**

In this section, important concepts for the thesis will be defined and related to the contexts in which they will be applied.

### **Pierre Bourdieu's habitus and the taste for necessity**

According to Bourdieu, social class is defined not only by an individual's 'position in the relations of production' but also by 'class habitus' which because of the extensive empirical research he conducted in France in the 1960s, he asserts 'is 'normally' (i.e., with a high statistical probability) associated with that position' (Bourdieu, 1984:373).

Bourdieu's 'habitus' and 'a taste for necessity', provides a way of understanding why it is possible to generalise about what working-class practices are and why I was able to pick out what I believe to be working-class practices (such as caravan holidays which are cheaper than holidays abroad) and how poverty and a struggle to pay for the necessities in life (the need to pay for food, clothing and housing etc) generates particular practices and a taste for those practices. The 'taste' or 'the choice of necessity' is 'a form of adaption to and consequently acceptance of the necessary [and] a resignation to the inevitable' (Bourdieu, 1984:373) which leads working-class people to accept their lot in life and to limit their tastes and ambitions accordingly and perceive these choices as natural (Bourdieu, 1984:373). It is particularly important to the thesis for understanding the generative dynamic of class practices and the lived experience of class.

An individual's view of the world, according to Bourdieu, is 'carried out under social constraints' as the 'familiar', "taken for granted" experience of the world which is perceived through habitus, 'the mental structures' through which we view the world, which are a result of 'an internalization of the

structures of that world.' Therefore, 'perceptive dispositions tend to be adjusted to position' and 'even the most disadvantaged' are inclined 'to perceive the world as natural and accept it much more readily than one might imagine' (1989:18).

Habitus is a 'system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action' (Bourdieu, 1990:12-13). In other words, habitus is the disposition of an individual, which is not only shaped by their social position, but also shapes their perceptions and understandings. At the same time, this generates class practices, which in turn, allow others to classify that agent and that agent to classify others.

Class positions are relational so that individuals are also distinguished and defined by 'what [they are] not and especially from everything [they are] opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference' (Bourdieu, 1984:166-167). This helps to explain why there are divisions not only between classes (e.g. many of the working-class think that the middle-classes are pretentious and many of the middle-class think that the working-classes are vulgar) but divisions within classes, for example why some "respectable" working-class families may look down on "rough" working-class families and/or those who are unemployed. It also explains why many individuals feel more comfortable mixing with people who share a similar habitus.

Bourdieu proposes that the habitus is also 'a product of history [that] produces individual and collective practices – more history-in- accordance with the schemes generated by history' (Bourdieu, 1990:54). Throughout the photo zines produced for the PhD can be found many instances of a taste for practices generated by a lack of money and choices made by working-class individuals out of necessity, because of the low wages paid to working-class individuals.

According to Bourdieu and in the words of Mike Savage, culture 'is not simply an add-on to class positions whose logic is provided by economic relations represented in the form of an occupational class structure, [...] it has to be factored into the account of how class positions are constituted and where the lines of division between classes are drawn' (Savage, 2009:2).

### **Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's hidden Injuries of class**

Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972) is about the everyday suffering of American working-class men which is caused by a meritocracy that makes people feel that dignity is something that has to be earned rather than something that all individuals are entitled to. Although specific to American society, it is also applicable to Britain and even more so since the advent of Thatcherism, because of the way that skilled and autonomous jobs, traditionally done by working-class males, have significantly declined because of economic restructuring and the rise of technology.

Sennett and Cobb describe the struggle for 'freedom and dignity' of the working-class men they interviewed (Sennett and Cobb, 1972:30) and how class in America is structured so that '*the tools of freedom become sources of indignity*' (Sennett and Cobb, 1972:30). By tools of freedom they mean a meritocracy in which individuals feel that through hard work and/or education they can achieve anything they want to but at the same time, if they do not achieve, they only have themselves to blame. This is what causes the 'hidden injuries of class' and the indignity and suffering of the men they interviewed. Throughout their interviews they discovered the same contradiction between the respect the working-class men had for those who did skilled manual jobs and coterminously, the respect the men had for education and the freedom and respect they perceived qualifications brought to people. Feelings of inadequacy compelled the men to make sacrifices so that their children would get a good education and in turn would be respected, even though the men felt that education would lead their children



'into work not 'as "real" as their own' (Sennett and Cobb, 1972:23). It is worth quoting at length a passage in which Sennett and Cobb analyse what they discovered from their interview with a man called Frank Rissaro, which gives a sense of this struggle in lived terms:

Rissaro believes people of a higher class have a power to judge him because they seem internally more developed human beings; and he is afraid, because they are better armed, that they will not respect him. He feels compelled to justify his own position, and in his life has felt compelled to put himself up on their level in order to earn respect [...] all of this is set against a revulsion against the work of educated people in the bank and a feeling that manual labour has more dignity. (Sennett and Cobb, 1972:25).

Essentially, feelings of inadequacy not only caused the men they interviewed to suffer daily, but also compelled the men to push their children towards jobs and life styles that they did not respect. And all of this was done even though there was no guarantee that after all the sacrifices that would need to be made (fathers working longer hours and spending less time with their families to pay for education), that their children would end up working in better jobs, have better lives or feel any less inadequate than their fathers.

The same feelings of inadequacy and struggle for dignity are also part of the lived experience of the British working-classes, because of a meritocracy that has been supported by the rhetoric and policies of Labour politicians such as Tony Blair, just as much as Conservative politicians. Simon Charlesworth's *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience* (2000) can be described as the British version of *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, in the way that it is one of the few books that extensively analyses the hidden injuries and lived experience of the British working-classes. For example, Charlesworth describes the inability of many of the working-class people he interviewed to articulate their suffering, and notes that 'the everyday suffering of these people is so ubiquitous, so utterly mundane, so much a fabric of the ordinary lives of ordinary people that it barely seems worthy of remark as people live their lives of quiet despair' (Charlesworth, 2000:146-147). Although the British

photobook's that will be analysed in part two and the photo zines produced for practice are not able to reveal individual psychology in the same way that Charlesworth and Sennett and Cobbs interviews are, they are able to make visible many of the injuries inflicted on the British working-classes during and as a consequence of, the Thatcher period.

The British photobooks provide a vehicle to discuss the hidden injuries of class which otherwise would remain hidden. Both the concepts of 'the violation of photography' and 'secondary ostension' which will be discussed shortly, are concepts which help to explain how photobook is able to make visible the hidden injuries of class of which Sennett and Cobb and Charlesworth describe. They will also help to explain how some of the hidden injuries described by Charlesworth have been made visible within the photo zine practice.

### **Diane Reay's psychic landscape of class and contemporary class analysis**

Mike Savage has observed the close relationship between identity and 'practices and accounts of class practices' (Savage in Reay, 2005:912) and Diane Reay has extended Savage's observation by proposing that class identity is also found in 'how individuals think and feel about those practices' (Reay, 2005:912). It is this thinking and feeling – the affective dimension of class, that she terms 'the psychic landscape of class' (Reay, 2005:912). By the affective dimension of class, Reay is specifically referring to the 'feelings of ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognition, abjection and the markings of taste [which] constitute a psychic economy of social class' (Reay, 2005:911), and these are all feelings she uncovered from the observations and interviews she carried out over a ten-year period in British schools (they are also thoughts and feelings I had at primary school and beyond). As Reay notes, education is a field in which 'the workings of class are not only concentrated and made explicit but are also heavily implicit' (Reay, 2005:914). Although it would be difficult to locate these feelings within photobooks, photobooks can help to uncover the causes of

these ambivalent feelings and as demonstrated by this thesis, can be used as an aid to an affective approach to class analysis.

### **Working-class practices**

In terms of the class practices of the British working-classes, they can be thought about just as much by what practices the working-classes do not take part in. For their research for *Culture Class, Distinction* (2009), Mike Savage and his colleagues replicated the work carried out by Bourdieu in France in the 1960s, within a British context. What they discovered about the practices of the British working-classes in the twenty-first century was that it's 'principle defining features are its lack of participation and its dislike of legitimate culture' and that 'there is no distinctive, separate and autonomous working-class culture [although] echoes and residues of the past emerge in the independent technical and practical culture of the skilled working-class' (Savage et al, 2009:212).

Yet, not participating in "legitimate" culture does not mean the working-classes do not engage in class practices. To not take part in legitimate culture is still a practice, even if it is viewed by the middle and upper classes as a negative one. "Illegitimate" practices such as watching 'the soaps', going 'to the match' and getting drunk, are practices that contribute to working-class experience and identity. As Savage points out, '[d]etachment [from legitimate culture] is a better notion than exclusion; [as working-class individuals] don't feel excluded' (Savage, et al, 2009:212). Working-class lives, according to the results of Savage and his colleagues research, 'are organised around different priorities, conviviality, family, work, perhaps material objects, but not cultural refinement' (Savage, et al, 2009:212). In terms of specific practices, Savage and his colleagues did find that 'the poorly educated members of the working-class are disproportionately likely to watch more than five hours television per day, to like soap operas and listening to country and western music, and to like eating out at fish-and-chip restaurants' (Savage et al, 2009:199). All of which can be understood in terms of having a taste for necessity – for what they can afford, and in terms

of the amount of cultural capital available to them – cultural capital being the ‘distinctive forms of knowledge and ability’ inherited from the family, developed through schooling and through extra-curricular activities which are all limited by money (Bennett in Bourdieu, 1984:xxii).

The psyche is something that the photograph is not well equipped to deal with, given the fact that the photography is only able to record outside appearances. Yet if working-class identity is shaped through class practices, it can be argued that the production of photobooks about class practices are a better way of coming closer to the psychic landscape of class or the lived experience of class within a period, than a single photograph is able to achieve alone. This is primarily because a sequence of photographs not only comes cognitively closer to the experience of the passage of time, which is a part of lived experience, but also to the experience of the act of looking, as the sequence is able to show a range of viewpoints, unlike a single image, which has just one viewpoint. A single photograph usually represents a moment in time, whereas a sequence of photographs represents many moments in time and can represent the passage of seconds, hours, days, months and even years. Examples of this can be found within the photo zine practice, which is analysed in part three. For example, *Funland* represents a weekend – two days, whereas *Skeggy* represents a week and *Homebaked*, *Lavinia’s Christmas Party* and *If they don’t want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...*, all represent just a few hours.

### **Raymond Williams’s Structures of Feelings**

‘In most description and analysis’, Raymond Williams argues, ‘culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense’ and while this is acceptable when talking about cultural activity which is in the past and has ended or has been replaced by new forms of cultural activity, it is inadequate for describing and analysing ‘relationships institutions and formations’ in the present, which are still in process (Williams, 1977:128). This premature conversion and reduction of complex lived experience and cultural processes into ‘finished products’, denies and excludes not only ‘the personal: this,

here, now, alive, active, 'subjective' (Williams, 1977: 128) but also 'the experiences to which the fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize' (Williams, 1977:130). This consciousness as it is lived, rather than 'official consciousness' - 'what it is [that is] thought is being lived' (Williams, date:130-131), Williams terms 'practical consciousness'.

When thought about in terms of class identity, 'practical consciousness' as lived by working-class individuals, has similarities and is compatible with Diane Reay's 'psychic landscape of class' - a term coined by Reay to describe the affective dimension of class – 'class thinking and feeling' (Reay, 2005:912), which is linked to class practices, accounts of practices and 'how individuals think and feel about those practices' (ibid, 2005:912). Reay describes the link between class identity and class practices as a generative process and argues that 'there is a powerful dynamic between emotions, the psyche and class inequalities that is as much about the makings of class as it is about its consequences' (Reay, 2005: 911). Therefore, like Williams's 'practical consciousness' and 'structures of feeling', the psychic landscape of class can be said to be always in process and not a finished product until perhaps a person dies or a historical period is over.

Williams uses the term 'structures of feeling' as a way to describe 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt' and Reay's 'psychic landscape of class' is able to address 'structures of feeling' more closely than traditional class analysis, which has tended to focus on 'class consciousness' – a political understanding of one's class position (Marshall, 1997; Wright, 1979 in Reay, 2005: 912), whilst ignoring or dealing inadequately with the affective dimension of class. Structures of feeling is multi-dimensional as it can be applied to both the micro and the macro changes that happen within a period, and most importantly, how the macro impacts on the micro of individual lives. Therefore, structures of feeling is an ideal concept for thinking about the transformation of Britain and how this has impacted on both the practical and affective dimension of working-class lives.

One of the most important aspects of Williams's structures of feeling and why it is suitable for the analysis of photography and the photobook, is that he proposes that it is most relevant to art and literature. Works of art, according to Williams, are 'explicit and finished forms-actual objects in the visual arts, objectified conventions and notations (semantic figures) in literature' that to 'complete their inherent process', are made 'present, in specifically active 'readings' (Williams, 1977:129). By this, I understand Williams to mean that works of art embody the structures of feeling of a cultural period and because they require an audience to read and activate them, then despite their objectified state, they are always in process and are never completed. When considering the many uses that a single photograph can be put to and how photographs can signify different things, depending on how they are sequenced or how they are framed by captions or other texts, and how this differs in different historical periods, then this active reading process becomes obvious. The photograph depicts a historical moment that has past and as an object the photograph will not change (apart from materially if the photograph fades or the paper perishes) but the interpretation and/or framing of that photograph will change within different historical periods.

Structures of feelings define 'a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period' (Williams, 1977:131). It is not the same as 'world-view' or 'ideology' although it includes them, it is 'specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought' (Williams, 1977:132).

As John Kirk writes of structures of feeling in literature:

[s]tructures of feeling can help to understand writing's entanglement with historical change. Texts provide evidence about the vital, and lived, experiences or attitudes of a group or of a society in a particular historical period, defining a particular quality of social experience.

(Kirk, 2003:81)

This is applicable to many cultural artefacts, including the seven British photobooks that I will analyse in part two because of the way that they define a particular quality of social experience in the Thatcher period.

### **Photography's productive capacity for violation**

In *Photography and its violations* (2014), John Roberts argues that photography has a 'productive capacity for violation' (Roberts, 2014:1). By violation, he means the way in which through the act of "pointing at", (Roberts, 2014:1), photography is able to disclose that which prefers not to be disclosed - the 'power relations and material interests' which violation 'is itself embedded in' and that which 'social appearances hide' – 'division, hierarchy, and exclusion' (Roberts, 2014:2). Photography has an insatiable appetite for 'intrusiveness and invasiveness' and as such has an 'infinite capacity for truth-telling', and it is this, according to Roberts, which 'gives photography its politically exacting and philosophically demanding identity' (Roberts, 2014:1). Through this act of violation - this intrusiveness and invasiveness, the photograph is able to reveal the position of a person or a thing 'within the totality of social relations in which the representation of the person or thing is made manifest' (ibid, 2014:1).

Yet the power of violation is not always a force for good, 'as if everything needs to be made visible, at all times, under all circumstances' (Roberts, 2014:2) and the concept of violation is not an argument for abandoning the concern for protecting the 'powerless' from the 'powerful', which preoccupied photographic theorists such as John Tagg and Allan Sekula in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a concept which the 'ethics of representation' needs in order to protect the vulnerable, but crucially, 'not in order to submit such bodies and faces to ignominy and shame' (Roberts, 2014:53). Photographers have always walked a fine line between exposing the bodies of their subjects 'to abjection' and defending those subjects 'against such necessary intrusion' (ibid, 2014:53). They not only have to consider the impact their photographs will have on their subjects but also how productive the act of violation will be

– in other words, photographers should always ask themselves if it will lead to the production of worthwhile knowledge.

Within my own practice, an example of how I have walked the fine line of violation is demonstrated by my decision not to photograph my father-in-law towards the end of his life. The late stages of his dementia meant that he was no longer able to give consent. Taking his photograph was not more important to me than the thought of making him uncomfortable. He was an intelligent man and in his lucid moments understood the power of photography to preserve the memory of the dead, and that photographs of him would be looked at after he had passed away. I decided that the violation in this case would not have been productive unless I was planning to use the work to communicate something important about the experience of dementia. Yet after his passing, with the permission of my mother-in-law, I decided to take photographs of his neglected bedroom. Something which understandably, he would have felt very uncomfortable about, but which I judged to be a productive violation.

Because of the instability of the meaning of photographs (they can be interpreted in different ways by subjects who occupy different social positions), and the way that the photographer cannot always control the context in which their photographs are shown (particularly in journalism), I propose that the concept of violation can be usefully extended to include the violation of a photographer and their intentions, which in turn can cause a violation of the subject that was not intended by the photographer. An example of this is Richard Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* (1996), an autobiographical photobook about the artist's alcoholic father and immediate working-class family. The photographs were originally used as a visual reference for Billingham to make paintings of his family and so he did not consider the potential ethical implications of the photographs. But after advice from Julian Germain, a visiting lecturer, they were edited into a photo essay, in a somewhat sympathetic way, in collaboration with the newspaper photography editor, Michael Collins. Without the permission of Billingham,



the publisher Scalo, decided to change the photograph on the front cover, to use an ugly typeface and to change the sequence of images, to create a more garish tone. In doing so, they violated not only the intention of the artist but also his family through presenting them in a less sympathetic way. Yet it can also be argued that in the end, this violation, although not intended by the artist, is productive, in that the tone of the photobook reinforced the sense of economic and social deprivation of Billingham's family and has produced knowledge of an attitude towards the working-classes within the historical moment of which it was made. When thought about in this way, the productiveness or non-productiveness of a violation can also be thought about in terms of context and the historical period in which it was produced, as what may be thought about as an unproductive violation in the present, may be discovered to be or reinterpreted as a productive violation in the future. This also fits with Walter Benjamin's use of the concept, redemption (1940), of which I will talk more about, which can be found within the writing of John Berger. According to John Roberts, Berger's writing developed out of 'the very redemptive tradition of Benjamin', and, is concerned with, 'how the art of criticism, of critical positioning and evaluation, can become an act of love' (Roberts, 1998:138). In other words, a reinterpretation of a photograph or photobook, such as Richard Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* (1996), which Martha Rosler's pithy critique (Rosler, 2004:229-230) suggests is unproductively violating, can allow a photograph or photobook to become a productive violation and to generate new knowledge. And in doing so, as sentimental as it sounds, can be 'an act of love'.

The productive violation of photography is its ability to generate knowledge and to allow subjects to become subjects other than to themselves – to become subjects of history. In this way the productive violation of the photograph and the photobook can be said to be 'redemptive' in the Benjaminian sense of the word. It is worth quoting at length Benjamin's thesis number three, from *On the Concept of History* (1940):

The chronicler, who recounts events without distinguishing between the great and small, thereby accounts for the truth, that nothing which has ever happened is to be given as lost to history. Indeed, the past would fully befall only a resurrected humanity. Said another way: only for a resurrected humanity would its past, in each of its moments, be citable. Each of its lived moments becomes a citation a l'ordre du jour [order of the day] – whose day is precisely that of the Last Judgment.

(Benjamin, 1940: no page number)

If applied to the photographer and the photobook, it could be said that 'the chronicler' is the photographer, who recounts events 'without distinguishing between the great and small'. Meaning that the photographer photographs everyday events, spaces and objects and dominated subjects in the same way that significant historical events and the ruling class are photographed (the camera does not discriminate). The photographer bestows significance on anything she or he picks out with the camera. The photographer and photobook practitioner, rescue events, things and subjects from becoming lost to history, the past is rescued and understood through redemption. By this I mean, for example, that my photo zine *He served his time at Cammell Lairds*, is not just about preventing the struggles of an individual like my father-in-law becoming forgotten about, but, in its modest way, is about attempting to prevent an entire generation of working-class men like him and their struggles becoming forgotten.

### **Secondary ostension**

Secondary or indirect ostension, according to John Roberts, is the way in which by 'pointing at one thing, we may in fact be making it clear that we are pointing at something else, relating one thing metonymically, synecdochally to another thing' (Roberts, 2014:154-155). The ability of photography to point at one thing in order to say something about another 'is essential to the social claims of photography' (ibid, 2014:155) – '[t]he photographer "looks at" in order to look beyond, look elsewhere, look awry, so that the beholder in "looking away," after looking at also Looks awry, as

the active producer of secondary ostension' (ibid, 2014:155). This 'substitution of a declared meaning for an undeclared supplementary meaning' Roberts argues, 'is essential to the social and discursive claims of photography' (ibid, 2014:155).

I propose that another layer to this secondary or indirect ostension, is what is revealed about the photographer in this situation – by 'picking out' and 'pointing at' these particular things and in these particular circumstances, the photographer is also inadvertently 'pointing at' his or her own position and attitude within the totality of social and historical relations of which the photographs and photobook is a product of. For example, in the 1980s, the middle-class photographer, Martin Parr deliberately chose to photograph working-class people in the seaside resort New Brighton during its busiest periods with people sitting amongst bins full of rubbish, using harsh flash and presented his subjects in a detached, ironic and slightly comedic way. In doing so, not only through secondary ostension does Parr point at the material conditions of those people – content to sit amongst the rubbish when perhaps the middle classes would not endure it, but he also inadvertently points to his own attitude towards the subjects of his photographs. Added to these layers of secondary ostension is also a 'pointing to' of an attitude towards working-class people in wider society at that time and a 'pointing to' of the way in which photography as a discipline was changing in how it was representing the working-class. In the 1980s, as Thatcherism led to the speeding up of de-industrialisation, photographers began to focus their attention on the working-classes as consumers rather than producers and shifted from the use of black and white film, which is connected to the history of heroic representations of manual labourers, to the use of the colour photography of advertising.

### **The social ontology of photography**

John Roberts proposes that two aspects of the social ontology of photography are crucial to understanding the 'primary social relation' of

photography which 'grounds, or overdetermines, all of [it's] other functions' (Roberts, 2014:4):

Firstly, 'in principle' photographers are 'able to arrive unannounced' and in doing so, 'are able to disclose what prefers not to be disclosed' (Roberts, 2014:4) – as in photographing the material conditions of my father-in-law's life, which discloses his poverty. The photographer, as I understand Roberts, does not literally have to arrive unannounced, as in hiding what they are doing in order to reveal that which prefers not to be revealed. This candidness is what so impressed the writers that Carol Schloss writes about in *Visible Light: Photography and the American Writer: 1840-1940* (1987). Her case studies demonstrate the profound influence that photography and photographers have had on the way in which writers have thought about and conducted their own practice, since photography's inception. The fact that photographers were unable to hide what they were doing, even if they wanted to, because of the visibility of the camera, made a deep impression on writers who worried about the ethics of their hidden observation of peoples' lives. In the words of Schloss, '[w]ithout a photographer's presence, without his trespassing glance, his engagement, no images would exist' - their experiences can be used 'as analogues for the more hidden activities of writers who are gathering materials' (Schloss, 1987:67). The act of taking a photograph, I propose, is not the point of disclosure (the disclosure does not announce itself at this stage). The subjects of the photograph are usually unconscious of what may be inadvertently revealed by the photograph and in some cases, so is the photographer. The disclosure of that which prefers not to be disclosed happens only as a result of what is revealed in the printing (or uploading) of the photograph/s after the event, during which the subject of the photograph is not usually present. Even then, the revelations of the photograph are only revealed for those who know how to read the signs – for example, to the untrained eye, the photograph of a family sitting cramped in a mobile home in France in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*, may just look like an ordinary family snapshot. But to others, what is revealed from the clues picked up from the surroundings, bodies,

expressions and clothing of the family, all of which was captured by a camera in just a moment, is that the family is from a particular social background.



Figure 1. A double page spread from *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. The surroundings, bodies, expressions and clothing of the family in the photograph signify that the family is from a particular social background. Photo: author.

Secondly, the 'social-relational content' of photographs are 'not simply descriptive-historical, but affective and empathic', or in other words, they provide 'an emotional "hold."' (Roberts, 2014:4). This is the reason why that despite John Roberts' arguing that Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980) is theoretically weak in political and philosophical terms, that he believes it to be 'one of the most important books written on the photograph since the 1930s' (ibid, 2014:4). This is because of the 'profound contribution of the defence of the social ontology of photography' that Barthes makes, through his recognition of the way that photographs psychologically wound us (ibid, 2014:4). I propose that this psychological wounding is political in that it makes the viewer pay attention and has the potential to have concrete

affects in the real world. Most obviously when a photograph moves a person and they then donate money to charity or to sign a petition. This change can just be a small change in attitude which sows the seed for future changes in attitude or for directing future actions and can be both individual and collective. An example of this is the photograph of Allan Kurdi, the drowned Syrian boy who was washed up on a beach, which was widely circulated on social media. The image of his plight may only have had a temporary affect and it may only have a long-term effect on the attitudes of only a relative few, but even this is something that is worthwhile and may lead to future changes to government policies.

### **The photographic essay and the photobook**

At the beginning of W J T Mitchell's, *The Photographic Essay: Four Case Studies* (chapter nine of 'Picture Theory') (1994), Mitchell poses three questions about the nature of the relationship between photography and language. In answer to his own questions, he argues that '[t]he relation of photography and language is a principle site of struggle for value and power in contemporary representations of reality: it is the place where images and words find and lose their conscience, their aesthetic and ethical identity' (Mitchell, 1994:283). He also argues that the photographic essay, which he describes as '*an emergent form of mixed, composite art*' [his italics], is the dramatization of questions surrounding the relationship between photography and language (ibid, 1994:283). 'Classic' examples of the photographic essay provided by Mitchell are Jacob Rii's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell's *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937), which he describes as 'giv[ing] us a literal conjunction of photographs and text-usually united by a documentary purpose, often political, journalistic, sometimes scientific (sociology)' (Mitchell, 1994:285-286).

According to Eugene Smith whom he cites, a series or sequence of photographs without text can also be regarded as a photographic essay and a 'distinguished' example of this is Robert Frank's *The Americans* (Smith in

Mitchell, 1994: 286). It must be noted that Frank does include captions with his photographs which tell the reader what the subject is and where it is located – for example, a parade in Hoboken, New Jersey, so his photographs do come into contact with language, and that is why several pages later Mitchell describes *The Americans* as a ‘relatively “pure” photographic essay’ (Mitchell, 1994:291). In Mitchell’s terms, my photobooks would be considered “pure” photographic essays because of the absence of text and captions. For the remainder of his essay, Mitchell concentrates on photographic essays, which ‘contain strong textual elements, where the text is most definitely an “invasive” and even domineering element’ (Mitchell, 1994:286), and ‘in various ways, foreground the dialectic of exchange and resistance between photography and language (Mitchell, 1994:289). One of the strongest examples of this is *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), a photo text book which I will discuss in more depth throughout the thesis, for reasons that will become apparent. Despite the importance of the titles for my photo zine practice, the photobooks do not foreground this relationship, so it is perhaps less directly relevant to my practice. But Mitchell’s reasoning about why photographic essays deserve this name rather than being called ‘the photo novel or lyric or narrative or just the “photo text”’ (Mitchell, 1994:288), is important for understanding why photobooks are a narrative based, literary form. It is worth pointing out that the use of the term ‘photobook’ for the thesis rather than ‘photo essay’, was decided upon because it is the term which is most commonly used today. The key books that trace the history of the medium, Parr and Badger’s three volumes of *The Photobook: A History* (2004, 2006, 2014) and Patricia Di Bello, Collette Wilson & Shamooun Zamir’ *The Photobook from Talbot to Ruscha and beyond* (2011), use the term ‘the photobook’.

Mitchell proposes three key reasons for the use of the term ‘photographic essay’ which help us to understand the photobook’s connection to literature, and therefore are worth quoting at length:

Firstly, 'the presumption of a common referential reality: not "realism" but "reality," nonfictionally, even "scientificity"; Secondly, 'the intimate fellowship between the informal or personal essay, with its emphasis on a private "point of view," memory, and autobiography, and photography's mythic status as a kind of materialized memory trace imbedded in the context of personal associations and private "perspectives."'; Thirdly, 'a root sense of the essay as a partial, incomplete "attempt," an effort to get as much of the truth about something into its brief compass as the limits of space and writerly ingenuity will allow'.

Photographs can only capture a limited amount of information 'that can never include everything that was there to be, as we say, "taken"', even if they can include a lot of detail within the frame. 'The generic incompleteness of the informal literary essay becomes an especially crucial feature of the photographic essay's relations of image and text. The text of the photo-essay typically discloses a certain reserve or modesty in its claims to "speak for" or interpret the images; like the photograph, it admits its inability to appropriate everything that was there to be taken and tries to let the photographs speak for themselves or "look back" at the viewer' (Mitchell, 1994:289).

### **The Snapshot**

Through experimenting with different film cameras, I became aware that using a compact film camera with a flash, was the most suitable way of capturing every day and intimate experiences at a moment's notice. The use of a compact camera produces what is known as the 'snapshot'. The use of and syntax of the snapshot is closely linked with the domestic use of photography and so is well suited to photobooks about lived experience. As John Roberts observes, the snapshot reconnects 'the image' to 'specific life histories and everyday contingencies – hence the singular connection between the snapshot and the time and space of autobiography and biography' (Roberts, 2014:79). It is a 'conversational form. In its connection to the "intersubjective" and the "familial," the "diaristic" and the



"confessional," it produces a performative intimacy with the political and cultural categories of the "everyday," (ibid, 2014:79) The domestic and 'everyday' of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s can be said to be literally embedded in the material of the 35mm film used for my photo zine practice because of its common domestic use within that period. Even though the use it is put to in my practice is professional, this is another way in which I connect the subject matter of the photobooks to the history of the British working-classes.

Roberts argues that through snapshot photography, artists have 'reclaim[ed] 'the domestic, non-composition, and contingent' and have 'reinvest[ed] photography with a nonprofessional ethos borrowed from Conceptual art and (to a lesser extent) workers photography of the 1930s' (Roberts, 2014:77). This is connected to both the idea of the photographer 'as part of a group or collective (in the spirit of Mass-Observation)' and to 'the idea of the photographer as diarist of his or her domestic circumstances or social milieu' (ibid, 2014:77). My photo zine practice can be said to embody both of these forms: the black and white photographs of workers at work in a bakery in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, the black and white photographs of speakers at a political rally in *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...*, and the black and white photographs of a father and daughter during a weekend in the seaside resort of Southport, come closest, perhaps, to workers' photography of the 1930s and to the spirit of Mass Observation. The colour photographs in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* are the most diaristic, yet some of the most intimate photographs taken for *Skeggy* and *Funland*, such as the image of the little girl sleeping in *Skeggy*, are also diaristic. But because they can also be said to be nostalgic and about the commercial pleasures of the working-classes, which was a focus of the photographs and research conducted by Mass Observation, they also fit within that category.

## **The Documentary Style**

Steve Edwards writes that documentary photography is understood by most people 'as the direct or objective record of objects or events before the lens' and proposes that it is 'better understood as an aesthetic mode predicated on the vernacular form of the document' (Edwards, 2012:81). He notes how Walker Evans 'articulated this clearly when he said 'documentary' was what the police made, whereas he worked in the 'documentary style' (ibid, 2012:81).

This documentary style can be said to have evolved into several modes such as the seriality/topography mode of Ed Ruscha in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) the confessional mode of Nan Golding in *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986) and Richard Billingham's *Rays a Laugh* (1996) and what I would term an ironic and detached mode (although not always completely detached – there appears to be a spectrum of detachment amongst individual photographs and individual photographers, depending on individual sensibilities) of photographers such as in Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* (1986), Paul Reas' *I Can Help* (1988) and Anna Fox's in *Work Stations* (1988).

## **The importance of the concept 'the everyday' to the working-classes**

John Roberts' *The art of interruption: Realism, photography and the everyday* (1998) has been one of the main theoretical influences on my research and practice. The reason for this is that he is one of the few theorists who has written about the history of photographic theories and photographic modernism in a way that highlights the importance of photography to working-class political and social struggle in the twentieth century. He is also one of the few theorists to write about the way in which the social and political function of Modernism has been suppressed 'in the interests of privileging the avant-garde critique of representation' of which 'post-structuralism has played a major part' (Roberts, 1998:3). I must also

note that on a personal level, *The art of interruption: Realism, photography and the everyday* (1998) was not only a revelation but also greatly empowering. It made me realise that my own class blindness (I grew up feeling the injustices of class but didn't have a vocabulary to articulate it), was a result of not only an upbringing in which social class was never mentioned but also because of a Fine Art education in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in which social class was never discussed.

According to Roberts, the category 'the everyday' 'entered the sphere of politics, science, art and social theory' in the first two decades of the twentieth century' (Roberts, 1998:15). The production of photography and film which reflected the category's 'explicit critical content' (ibid, 1998:15) 'brought the collective experience of industrialisation and the construction of working-class identity into the realm of the aesthetic as part of a widespread shift within the balance of class forces on a world scale, the Russian Revolution being the crucible of this process' (Roberts, 1998:25-26).

Photography and film played a crucial part in:

both narrating the revolution back to its participants and in transforming, in general terms, people's expectations of the 'everyday'. By bringing into view the minutiae of everyday revolutionary experience and the collective power of the working-class, photography and film were seen to be in a position to perform key dialectical, social and perceptual tasks that were just not available to the traditional media.

(Roberts, 1998:25)

I propose that this bringing into view of the minutiae of the everyday experiences and the performing of key dialectical, social and perceptual tasks, is something that film and television, the photograph and the photobook are still able to do. In doing so, it is a way of reconnecting us with the past struggles of the working-classes in a Benjaminian redemptive way. My photo zine *He served his time at Cammell Lairds* is a good example of this, in the way that it performs the perceptual task of bringing into focus

the connection between the material conditions of a British working-class life and connects it with a collective history of the British working-classes.

### **Documentary photography in Britain**

The film maker and theorist John Grierson was the main intermediary of 'the 'factographic' culture of the Soviet Union' in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet the politics of class struggle was toned down in his writing and films and the term 'documentary' (as also applied in the USA) became a way of separating factographic culture from its 'revolutionary politics' (Roberts, 1998:58). Avoiding 'the confrontational cognitive disruptions of his much admired Bolshevik cinema', Grierson wanted 'to tell stories of the 'everyday' in epic, pastoral form' (1998:59) and by the 1930s his films lost their explicit class content, as he shifted his focus 'from worker to citizen, from working-class interests to the general human good' (ibid, 1998:59). In part, this was linked to an anti-left agenda which meant that film makers like Grierson were forced to water down their message in order to secure funding. Yet as John Roberts points out, although Grierson chose to 'distance his film-making from class struggle', his work nevertheless 'participated in a particular resilient working-class culture of the 1920s and 1930s' (Roberts, 1998:60).

In the late 1930s, Mass Observation - 'the mass literary and photographic archive of British society' conceived of and conducted by predominantly 'middle class intellectuals and activists' (Roberts, 1998:62) and illustrated magazines such as *Picture Post* and *Weekly Illustrated*, were one of the main ways in which photography documented and represented British working-class life. Apart from the brief attempt of workers to produce and distribute their own photography through *Workers' Illustrated News (WIN)* in 1929, and through the work of the Workers' Camera Club which was set up in the East End of London in 1930 and became the Workers' Film and Photo League in 1934 (Roberts, 1998:67-68). I have already noted how the theme of working-class leisure in *Skeggy* and *Funland* can be linked to the themes of Mass Observation. Despite Mass Observation's 'socialist ambitions', the

project became 'a moral dissection of working-class mores and the new commercial pleasures in the name of 'reason'' (Roberts, 1998:62). This is not to say that my photobooks function in the same way – thanks to de-industrialisation and Thatcherism, there no longer appears to be an idea of working-class community that needs to be 'defended against the divisive and amoral effects of commercialised leisure' (Roberts, 1998:63).

Following the second world war, photography 'became professionalised as journalism' (Roberts, 1998:71). It wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s when working-class and lower middle-class students began entering higher education, that intellectuals, radicalised by May 1968 and influenced by the photographic theory and practices of the 1920s and 1930s, that British photographic theory 'underwent a radical transformation comparable to that of the inter-war European avant-garde' (Roberts, 1998:144). This can be seen in the array of publications on photography at the time (of which I don't have the space to describe in detail), from the inclusion of articles about photography in the film journal *Screen* in the late 1970s, to *Camerawork*, *Ten:8* and *Block* and the publication of books in the 1980s such as *Photography/Politics 1* and *2* (Roberts, 1998:145). Unfortunately, the 'main critical thrust of this new photographic theory, with its anti-humanist conflation of semiotics, psychoanalysis and discourse theory, [was] to identify realism with positivism' and as a result there developed 'a theoretical consensus that both discredit[ed] the very possibility of truth and further separate[d] the avant-garde critic of positivism from working-class politics' (Roberts, 1998:145). This was also happening in the USA, except 'with more institutional clout' which leads John Roberts to argue that this amounted to 'a powerful radicalisation of the critique of realism. And as such a powerful cultural hegemony' (Roberts, 1998:145).

Coterminously, in the disciplines of Sociology and Cultural Studies, where class analysis had played a central role, researchers were also abandoning class analysis in favour of an identity politics that focused on gender, race and sexuality. Class, as Roberts observes, was treated as 'one identity

amongst many' (Roberts, 1998:159). And it is this which has led me to the conclusion that in the period when the British working-classes were under attack economically and politically, when they most needed moral support and a counterculture to resist the effects of Thatcherism, they were abandoned by intellectuals.

Jo Spence was one of the exceptions to this, as was John Berger. Influenced by the factography of Dziga Vertov and his 'insistence on photographic naturalism as a potential pedagogic force' (Roberts, 1998:199), Spence managed to retain a link to the avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s. She explored the pedagogic potential of photography and through this analysed class, ideas about 'the family', her own working-class upbringing and 'the under-narrativization of certain experiences in the culture' (Roberts, 1998:205), while also exploring issues of feminism.

In the 1960s and 1970s, through photo-text books that were produced in collaboration with the photographer Jean Mohr [*A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor* (1967) *A Seventh Man* (1975) and *Another Way of Telling* (1981)], John Berger 'attempt[ed] to extend the critical place of the archive within the legacy of the avant-garde' (Roberts, 1998:128). Berger and Mohr's photo-text books are crucially different from those of the 1920s and 1930s, in that much of the work of the 1920s and 1930s 'was driven by satire, parody and other deconstructive tropes' (Roberts, 1998:128-129), whereas 'Berger's extended montage model [is] determined by a strong sense that what constitutes the cognitive base of realism is a participation in the lives of others, as a means of connecting our sense of the 'everyday' to the everyday experiences of others' (Roberts, 1998:129).

By the late 1990s, Jo Spence had died of cancer, John Berger was living in France and had shifted his attention 'away from the industrial working class' (Roberts, 1998:139) to that of the 'so-called cyclical time-scales of peasant life' (ibid, 1998:129) and deconstructive theorists such as Victor Burgin had emigrated to the USA, so no longer had the same institutional influence on British photographic theory as they once had. In the words of Roberts, 'the

departure of Burgin, [Mary] Kelly and [John] Tagg for America in the late 1980s effectively evacuated the theoretical base of the post-Althusian-Lacanian-feminist nexus' (Roberts, 1998:156). Photography appeared to become more international in outlook as British photographers such as Paul Graham and Martin Parr moved away from British concerns to examining Europe and the rest of the world. The success of Richard Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* (1996), is perhaps symbolic of how much artists had abandoned the investigation of the political and ethical dimension of the representation of class or felt freer to ignore the theories of the 1970s and 1980s. Billingham, I must add, did not have a photography background nor was he tutored in photographic theory so I am not inferring he was personally responsible for the climate of the art world and the distribution and reception of his work.

Having defined and related important concepts for the thesis to the contexts in which they will be applied, I will now move on to mapping out the way in which common sense understandings of what it is to be working class in Britain has been influenced by a 'heroic tradition' of class analysis in British sociology.

## **British Sociology and the heroic tradition of class analysis**

British sociology was founded upon the study of class and so it has played a significant role within common sense as well as academic understandings of class. Its history is entangled with the politics of the labour movement and the Labour party and therefore is important to understanding British working-class identity. As Savage observes, [t]he power of the class concept 'rests in its ambivalent location betwixt academic, political and public fields' (Savage, 2016:58).

From the outset, British sociology was tied up with the labour movement because of the centrality of Marxism to its understanding of class. Even the sociologists who opposed Marx were forced to 'challenge revolutionary formulations through elaborating more complex or subtle versions of their analysis of class than might be expected from a literal rendition of Marxist theory' (Savage, 2016:61). Sociologists like Michael Young influenced the policies of the Labour party which had a direct effect on working-class lives. Young wrote the Labour Party manifesto in 1945 (ibid, 2016:61), and after abandoning class analysis and embracing a highly individualised concept of identity, Anthony Giddens 'was pivotal in shaping New Labour policies that emphasized 'redistributing possibilities as opposed to wealth' (Gilles in Tyler, 2013:158-159).

### **The 'heroic' tradition of British class analysis**

The first generation of sociologists to investigate social class in Britain began their work following the second world war. Mike Savage terms them the 'heroic' generation due to the way in which influenced by Marx, they assigned the working-class a 'heroic' role by concentrating 'on the prospects for the working class to bring about social change' (Savage, 2016:60).

The research methods developed by this generation of sociologists not only created a set of research tools that could be used across the social sciences



(Savage, 2016:61) but also the 1960s, alongside the work of writers, musicians and film makers, helped to make the working-class 'visible' (Savage, 2016:61). This model of class analysis was highly political (ibid, 2016:61) and largely built upon 'a model of the white male worker' which following the 1960s became increasingly unable to deal with the transformation of women's role in society, issues of race and the transformation of the economy (Savage, 2016:62). But at the same time that the white male working-classes were becoming fully 'visible', 'the social foundations of this formation were beginning to be radically undermined' (ibid, 2016:62) and this, according to Savage, is reflected in one of the last works of the heroic tradition - Paul Willis's *Learning to labour* (1975), a study of rebellious school boys preparing to leave education for 'a world of manual labour which is being dismantled in front of them' (Savage, 2016:62).

In the 1970s John Goldthorpe and his associates developed the 'Nuffield class schema' which classified individuals based upon their occupation, this offered sociologists a way in which to distance their approach from that of the heroic generation as it 'did not depend on any baggage about class formation or solidaristic identities, nor on politicised theories of class' (Savage, 2016:62-63). Yet despite offering a methodology that was able to deal with many of the developments that had taken place since the 1960s, in terms of feminism and the fight for racial equality and for lesbian and gay liberation, Goldthorpe's schema 'reduc[ed] class to a specifically variable which lost its capacity to engage with the public and political questions of the day, as well as the arguments of other social scientists' (Savage, 2016:65).

Class analysis declined between the mid-1970s and late 1990s (Savage, 2016:58) because of the reasons noted, but by the early 2000s there was a revival, aided by the empirical and theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose 'social analysis did not fixate on the working class as the key progressive social force' in the same way that the heroic generation had done (Savage, 2016:66) and provided conceptual resources for analysing the

way in which those who have benefited from the economic restructuring of Britain since the 1970s are able to 'acquire, reproduce, and convert their privileges' (ibid, 2016:66).

Importantly, Bourdieu provided 'an alternative to the heroic generations emphasis on class consciousness and identity, through his concept of "mis-recognition" – 'the "naturalisation" of social relations' which disguises the constructed nature of 'gender divisions' so that they appear natural and therefore not questioned, which helps to explain why individuals 'might not be class conscious, even in the midst of a highly class divided society' (Savage, 2016:67). Despite, 'Bourdieu's social theory [having] relatively little to say about women or gender [with the exception of Bourdieu in 2001]' (Adkins in Adkins and Skeggs, 2004:3), British feminists have been able to adapt and extend Bourdieu and this is evidenced in a collection of essays that appear in Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs' *Feminism After Bourdieu* (2004). Habitus and the forms of capital are two of the main concepts developed and used by Pierre Bourdieu to explain the different perceptions, life chances, trajectories and lifestyles of different classes and class fractions, which alongside other concepts I will use to analyse the lived experience of class and how it has been represented in the photobook.

The photobooks analysed and photo zines produced for the research, like all representations of the working-classes, whether it be reality television programmes, documentaries, novels, or films, are all tied up in the political stakes of the concept of class and how working-class individuals think and feel about themselves.

Thatcherism not only had a profound impact on the lives and fortunes of the working-classes but through its anti-social democratic, anti-union, anti-collective, anti-welfare rhetoric, has negatively contributed to the way in which working-class individuals think and feel about themselves.

## Thatcherism

Since 1979, the British working-class has been significantly reconfigured by Thatcherism. It has been economically and politically weakened by the shift from the collective ethos of Social Democracy - the welfare state, a mixed economy, strong unions and government intervention to create and protect jobs and to control the worst excesses of capitalism, to the individualist ethos of Thatcherism - the free market, privatisation when and where possible, weak unions, a reduction of the welfare state and government intervention only when necessary to ensure the smooth running of the market. Working-class identity has also been weakened by the deliberate banishment of the term 'working-class', with all its political and historical connotations, from the vocabulary of politicians and replaced by innocuous and atomising terms such as 'hard working families' and 'the just about managing'. Therefore, it is important to understand what Thatcherism is and how it came about.

In *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies* (2014), Stephen Farrall and Colin Hay observe that most scholars of Thatcherism agree that Thatcherism 'represents an abrupt, decisive and unprecedented break with the past' (Hay and Farrall, 2014:10). The past - meaning the Keynesian democratic consensus, which had emerged due to the egalitarian spirit brought about by the role played by the working-classes in helping to win the Second World War. Keynesian economics committed successive governments to 'high employment, low inflation, economic growth, and a sustainable external balance' (Jackson in Hay and Farrell, 2014:71). Yet, the ideology of Thatcherism did not appear from nowhere - it 'represented a crystallization of ideas that were in circulation in the 1960s and 1970s', ideas that were not only in the Conservative party as might be expected, but which by the 1970s had also entered the Labour party, as demonstrated by a speech made by James Callaghan in 1976 at a Labour conference. Indeed, Callaghan's speech was so scornful of Keynesian economics that it sounds as if it could have been

written by the monetarist economist Milton Friedman (Jackson in Hay and Farrall, 2014:74):

We used to think you could spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and that in so far as it ever did exist, it only worked by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy, followed by a higher level of unemployment as the next step.

(Callaghan in Hay and Farral, 2014:74)

Across many accounts, there is agreement that Thatcherism was essentially 'the implementation in Britain of New Right ideas' (Hay and Farrell, 2014:6). Central to the tenets of the New Right is a reduced role for the state. This is founded upon the idea that 'state intervention does not work, alternatives to the market are flawed, government failure is more common than market failure and individual citizens' rights are likely to be violated by anything other than the most minimal of forms of state intervention' (Gamble in Hay and Farrell, 2014:6-7).

The tenants outlined by Gamble are also that of the economic philosophy - neoliberalism. But unlike the neoliberalism espoused by intellectuals, the neoliberalism adopted by the New Right in Britain and the USA which influenced 'policy debates and [guided] proposals for reform' (Turner, 2008:217) was far less radical. This was primarily for the pragmatic reasons that implementation would have been too costly and for fear of it being too unpopular with the electorate (Turner, 2008:217). Yet it was because of the personal determination and hard-headedness of Thatcher, which earned her the title 'The Iron Lady', and her willingness to be unpopular with her own party and the electorate (up to a point), that she and her Conservative government were able to implement many of the New Right policies that had such damaging effects on working-class lives and communities. A key example being the high levels of unemployment that were brought about by her government's policies, which she was willing to accept as necessary for the transformation of the economy and weakening of the trade unions. Up to

that point, both Labour and Conservative governments had done their best to avoid doing anything that would increase unemployment when and where possible (Thompson in Hay and Farrall, 2014:63). It was also her ability to articulate neoliberal ideas to the public in populist terms (Hall, 1983:30-31) which helped her to remain in power and to embed her brand of neoliberalism firmly in the centre ground of politics.

Economic liberalism was not something new in the Conservative party and apart from a rejection of the post-war social democratic consensus, the ideology of Thatcherism had much in common with traditional Conservatism (Gamble, 1983:120-121). As Stuart Hall observes, Thatcherism 'managed to marry the gospel of free market liberalism with organic patriotic Toryism. 'Free market, strong state, iron times': an authoritarian populism (Hall, 1983:10).

In *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class* (2015) Selina Todd proposes that there were 'two major turning points' in the 20th century for the British working-classes – the first was the Second World War and as already noted, the egalitarian spirit it created, which led to the election of a Labour government in 1945 who delivered a National Health Service (NHS), 'free education, comprehensive social security and full employment' (Todd, 2015:7), all of which significantly improved the quality of many working-class lives. Even though inequality was not erased, the years between 1940 and the mid-1970s were a time of optimism and relative prosperity for the working-classes (Todd, 2015:8). Hence why the period between the 1950s and early 1960s came to be known as the 'Age of Affluence' and why British sociologists in the 1960s began theorising about the embourgeoisement of the working-class, of which John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood's *The Affluent Worker* (1968/1969) is a prime example.

The second turning point was the election of a Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher in 1979 (Todd, 2015:8). According to Todd, 1979 marked 'a watershed when, for the first time in forty years, the gap between the richest and the poorest began to widen rapidly, and Britain witnessed the

fall of the working-class as an economic political force' (Todd, 2015:8). It is also the point at which social equality was abandoned as a policy objective by both Labour and Conservative governments, in response to the inability of socially democratic policies and Keynesian economics to deal with the economic crises that plagued Britain from the late 1960s onwards. Labour reluctantly did so as part of the conditions of a loan from the International Monetary Fund in 1976, yet for the New Right, inequality was something to be deliberately pursued. According to Carol Walker, the Thatcher government pursued a 'strategy of inequality' and 'broke the post-war consensus on the structural causes of poverty and replaced it with individual explanations, which blames the poor for their poverty and demonized 'dependency' (Walker in Hay and Farrall, 2014:283). The widening of the gap between richest and poorest did not happen by accident but was the result of a distinct approach to the economy. By 1981, under Thatcher, Britain suffered 'a more severe recession than any other major capitalist economy', unemployment had risen, and manufacturing output had dramatically fallen (Gamble in Hall and Jacques, 1983:128). As Bob Rowthorn dramatically highlights - this was 'a slump unprecedented in the whole of British history [...] No other advanced capitalist country has experienced a fall in recent years remotely comparable to that in Britain.' After only one year of the Thatcher government, 'manufacturing output had fallen by 15%'. This is made stark by Rowthorn's comparison of 'a fall of 5.5% in the worst year of the Great Depression between 1878 and 1879 and a fall of 6.9% in the interwar depression between 1930 and 1931' (Rowthorn in Hall and Jacques, 1983:73). This caused a steep rise in unemployment - as nearly as many manufacturing jobs were lost in the early 1980s 'as in the entire 13 years of de-industrialisation between 1966 and 1979 put together' and this was compounded by the fall of employment in the service sector as a consequence of 'the slump and cuts in public expenditure' (Rowthorn, 1983:74). Although '[d]eregulation, privatisation and neo-classical economics' became a global phenomenon in the late 1980s (Heffernan, 2000:13), as Richard Heffernan rightly points out, the Thatcher led

Conservative government 'was not simply a cypher of social, economic and political structures'. It is very unlikely that a Labour government would have behaved the same way. (Heffernan, 2000:13).

Conterminously, to gain consent from the electorate for curbing the power of the trade unions and for cuts to welfare provision, there was a significant ideological attack mounted against the working-classes. Supported by the media, Thatcher utilised 'the emotive image of the 'scrounger': the new folk devil' to mount an 'assault, not just on welfare over-spending, but on the very principle of collective social welfare' (Hall, 1983:29). As Stuart Hall observes, '[t]he colonization of the popular press was a critical victory in this struggle to define the common sense of the times. Here was undertaken the critical ideological work of constructing around 'Thatcherism' a populist common sense' (Hall, 1983:29). Although rhetorical attacks on the recipients of welfare was not a new phenomenon, during Thatcher's time in office, the sustained rhetorical attack on 'social security and the poor', was so pronounced that Michael Hill and Alan Walker, find it 'difficult to convey' (Hill and Walker in Hay and Farrall, 2014:97). To get a sense of the moralising tone of Thatcherism and her government's attitude towards social security which underpinned policy, it is worth quoting from Hill and Walker's extract of an article Thatcher wrote for *Women's Own* magazine:

I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant'. 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problems on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first.

(Article in *Woman's Own*, 31 October 1987 in Hill and Walker, 214:97).

It wasn't just benefits claimants and the poorer members of the working-classes that were subjected to rhetorical attacks to gain consent from the electorate and to clear the ground for her restructuring of the economy. In

the build up to his unsuccessful attempt to curb the power of the trade unions with the Industrials Relations Act of 1971, the Conservative leader Ted Heath, invoked the emotive idea of 'the great trade union of the nation' and 'the greedy working class' 'holding the nation to ransom' which years later, Thatcher used to greater effect – pitting the discourses of "nation' and 'people' against 'class' and 'unions'" (Hall, 1983:27).

As Hall notes, 'Thatcherism, far from simply conjuring demons out of the deep, operated directly on the real and manifestly contradictory experience of the popular classes under social-democratic corporatism' (Hall, 1983:31). Under Social Democracy the state had become involved with every aspect of 'social and economic life' (Hall, 1983:32). It was 'increasingly experienced [...] not as a benefice but as a powerful bureaucratic imposition' (Hall, 1983:33) and 'less as a welfare or redistributive agency, and more as the 'state of monopoly capital' (1983:33-34).

In response to Britain's economic problems, the Labour Party – the political representative of the working-classes in Parliament and the party most closely associated with social-democratic corporatism, began to 'attack [...] the economic position of the working-class, through bouts of deflation, wage restraint and a failed attempt to curb the power of the unions through the white paper- In Place of Strife (Jacques, 1983:42). Thatcher was able to use all of this to her advantage. It was not that Thatcherism was popular or actively supported, its success lay in the way that 'the possibility of imagining an alternative to the liberalizing disposition' was gradually eroded (Farrall and Hay, 2014:329). And the way in which 'active resistance' was silenced through the removal of 'institutional resources' which oppositional organisations such as 'the trade unions or left-wing metropolitan local authorities' had relied on to mobilize politically (Farrall and Hay, 2014:330).

In lived terms, the knock-on effect of deindustrialisation that was already in process but speeded up by the policies of the Thatcher government, appears to be barely touched upon within the literature about Thatcherism.



The dramatic decline of 'traditional industries which had nourished 'heroic' images of manual labour' (Savage, 2000:133) combined with the changing status of manual labour and its close links to male working-class identity had a profound effect not only on the mental health and the well-being of working-class males but also placed an immense strain on families and as this is made visible by some of the British photobooks that will be analysed in part two of this thesis.

Between 1984 and 1992, 119 coal mining pits were closed, and the number of miners fell from 171,000 to 44,000 (Waddington, Critcher, Dicks, Parry, 2001:12). In *Out of the Ashes? The Social Impact of Industrial Contraction and Regeneration on Britain's Mining Communities* David Waddington, Chas Critcher, Bella Dicks and David Parry's interviews reveal the strain of unemployment on the families of miners. Children became traumatised by the tensions between parents struggling to cope emotionally and financially. They became emotionally insecure, lost confidence and were deprived of 'comfort, support and regular social interaction' and basic material goods 'such as clothes and sweets', all of which had a knock-on effect on their performance at school. (Waddington, Critcher, Dicks, Parry, 2001:212-213). The physical and social fabric of mining communities was also affected as housing and local amenities progressively became run-down. As Waddington writes: '[V]illage cohesion [was] lost, social rivalries develop[ed] and people became detached and isolated from erstwhile colleagues and friends' (Waddington, Critcher, Dicks, Parry, 2001:213). As a result of all of this, anti-social behaviour became a problem as 'political disaffection and disempowerment' found an outlet in substance abuse or 'acquisitive and expressive crime, ranging from burglary to joyriding' (Waddington, Critcher, Dicks, Parry, 2011:213). As Geoff Bright discovered from ten years of research in mining communities, the disaffection of the young people that he interviewed emanated from 'a kind of 'ghosted' affective atmosphere' (Bright, 2016:144) in which they were 'unconsciously reprising the affective repertoire of their collective past while at the same time being severed from any conscious memory of it by the socially necessary silences (Walkerdine

and Jimenez 2012) that surrounded it' (Bright, 2016:145). The aftermath of the 1984-85 miners' strike and pit closures was leading the young people to 'fight out (literally) coalfield conflicts going back to the 1930s about which they knew virtually nothing' (Bright, 2016:144). Bright also shockingly notes that amongst the hundred or so young people he interviewed between 2006 and 2011, all of them had suffered at least one, and some 'a combination of more than two or three of the following':

family breakdown, long-term unemployment, chronic disease, disability, alcoholism, sexual abuse (including rape), drug use and overdose-related death, arrest and strip search, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, custodial sentences, curfew orders, parental imprisonment, suicide, accidental death, eviction and domestic violence.

(Bright, 2016:144)

It wasn't just mining communities that were profoundly affected by Thatcher's acceleration of de-industrialisation and the restructuring of the British economy. Simon J Charlesworth carried out forty-three interviews in the post-industrial town of Rotherham in the 1990s. His interviewees described the loss of a way of living 'in which there was a sense of friendship and relation, of basic dignity and respect', where a relative amount of job security meant that individuals could make plans for the future, 'buy a house, marry, have children, live a life' and how it had been replaced by precarious, low paid employment. (Charlesworth, 2000:10).

As Charlesworth observes:

Freedom from the pit and steelworks, for the industrial working class has been bought at the price of the loss of many other human forms through which dignity, self-respect, honour and human sociality were founded.

(Charlesworth, 2000:49)

Charlesworth's account offers a sense of the consequences of Thatcherism on the lives of the working-classes in Rotherham, which can be generally applied to the experiences of many of those living in post-industrialist towns in Britain, but to get a sense of the brutal effects of Thatcherism as it was

lived on a day-to-day basis, it is worth drawing attention to a specific case. In a chapter called 'Life of the Scrap Heap' in Ian Jack's *Before the Oil Ran Out* (1987), Jack vividly describes the horrifying spectacle of mostly men but sometimes women and children, reduced by unemployment (which ran at twenty percent in Birkenhead), to scavenging on a rubbish tip in Bidston Moss:

These are not people who go out at dead of night to retrieve pine chests from skips in gentrifying zones. These are people up to their shins every day in old tea-bags, cat-food tins and onions skins, sliding and falling on slopes of polythene bags and bacon rind, scrambling to get to the copper wire before the next man, seizing a pair of discarded shoes, triumphantly unearthing a bicycle pump, shouting warnings when the municipal bulldozer bursts forward again and threatens to bury half a dozen of them in a grave of nylon stockings and fish-finger cartons.

(Jacks, 1987:221-222)

In Birkenhead the stigma of this abject poverty can still be felt by Tranmere Rovers football fans, who to this day are often called 'tip rats' by the supporters of opposing football teams.

In *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* (2000) Mike Savage's 'central argument is that much contemporary social and cultural change can be viewed as the fallout from the eradication of the defining role of the working class in British culture' (Savage, 2000:152). Savage notes how, for E P Thompson, the 'English' working-class was born 'in the early nineteenth century' and became 'central to British society and politics' through its 'championing [of] a democratic, radical politics that challenged the Establishment and celebrated working-class culture as an embodiment and practical expression of a democratic and populist culture'. This continued 'in part through the influence of the labour movement into the late twentieth century and remained an enduring force defining the best, most progressive features of British social and political life' (Savage, 2000:29). Savage proposes that the 'collapse of this association between dignity, individuality

and the working class [...] is fundamental to understanding contemporary social and cultural change' (Savage, 2000:153).

Thatcherism not only helped to bring about this collapse but has also helped to obscure the legacy of which E P Thompson refers to. When considering how the Labour movement was weakened, both literally and symbolically (in particular through the miners' strike and its representation in the media in 1984-1985), the sustained rhetorical attack on the poor and the effort of 'elites to jettison the language of class struggle as the perceptual framework through which to perceive social and economic (dis)advantage' (Tyler, 2013:153), there can be little doubt that much violence has been done to the British working-classes.

Since the 1970s, working-class lives have changed, not only financially in terms of earnings, job opportunities and in the reduction of the social wage (through the underfunding of public services, reduction in welfare provision and the selling off of public assets), but also ideologically, in terms of the status, identity and self-esteem of working-class individuals. By working-class individuals, it is mostly white working-class men that I am referring to, as it is they who in the twentieth century enjoyed a higher status in the work place (as well as society in general) compared to that of women and ethnic minorities. As Beverly Skeggs discovered from her research for *Formations of Class & Gender* (2001), class is experienced by many working-class women as 'exclusion'. Unlike for working-class men, class for working-class women is not 'a positive source of identity, a way of including themselves in a positively valorized social category' (Willis in Skeggs, 2001:74). This is hardly surprising given the fact that, historically, the class label when applied to women 'has been used to signify all that is dirty, dangerous and without value' (Skeggs, 2001:74).

It is white working-class men who were the main subjects of research conducted about class within the tradition of class analysis in Britain in the twentieth century. Working-class identity and class struggle is tied up with sociological understandings of class which, unlike in other academic fields, is

more likely to spill out into the public arena and common-sense understandings of class, which in turn influences working-class identity.

## **Part II: The Lived Experience of Class During the Thatcher Period in the British Photobook**

In this section I analyse seven British photobooks that each document, to a lesser or greater extent, and with varying degrees of intention and political commitment, different aspects of working-class life and the lived experience of class during the Thatcher period.

This analysis focuses on what the photobooks reveal about the shifts brought about or accelerated by Thatcherism, how the working-classes are represented, the methods used by their producers and how well each photobook communicates a sense of the lived experience of class within this period.

The examination and analysis of the photobooks has been a continuous process during the research, and it has informed the development of the photo zine practice. It is part of the methodology in that the photobooks have provided models of practice and representations of class and lived experience, to work with and against. Subject matter, ethical approach, camera apparatus, photographic technique, sequencing of photographs and book design are all part of the models of photo zine practice that they provide. Yet the books are not just of interest for developing my own practice about working-class experience, another aim of the research is to highlight the importance and value of photobooks in general, and more specifically, to highlight the value and importance of these particular photobooks for documenting and contributing to our understanding of Thatcherism and its impact on working-class lives.

### **Representing the Lived Experience of Class**

The lived experience of class is not an easy thing to represent as experience is an internal not an external phenomenon and is shaped by habitus (the schemes of perception through which the individual experiences the world). But, as noted in the introduction, because habitus and lived experience are

tied up with class practices which shape those experiences, the photographing of class practices is one way of representing the lived experience of class.

For the photobook practitioner, the difficulty of representing the psychological aspects of lived experience can be compared to the difficulties faced by a film director when translating a novel into a film or television series. A novelist uses written language to represent the experiences, thoughts and memories of characters, which in turn also symbolise the disposition of those characters. But in the transcription of a novel into a film, the director must translate those experiences, thoughts and memories into scenes, behaviour and dialogue, which point towards those lived experiences and inner states of mind. For example, a novelist may create the impression that a character in a novel is mean spirited, through the uncharitable thoughts the character has about other people, whereas in film, the director cannot show those inner thoughts (unless by voice over) and may have to demonstrate a character's meanness of spirit through specific symbolic acts or behaviour, which build up this impression in the mind of the viewer.

In a similar way, a photobook practitioner who wants to draw attention to the inner thoughts or state of mind of his or her subjects, can use captions or the writing of the subjects themselves to achieve this. In *Suburbia* (1973), Bill Owens inserted captions below his photographs of American families to represent their thoughts and opinions, and in the process reveals their pretensions. For example, below a photograph of a woman who appears to be reprimanding her son, while his younger brother and sister look on, the caption reads: 'I believe in strict discipline of my children, but they also deserve the right of self-explanation' (Owens, 1973:46). In *Raised by Wolves* (1995), Jim Goldberg uses the actual writing of the teenage runaways who are the subject of the photobook, to great emotional effect. One of the runaways demonstrates his awareness of the exploitative dimension of documentary photography, when he states in scrawled handwriting: 'I'm Dave Who the Fuck Are you You Need me 2 Feel superior I need you 2 laugh

At' [*sic*] (Goldberg,1995: no page number). The brutality of this writing is underlined and made more abject and confrontational by its proximity to a close-up photograph of the runaway's large, brittle teeth. This direct confrontation of the runaway with the viewer, prevents a comfortable distancing from the brutality of the lives of the runaways we see within the photographs in *Raised by Wolves* (1995), but coterminously, the shock value of this confrontation can also add to a feeling of voyeurism and horrified fascination. In terms of subject matter and fascinating abjection, *Raised by Wolves* is comparable to Harmony Korine's cult film *Gummo* (1997), which features abject poverty, animal cruelty, a teenage transvestite who shoots and poisons cats and a girl with down syndrome who is prostituted by her brother.

It is no coincidence that the photobook has much in common with film and television. The photo-text books of the 1920s and 1930s, were a Modernist response to the rise of the cinema and mass culture, which led to the transformation of photography's 'functions into a filmic or protofilmic language' (Roberts, 2014:41). As John Roberts observes, many photographers 'adopt(ed) the open conditions of literary form as a way of testing the truth-conditions of the photograph and including the "voices of the many"' (Roberts, 2014:56). From Ernst Friedrich's *Krieg dem Kriege* (1924), Vladimir Mayakovsky and Alexander Rodchenko's *Pro eto* (1923), Andre Breton and Jacques-André Boiffard's *Nadja* (1928), and John Heartfield and Kurt Tucholsky's *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* (1929)' to Bill Brandt's *The English at Home* (1936), Aaron Siskind's *Harlem Document* (1940) and Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), all recognise the potential of photobooks for making visible ideology and for metonymically representing a total picture of society (ibid, 2014:56).

Yet contrary to all of this, my own photo zines contain no text, apart from the hand-written statements of workers I use for the zine that accompanies my first photo zine – *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. My communication of



lived experience relies on the cultural practices represented and the facial expressions and body language of my subjects, in much the same way that people can get a sense of lived experience from watching a film with very little, or no dialogue or subtitles. As I will go on to explain, it is possible to get a sense of lived experience from photographs alone, but it is important to our understanding of the photobook to highlight that if photobook practitioners wish to provide a deeper insight into the inner lives of their subjects, they can make use of a range of techniques to do so.

Many of the British photobooks that will be analysed make use of only an essay at the front or back of the book, which can easily be ignored or sidelined by the reader, without losing a sense of the lived experience of their subjects. Within our relationships and day to day interactions we don't just rely on language to understand each other. We all interpret each other's facial expressions and body language, which contributes to a sense of shared experience or empathy with other people's experiences, no matter how inaccurate our interpretations of what others are thinking and feeling might be.

Having explained the difficulties involved with representing lived experience and the different strategies that can be used by photobook producers to do this, I will now move on to my analysis of how the lived experience of class within the Thatcher period has been represented by seven British photobooks.

As noted in the introduction, my own working-class upbringing in one of the most deprived areas of Liverpool in the 1980s and 1990s will undoubtedly inform my reading of the photobooks selected for analysis and the individual photographs within them. My own lived experience of class and class practices within the period, provides me with a deeper understanding of what is represented within the photographs than is perhaps available to those who have not undergone those experiences. Yet, this is not to say that I am not at risk of over-identifying with those represented, or of incorrect readings of the representations of the lives of subjects I do not personally

know. What I am saying, is that my own struggles for the necessities of life when growing up and in adulthood and all that has entailed, allows me an insight into the hidden injuries of class and to experiences, which others who are not from my background, may be less receptive to because it is not part of their own lived experience.

The photobooks will be analysed in an order that reflects their subject matter, ranging from the most intimate and private to the most public. I begin with *Ray's a Laugh* (1996) and Waplington's *Living Room* (1991), which are both about the personal and domestic lives of working-class families. I then move on to Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring* (1986), which is about the public experience of visiting unemployment offices, yet also reflects the personal through the expressions and body language of its subjects, who despite being surrounded by many people, appear isolated. Next, I analyse Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* (1986) and Paul Reas' *I Can Help* (1988), which both focus on consumerism and feature the most public areas of working-class lives. Amongst the photobooks analysed, they are the most detached from their subjects, yet within each of them there are moments of the personal through the expressions and body language of their subjects. Finally, I move on to Chris Killip's *Pirelli Work* (2006), which unlike the other photobooks, represent the working-classes as dignified producers, rather than as hapless consumers. And then on to Killip's *In Flagrante* (1988), which unlike *Ray's a Laugh*, points towards the causes of its subjects' unemployment.

*Pirelli Work* and *Inflagrante* also differ from the rest of the photobooks in that they were produced using black and white photography, which by the year that *In Flagrante* was published, was considered "old fashioned" or not at the cutting edge of photography, compared to the colour documentary of Martin Parr, Paul Reas, Anna Fox (Dilnot, 2006:66-70) and Paul Graham. Indeed, an essay by Susan Butler published in *Creative Camera* in December 1985, titled *From Today Black and White Photography is Dead* (Butler in Brittain, 1999:121-126), already suggested the impending retirement of

black and white documentary photography, several years before *Aperture* magazine, 'left a clear sense that the project Killip represented was over' (Dilnot, 2006:67).

Both Killip's photobooks focus on the public, yet still manage to communicate the personal due to his approach and sensitivity. They also differ from the rest in how they represent traditional working-class life and culture, and reflect an older approach to documentary photography, exemplified by the photographs and photobooks of sociologist Lewis Hine (1904 - 1940), and the photographs produced for the Farm Security Administration's photography programme (1935–44).

### **Richard Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* (1996)**

*Ray's a laugh* (1996) is about the domestic life of Richard Billingham's working-class family and their menagerie of pets, living in abject poverty in an over-crowded, tower block flat, in the West Midlands. Ray, whom the title refers to, is Billingham's alcoholic father. The book is A4, soft backed and has a portrait layout that contains fifty-four, mostly colour, photographs.

The wrap around front cover of *Ray's a Laugh* sets the tone for the rest of the book – an out of focus, garish and blurred close-up of Ray's head lying on a bright red pillow, which is positioned vertically so that his head appears upright. Ray is laughing toothlessly with his eyes closed. The title's chunky white, irregular typeface is ugly and spread unevenly across the bottom of the page, printed over Ray's chin. The photograph wraps around to the back to cover over half of the back page where two blurbs summarise what *Ray's a Laugh* is about. The first is a short statement by the photographer Robert Frank, which includes the lines 'No room for judgement or morality ... Reality and no pretence. Richard Billingham is the son and he knows – his family'.

The title *Ray's a Laugh* creates the impression that the focus of the book is about Ray's personality and behaviour and he is not to be taken seriously, as there are no essays or captions to indicate the book may be a metonym for something else, and the blurb on the back supports this atomised reading. Billingham could have included a line in his blurb about Ray losing his job because of the effects of Thatcherism but he doesn't. This is not a criticism of the book or of Billingham, as the simplicity of Billingham's autobiographical description of his family's life contributes to the overall brutal tone of the book and a sense of the cultural capital of him and his family. It is worth noting at this point, that working-class people such as myself (until around the age of thirty), can be apolitical out of ignorance rather than choice. As Simon J Charlesworth observes, 'the last great

paradox of domination, [is] that those who have suffered are finally robbed of the right to be indignant' (Simon J Charlesworth, 2000:139).

*Ray's a Laugh* includes two black and white photographs, which barely register as black and white as they are so black that they do not stand out from many of the colour images which also contain black shadows.

Most of the photographs spread across two pages and the spreads are a mixture of full bleeds and photographs with white borders. The white borders appear around only some of the images, giving the impression that a lack of care was taken when designing the book, which Billingham has always been unhappy about. The publisher Scalo, not only changed the layout of the first edition of the book to make it more jarring but then ignored Billingham's request that the second edition would be free of white borders (Ladd in Cotton, 2014: no page number). The lack of care that the syntax of the white borders convey, is added to by Billingham's use of throw away cameras and old film stock to take the photographs themselves. The aesthetic produced by this approach was not some sort of calculated conceptual strategy that Billingham employed, as the photographs were not taken with the intention of sequencing them into a photobook or putting them on display on a gallery wall. The photographs were meant to serve as a reference for the paintings Billingham intended to make – Billingham wanted to become a painter rather than a photographer. The lack of care applied to both the materials that were used to make the photographs and to the design of the book, with its deliberately ugly typeface and choice of garish front cover is one of the books strengths. For the design of the book itself echoes the material conditions in which the Billinghams live, the brutality of their lives and the experiences which are represented within its pages.

In *Ray's a Laugh* several tranquil scenes of British birdlife are interspersed throughout the sequence of photographs. These scenes of tranquillity and natural beauty act as interruptions in the sequence, standing in stark contrast to the man-made misery of the crowded tower block flat. Yet,

because the photographs of the Billingham family are so powerful, the photographs of birds barely register and will be forgotten by most viewers – akin to an image that has momentarily flickered on and off a television screen.

*Ray's a Laugh* captures not only the structures of feelings of many working-class lives affected by Thatcherism, but also something of the confessional culture of chat shows and reality television that were beginning to take hold by the end of the 1990s. Martin Parr and Gerry Badger note how the New Colour Documentary which emerged in the 1970s and influenced people like Parr and Graham, tended to 'have the nature of either a diary or a confession' (Parr and Badger, 2006:290). They cite William Eggleston's *Guide* (1976), which demonstrated to contemporary photographers 'the potential vocabulary of colour (ibid, 2006:290), as a model for the diaristic mode, and Nan Golding's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986), 'which set the emotional agenda for much contemporary photography of everyday life' (ibid, 2006:290), as a model for the confessional mode, of which *Ray's a Laugh* is an example of.

In terms of abject poverty, horrified fascination and raw brutality, *Ray's a Laugh* is comparable with Goldberg's *Raised by Wolves* (1995), a photobook about teenage runaways which combines photographs with handwritten statements by the runaways about their lives, and Harmony Korine's *Gummo* (1997), a film about an impoverished town in America which has been blighted by the aftermath of a tornado. Korine's experimental, unconventional and rough and ready approach to film making, his casting of real people (including a drug addict) as well as actors, and his focus on dysfunction and poverty, also echoes the approach and tone of *Ray's a Laugh*, although *Ray's a Laugh* is not fictional. Yet, it must be pointed out, that no matter how factual the subject matter of photobooks are, they are a sort of fiction in the way that photobook editors, like the producers of montage, construct a sense of reality from photographs often taken days, months or years apart. Photographs in themselves cut off parts of reality

from outside of the frame and so even the most truthful documentary photography is always a kind of fiction. Therefore, Korine's method of working with non-actors and use of improvisation has elements of documentary in the same way that conversely, the photobook has elements of fiction.

As noted in the introduction – the structures of feelings of a period are emergent and can be detected in art works before they are fully developed - it is only once they are replaced by new structures of feelings that they are fully recognised. The photographs of Billingham's family may have been taken after Thatcher had left office, but what they communicate is the long-term consequences of her government's policies on many working-class lives, and inadvertently – a negative shift in attitudes towards the representation of working-class lives within the public imaginary, particularly towards the unemployed. This is not to say that *Ray's a Laugh* was a direct result of a changing shift in attitudes but rather that it inadvertently captured a sense of how attitudes had changed. That was in large part due to Scalo, the book's publisher, overriding the more sympathetic reading of the family that had been edited together by Billingham, Julian Germaine and Michael Collins. In the words of Charlotte Cotton, '[f]or Collins, the unilateral disregard of his conception of *Ray's a Laugh* is a travesty, and one that reduced Billingham's photographs into a prurient spectacle and an inauthentic experience of the emotionally insightful portrayal of his family that Collins and Germaine had nurtured (Cotton, 2014: no page number). As noted in the introduction – Thatcherism did not begin and end with the woman's time in office. Many of the ways of managing the economy that she introduced, making the market the measure of everything and demonising the poor to gain consent for welfare cuts, carried on through the Major years and into the Blair years and beyond. Ray lost his job working as a machinist in a factory in the early 1980s and then soon after his redundancy money ran out, he was persuaded by a 'conman' to sell the family's home for a mere £2000. The family then had to move to a flat in a tower block and as the photographs in the book reveal – Ray became an alcoholic and never

recovered. Ray died in a nursing home when he was 74 in around 2007, and although his wife Liz was considerably younger, she had already passed away at the age of 56 in 2004 (Billingham in Adams, 2016: no page number).

The apolitical approach of *Ray's a Laugh's* publishers could be said to symbolise what was happening in wider British society within chat shows and reality television, which became more about entertainment than investigative journalism. As noted in the introduction, a significant amount of critical work was done in the 1970s and 1980s on the ethics of documentary photography and the representation of the powerless by the powerful. Yet just because theorists were writing about the ethics of representation, and a small number of photographers such as Jo Spence and Victor Burgin produced work which demonstrated this commitment, does not mean to say that this attitude was widespread amongst photographers.

A change in attitude towards the political uses of documentary photography had already taken place in the 1960s, amongst a generation of American photographers who became known as 'the Social Landscape School, or sometimes the Snapshot school' (Parr and Badger, 2004:236). This included Diane Arbus, Gary Winocot and Lee Friedlander, all of whom were promoted by John Szarkowski at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, in the exhibition *New Documents* (1967). Szarkowski's description of their approach has echoes of the blurb written by Robert Frank for *Ray's a Laugh*, and is worth quoting at length for what it reveals about the Szarkowski and the attitudes of that generation:

*Most of those who were called documentary photographers a generation ago, when the label was new, made their pictures in the service of a social cause. It was their aim to show what was wrong with the world, and to persuade their fellows to take action and make it right.*

*In the past decade a new generation of documentary photographers has directed the documentary approach towards more personal ends. Their aim has been not to reform life, but to know it. Their work betrays a sympathy – almost an affection – for the imperfections and*



*frailties of society. They like the real world, in spite of its terrors, as a source of all wonder and fascination and value – no less precious for being irrational. [...]*

*What they hold in common is the belief that the commonplace is really worth looking at, and the courage to look at it with the minimum of theorizing.*

(Szarkowski in Parr and Badger, 2004:236-237)

Szarkowski makes it sound as if the world's problems are a natural phenomenon and that the photographers photographed as a way of holidaying in other people's misery and were completely detached from the lives they documented. Szarkowski may well be misrepresenting the intentions of the photographers, but his statement does mark a shift in attitudes towards the uses of documentary photography, and as director of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), he will have played an influential role in institutionalising and canonising particular photographers. Szarkowski's central argument in his essay for *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960* (1978), was that there are two types of photographers, those who 'think of photography as a means of self-expression' and those 'who think of it as a method of exploration' (press release for exhibition, 1978).

Larry Clark's *Tulsa* (1971), stands out in this regard because of its sensational content. Although Clark was an "insider" within the community he was photographing, *Tulsa* has a distinctly voyeuristic feel, in that it focuses heavily on young people having sex and taking drugs. It is a photobook which expresses what Parr and Badger term 'the diarist impulse' (Parr and Badger, 2004:238), and is not a photobook that reveals the demise of its subjects in order to argue for change.

In much the same way, *Ray's a Laugh* reveals Billingham's family's squalor, but seemingly without any political intention. It is worth noting that Larry Clark went on to become a film maker and directed the controversial and equally prurient film *Kids* (1995), which also focuses on the sex lives and

drug taking of a group of teenagers. *Kids* was written by Harmony Korine whose film *Gummo* and approach to film making I have already compared to Billingham's approach to *Ray's a Laugh*. Yet this is not to say that Billingham's work is as cold as Clark's, or that he was detached from what he was photographing – he obviously loves his family and had grown up in the environment he was photographing, so to him it wasn't sensational. But as the behaviour of *Ray's a Laugh's* publisher attests, the intention and reception of photobooks cannot be strictly controlled by photographers. The inclusion of enlarged photographs from *Ray's a Laugh* in Saatchi's *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1997, reinforces the idea that the photographs that appear in *Ray's a Laugh* are sensational, and that Billingham was exploiting his family, which he was not.

Politically, *Ray's a Laugh* cannot be said to be arguing for socio-political change, as Ray's alcoholism and Liz's obesity and addiction to smoking which are suggested by the sequence of photographs, come across as self-indulgent and self-inflicted, because there is nothing in *Ray's a Laugh* to suggest outside causes. The tendency to blame individuals for their own poverty, was increased by Thatcherism. Thatcher and her government believed and asserted that 'the welfare state' created dependency, that being dependant on welfare was 'both a personal failing and morally debilitating' and that welfare provided by 'the family, self-help, charities, but especially that of the market was superior to welfare from the state' (Walker in Farral and Hay, 2013:284-285). Through populist rhetoric – 'terms such as 'genuine need' bec[a]me commonplace' (Hill and Walker in Farrall and Hay, 2013:93), and with the support of the media, Thatcherism helped to shift explanations of poverty from structural causes to the individual and to redefine poverty as "dependency" and 'as a behavioural problem caused by the welfare state itself' (Moore and Oppenheim in Farrall and Hay, 2013:286). Therefore, it is easy to imagine how *Ray's a Laugh* supported and could support a Thatcherite, anti-welfare narrative.

The audience for photobooks is so small that their impact on societal attitudes in comparison to the representation of the working-classes in the media, is minimal, but this is not to say that because of their small audience that photobooks and art works are inconsequential. Politically, *Ray's a Laugh* can be redeemed through what is written about it by commentators, but like all photography, this is not something that is stable and is something that changes with time. The work can be used as a political football by both the left and the right. An example of this is an article written by Martha Rosler in the late 1990s. In order to protest against what she perceived as the exploitation of Billingham's family, Martha Rosler wrote a scathing account of the exhibition of the books prints, which she termed a 'freak show' (Rosler, 2003:230), and of *Ray's a Laugh*, which she proposed was a demonstration of Billingham's 'Oedipal rage' (ibid, 2003:230). Rosler holds up Billingham's work as a prime example of a mostly European trend for 'a de-skilled "slacker" aesthetic of blurry informal photos, often of conglomerations of people doing nothing much' which was influenced by and fed back into fashion photography (Rosler, 2004:229). That may well have been a trend in photography at that time and I have seen instances of what she is referring to. Like Clark's *Tulsa*, they quite often feature half-dressed teenagers, having sex and/or taking drugs and have a nihilistic tone and are depressingly cool, detached and ironic. Ryan McGinley's *The Kids Are Alright* (2000), described by Parr and Badger as 'ferociously detached yet intensely personal' (Parr and Badger, 2014:79) is a good example of this and this says as much about the art world who embraced this kind of work as it does about the photographers producing it.

Influenced by Larry Clark whom he met when skateboarding, McGinley produced the self-published photobook, which features photographs of his friends having sex and taking drugs. Rosler's critique of Billingham is far too simplistic and reductive, as not only does she completely gloss over the thematic differences between *Ray's a Laugh* and the photography she categorises it with, she also fails to discuss the specific context in which the photographs were taken. For example, a photograph taken in the USA by

Ryan McGinley of his drunken, teenage, skateboarder, friends, is not the same as a photograph taken in the UK by Billingham, of his own unemployed, middle aged, alcoholic, father, in a tower block flat. The photographs were taken in completely different cultural and economic circumstances, even if both photographs appear deskilled, blurred and informal.

*Ray's a Laugh* is the only photobook amongst those that will be analysed in this thesis which makes visible the role of alcohol consumption in many working-class lives. Therefore, it is important I say something more about it here. Alcohol has played a significant role in my own life (I started drinking and going to night clubs at the age of fifteen), as well as people in my family, indeed my grandmother who is nearly 89 still regularly "gets drunk", even though she has always had a tendency to "turn nasty" when intoxicated and it affects her mental health in the days after (she feels like "she has murdered someone"). My sister, father and step mum are all recovering alcoholics who fortunately managed to give up drinking many years ago. My father's alcoholism did not interfere with his ability to hold down his job, but my sister did lose several jobs because of it.

Simon J Charlesworth, aided by Pierre Bourdieu, analyses the role of "drinking" and "going out" in working class lives brilliantly when he observes 'the real desperateness it betrays beneath the shallow avowals of love and friendship' - it is 'a tranquilized hedonism, so concerned with pleasure as an anaesthetic rather than aesthetic experience' (Charlesworth, 2000:223).

In the words of Pierre Bourdieu, whom Charlesworth cites:

There is still a sort of economic calculation in the unwillingness to subject existence to economic calculation. The hedonism which seizes day by day the rare satisfactions ('good times') of the immediate present is the only philosophy conceivable to those who 'have no future' and, in any case, little to expect from the future . . . the being-in-the-present which is affirmed in the readiness to take advantage of the good times and take time as it comes is, in itself, an affirmation of solidarity with others (who are often the only guarantee against the threats of

the future), inasmuch as this temporal immanentism is a recognition of the limits which define the condition.

(Bourdieu, 1984:176)

In other words, the precarity of working-class lives leads to taking opportunities to enjoy life in the immediate present rather than looking towards the future. This why the working-classes, whom Beverley Skeggs describes as 'present-located, other-orientated [and] excluded from the fields of value accrual (unless as a source of labour)' (Skeggs, 2011:509), tend to have worse health and live shorter lives than the middle classes. The middle classes who are 'future-facing, self-orientated [and] positioned with many possibilities for accruing value' (Skeggs, 2011:509) have much to gain in terms of value accrual (and longevity) by making sacrifices in the present such as abstaining from alcohol and fattening foods (Bourdieu, 1984:187-204).

*Ray's a Laugh* shows the effects of unemployment caused by Thatcherism on one working-class family in the 1990s, but this is just one family and many others had different experiences, although poverty and struggling to pay for the necessities of life is something that most will have had in common. I know from my own and my sister's upbringing as children in the 1980s, that even people like my own father, who, as already noted, had a relatively skilled job, struggled to afford to pay for a basic standard of living. This is one of the reasons I have also chosen to analyse Nick Waplington's *Living Room* (1991) as *Living Room* also reveals working-class poverty, but at the less extreme end of the spectrum.

## **Nick Waplington's *Living Room* (1991)**

Nick Waplington's *Living Room* (1991) is about the domestic lives of two working-class families. It is a hardbacked, white book, around A3 in size, with a landscape layout. It contains fifty-six, mostly large colour photographs that were taken between 1983 and 1991, which are surrounded by mostly thin, white borders. The front cover features the three blonde haired daughters of one of the families, dressed identically in tartan dresses. In the foreground two of the sisters pretend to Hoover the front lawn of what we presume is their house, while their sister, stands in the background and looks directly at the viewer. The back cover features a slightly smaller photograph of two of the girls, sitting on the floor of their shabby looking kitchen with their blonde-haired father. They are feeding each other mouthfuls of what looks like 'Sunday dinner', as if it's a game and they are "taking turns". Above the photograph are two blurbs about the theme of the book, one of which notes that *Living Room* differs from the 'falsely compassionate conventions of social "reportage"'. The book begins with Waplington's photographs and then around a quarter of the way in, there is a two-page essay by John Berger, titled: 'Means to Live', which captures the playful and upbeat essence of what is seen in the photographs. The book then returns to Waplington's photographs and around three quarters of the way in, there is a shorter essay by Richard Avedon, which is spread across the bottom half two pages. The essay is titled: 'Remarks', in which Avedon describes seeing Waplington's *Living Room* photographs for the first time, during what sounds like a group tutorial in which Avedon was giving feedback to students about their work. He then describes the photographs in romantic and apolitical terms. For Avedon, the series is 'a picture of family hysteria: cruelty and bliss, energy and exhaustion' (Avedon, 1991: no page number), which sends him off into a fairy tale reverie: 'There are ogres, and Allices on linoleum floors, and enormous mothers who have drink oceans. His people live in a confined world, but they are all powerful within it' (ibid,

1991: no page number). Following Avedon's essay, the book finishes with the last of Waplington's photographs.

The title *Living Room* can be interpreted literally, as a reference to the fact that many of the photographs and the action we see in the books takes place in living rooms. Yet at the same time the title can also be interpreted more metonymically, as being about how much of peoples individual and family lives are spent in living rooms. Living rooms are a kind of sanctuary from the world and a place where people feel they can be themselves and are at their least self-conscious. They are also places where the working-classes are likely to spend more of their leisure time because of 'the taste of necessity' - watching television is a relative cheap leisure activity (unless you have expensive television packages but even they are still cheaper than many other leisure activities). As I have already noted, Mike Savage and his colleagues discovered from their empirical research that 'the poorly educated members of the working-class are disproportionately likely to watch more than five hours television per day' (Savage et al, 2009:199). The 'non-utilitarian affects of care, loyalty and affection' (Skegs, 2011:504) that Beverley Skeggs discovered from her interviews with working-class individuals, which I will discuss later in the thesis, are also something that cost nothing and can be freely expressed within living rooms. This is something that can be seen clearly in many of the photographs in *Living Room* and is captured by Berger's tender essay.

*Living Room* depicts working-class poverty, but more of a middle-of-the road poverty, which comes closer to my own upbringing than the extreme poverty and deprivation of the Billingham's. Waplington started taking photographs of the two families we see in *Living Room* in 1983 when he was seventeen and continued after the publication of *Living Room* until 1997. Therefore, the photographs that appear in *Living room* must have been taken over a period of eight years - between 1983 and up to 1991, when the book was published.

Like Billingham, Waplington was very close to the subjects of his work, except the families represented in *Living Room* are not Waplington's own, but two families who lived on his grandfather's council estate in Nottingham whom he became friends with. It is clear from the photographs of the most intimate and playful moments of the family's lives, that they could not have been taken by an outsider. The photographs which show the same children at different ages could only have been taken over several years by someone who visited regularly and whom they knew well and felt comfortable with.

It is clear from the photographs of the domestic environments of the two families that they are poor, even if they aren't in the same desperate state as the Billinghams. The worn sofas, stained carpets, ripped wall paper and mess in *Living Room*, as well as the way that the families are dressed, their hair styles (in some photographs the children's hair looks like it has been cut by a family member) and the tattoos on the mother and father of one of the families (which look like prison tattoos, like they have been etched into the skin by amateurs with a razor blade), indicates the families do not have much money or cultural capital, yet this does not seem to prevent them all from appearing to be reasonably happy.

Waplington focuses on the good times - when the families are in a playful mood, with children jumping off furniture, parents holding children upside down, children playing in the street and in the back yard, holding pet rabbits and puppies, a night out in a social club, visits to the in-laws, visits from friends and family, trips to the sweetshop and ice cream van, trips to the shops to buy school shoes and a trip to the doctors. All of which are everyday events which are part of the lived experience of many working-class individuals.



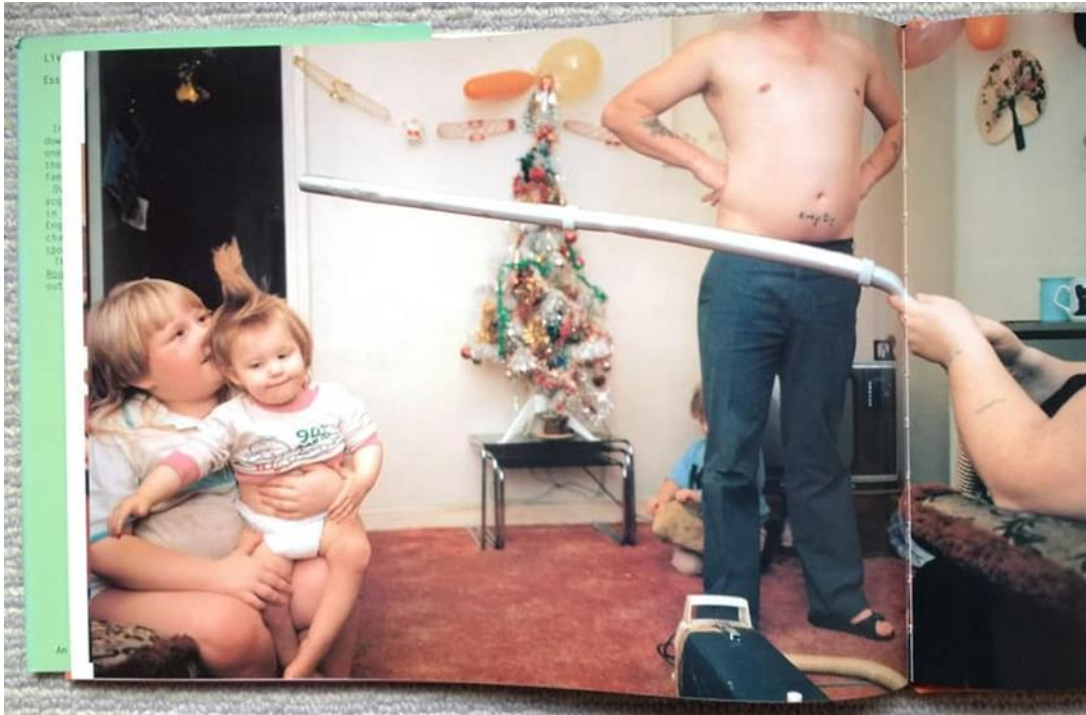


Figure 2. A photograph of one of the families that appear in *Living Room*. Waplington focuses on the good times when the family are in a playful mood. Photo: author.

This sense of everyday life does not give any indication of what was happening politically when the photographs were made, all it can tell us is about the fashions of the period and that the working-class families we see in the photographs do not have much money. Therefore, the book is less about the direct effects of Thatcherism than many of the other books. The book's strength comes from the fact it represents ordinary life rather than the extremes which the makers of documentary photography have always tended to favour. Many families in the Thatcher period, such as my parents, did struggle, but they were protected from the worst effects of Thatcherite policies and so life carried on as it always had done. This is just as an important part of the structures of feeling of the period as was the disruption and transformation that took place.



Figure 3. A photograph of one of the families in *Living Room* visiting a corner shop. An example of how everyday life and lived experience is represented in the book. Photo: author.

Added to the upbeat tone of many of Waplington's photographs are the materials he used to take the photographs and the design of the book which does not have the same jarring feel as *Ray's a Laugh*. Waplington used a 6 x 9 Fuji GSW690, a medium format camera. He used it with a flash which he redirected away from his subjects so that the photographs give the impression of having been taken in the light that was available (1992: unnumbered). So, although many of Waplington's images come across as domestic photography because of their everyday content, the equipment used was that of the professional and the medium format print lends itself well to the display of photographs on the gallery wall because of the way they can be blown up without losing detail, in a way that it is much more difficult to achieve with a 35mm photograph. The materiality of Waplington's images does not announce itself in the same way that Billingham's photographs do, Billingham's photographs have many flaws in them in the same way that domestic photography does as a result of the inexperience of

those taking the photographs and because of the way they are processed by commercial chemists. Many of us who grew up before the invention of digital photography remember collecting prints from the chemist and the stickers they would apply to over exposed and double exposed images. All of this draws attention to the way the materials are used and contribute to the raw quality of *Ray's a Laugh*. An example of this is a photograph of Ray falling over in which there is a black stripe that runs down the left side of the image, which although contributing to the composition, is still a flaw that is not usually seen in professional photography.

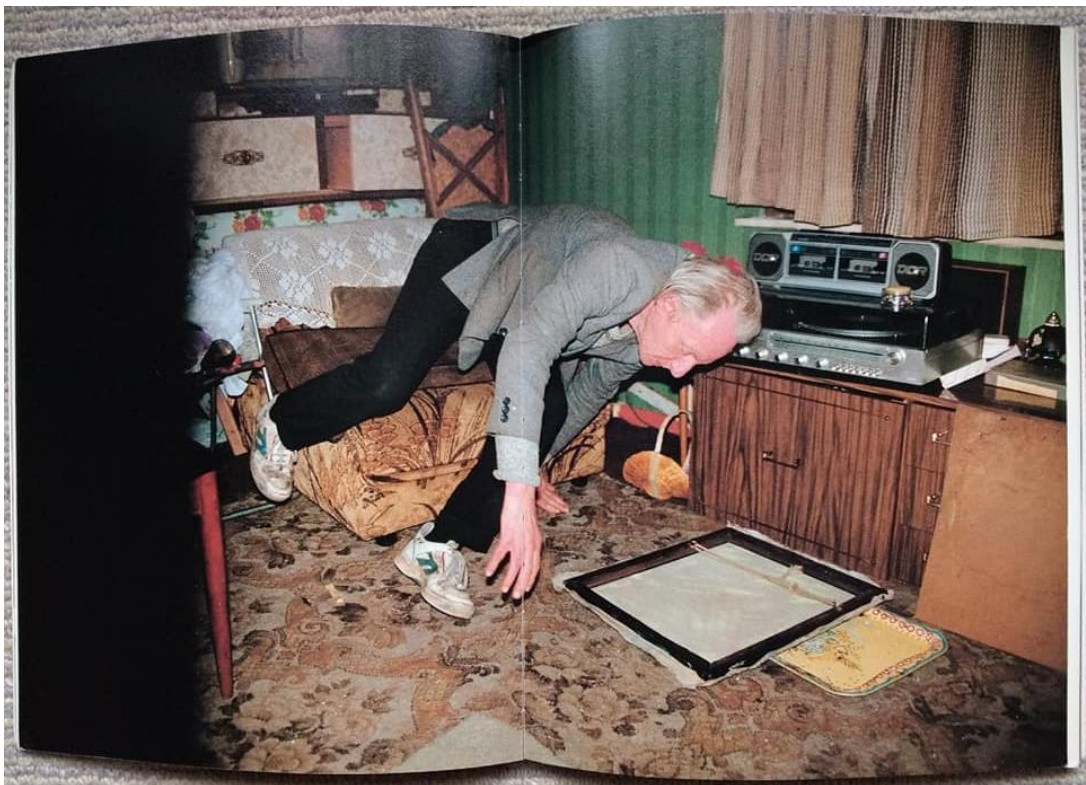


Figure 4. Ray falling over in *Ray's a Laugh*. The black stripe that runs down the left of the photograph is a flaw that is usually seen in domestic rather than professional photography. Its inclusion adds to the overall raw tone of *Ray's a Laugh*. Photo: author.

Billingham used throw away cameras and a 35mm Zenith camera, with old film stock and developed his prints at the chemist. It is plausible that his approach was as much about Billingham's own poverty as it was about experimenting and his intention to use the photographs for making

paintings. In this way the materials are autobiographical in the sense that they literally embody Billingham's own poverty, not just that of his family.

I will now move on to Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring*, for which Graham, like Waplington, used a medium format camera and took photographs from unusual angles but for very different reasons. Graham's photographs also give a good sense of lived experience, but not because of the representation of everyday life, like the photographs in *Living Room*, but because of the somatic effects the angles of the photographs create, which replicate the agitated body forced to sit and wait for many hours in an oppressive environment.

### **Paul Reas' *I Can Help* (1988)**

*I Can Help* is about the consumerist boom of the 1980s, and indirectly about post-industrialism. Although *I Can Help* appears tongue in cheek, it's underlying message, as the essays at the front of the book reveal, are deeply serious, despite the comical way they are written. Under Thatcher, a consumerist boom was built on the ruins of industrialism as the supermarket built on the site of a former car factory in the book reveals. The transformation of the economy from a reliance on manufacturing, to goods and services and the financial sector, was only possible through the dismantling of the trade unions, the loss of skilled jobs and by creating relatively high levels of unemployment, particularly in the north of the country where manufacturing was concentrated.

*I Can Help* is slightly smaller than A4, white and soft backed, with a landscape layout, and contains thirty-four colour photographs. The wrap around front cover features a photograph of a male sales assistant who is wearing a shirt and tie walking across a car park. Pinned to his tie is a triangular badge which reads 'I can help'. On the right-hand edge of the front and back is a woodblock print like illustration, of sections from the cover photograph. On the back is a paragraph from Stuart Cosgrove's sarcastic essay which appears inside the book, about 'free-market economics [and] the consumer's right to choose', and a one paragraphed blurb, which summarises what the theme of the book is about.

The title *I Can Help* is a literal reference to the badge on the sales assistant's badge which appears on the front cover, and to the sales assistants we see in the photographs, including a middle-aged man in a red blazer, comedically stooping as he attempts to sell beds to the onlooking customers. It is also a general reference to consumer culture and all that it entails, with the persuasive sales man or woman representing the human face of capitalism.

*I Can Help* begins by speaking directly to the viewer through the subliminal messages which come from the juxtaposition of writing in the photograph.

Behind a miserable looking mother and her middle-aged daughter who are waiting at a till, above the doorway of the shop, is a sparkly red, green and yellow Christmas banner which reads 'GREETINGS'. Printed on the middle-aged woman's bag is a large pound sign and the words 'Big Spender'. The words are read by the viewer in succession and is therefore welcomed into the book with the words – greetings big spender. On the next page is a foreword by Rod Jones who positions Reas within the history of documentary photography and summarises the critical message behind the work. This is then followed by a four-page essay by Stuart Cosgrove, who cleverly weaves in detail about each of the photographs into his simultaneously comical and depressing narrative, about the impact of Thatcherism and free-market economics on British society.

Like *Beyond Caring, I Can Help* is a photobook which focuses on public experience rather than the private aspect of people lives, yet it touches on the psychological through the expressions and body language of the individuals represented. Although it is not specifically about the British working-classes, working-class individuals and families do appear in it and Reas draws attention to what has been lost for the working-classes as a result of Thatcherism and the transformation of the economy, through two particular plates (plate 22 and plate 23 - Post Industrialism 1 and 2), and through the books two introductory essays, which help to contextualise Reas' photographs. The transformation of the British economy and the weakening of the working-class is the background music to which Reas' humorous and ironic photographs are set against.

*I Can Help* has other things in common with *Beyond Caring* because of Reas' use of a medium format camera and the unusual angles of many of the photographs, which replicate the experience of moving through the shopping areas represented and the discomfort of shoppers. Some of Reas' photographs suggest that they were taken either without looking through his viewfinder or very quickly because of the obvious need to capture photographs as quickly and discreetly as possible. In commercial



environments it is not difficult to imagine that photographers may face hostility from shop managers or security guards, or even just people who don't want to be photographed by a stranger. The off-kilter photographs reinforce the sense of urgency and agitation experienced by shoppers, in a busy and crowded environment where parents are harangued by their bored children. The slight blurring of plate six, a close-up of a mother pushing a shopping trolley containing a girl, could said to be a technical flaw brought about by the low lighting, but the slight blurring of the man in a beige coat passing her by, gives the photograph a feeling of speed and creates the impression that people are in a rush and are almost manically shopping. Similarly, the angle from which plate seven's photograph was taken, creates a similar sense of discomfort. The photograph is another close-up, taken from a low angle. It focuses on a young man wearing a coat, scarf and gloves, carrying a box containing a microwave. He is surrounded by an overweight, middle-aged, woman, who wears spectacles, she appears like she's almost walking into him and a young woman carrying a toddler. They are lit by flash, which also adds to the disquiet of the image and reinforces the discomfort of the man, navigating through what we presume to be a crowded shop, accompanied by the woman holding the child, whom we presume is his partner.



Figure 5. A family purchasing a microwave oven in *I Can Help*. The off-kilter photographs in *I Can Help* reinforce the sense of urgency and agitation experienced by shoppers. Photo: author.

Like *Beyond Caring*, Reas' photographs have simple captions on the otherwise blank, left-hand page across from the photographs. We know from the plates that have just been described, where they were taken and the time of year. Plate 6 is simply captioned: 'Christmas Tesco's' and plate 7, 'Christmas Dixons'. This information is bland, but it is information that is important to the narrative and theme and is an integral part of the dead-pan tone of the photobook.



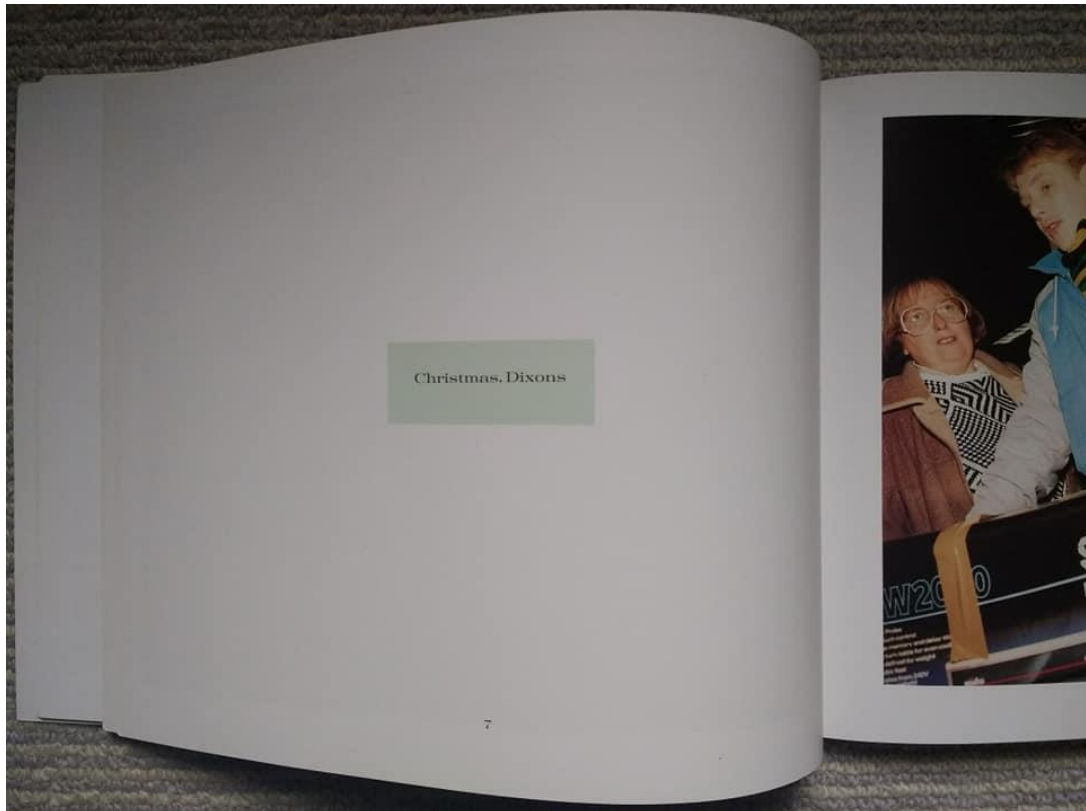


Figure 6. 'Christmas, Dixons' caption in *I Can Help*. The bland information provided by the captions in *I Can Help* are important to the book's narrative, theme and deadpan tone. Photo: author.

The reader understands that Tesco is a supermarket, Dixons is an electronics shop and that Christmas is a period in which people consume more and the shops are busier and more uncomfortable than usual. At Christmas, the discomfort of crowded shopping areas is added to by the wearing of thick coats for the cold outside, which makes the stuffy, hot atmosphere of the shops more unbearable and the consumer more agitated. In his captions, Reas could have been more specific about the location of the shops, like Graham is about the social security offices, but labelling them with only the brand name of the shop reinforces not only the sense that the photobook is about consumerism, but also that the experiences we see are replicated all over Britain, in all of the branches of the same shops. Despite the irony, humour and light heartedness of Reas' approach, *I Can Help* is just as political in its message and as critical of Thatcherism as *Beyond Caring*. There are a few plates for which Reas provides addition and crucial

information – plates 22 and 23 which he labels 'Post Industrialism 1' and 'Post Industrialism 2' respectively. In addition, he adds the following information to plate 22, at the bottom of the page: 'Metro Shopping Mall, the north east of England' – the photograph is comical in that it features a gormless looking, middle-aged, bespectacled man, standing next to a grey haired woman, inspecting an ornament, that we understand from the sign on the stall above, has been crafted from coal.

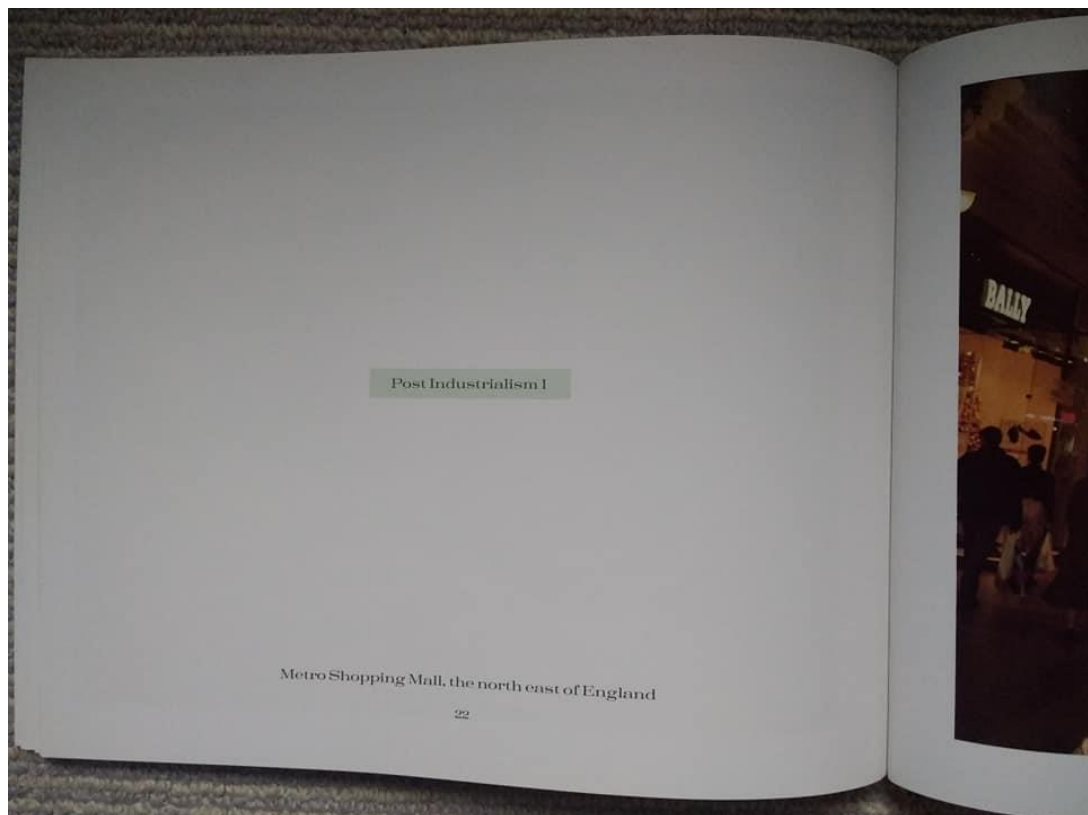


Figure 7. 'Post Industrialism I: Metro Shopping Mall, the north east of England' caption in *I Can Help*. The use of the title 'Post Industrialism' draws attention to the photograph's political significance. Additional information provided at the bottom of the page further contextualises the photograph and its political meaning. Photo: author.

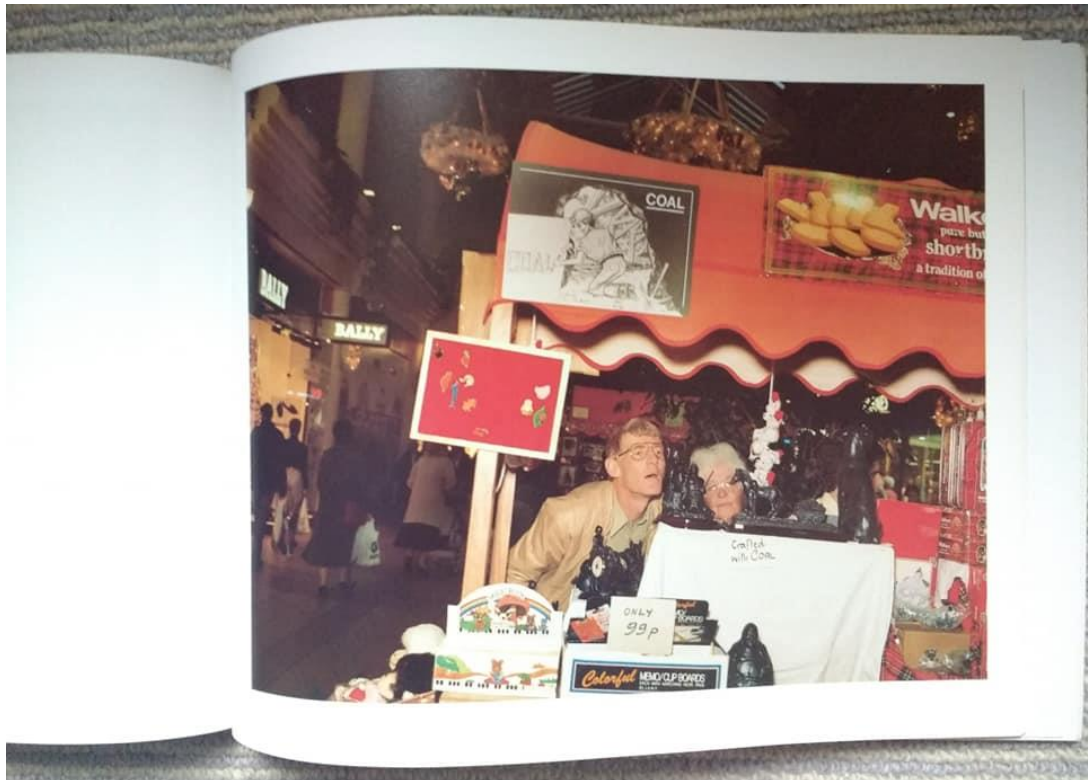


Figure 8. A couple looking at ornament carved from coal in *I Can Help*. 'Post Industrialism I: Metro Shopping Mall, the north east of England'. This comical photograph and its simple caption could be interpreted as representing, in the most understated way possible, one of the most brutal episodes in British working-class history. Photo: author.

This comical photograph and its simple caption could be interpreted as representing, in the most understated way possible, one of the most brutal episodes in British working-class history. In that, what it alludes to, by secondary ostension, for those who know about recent British history, is the defeat of miners and the dismantling of the British mining industry by the Thatcher government, following a year-long strike. During the strike, 8,000 riot police violently attacked miners at a coking plant in Orgreave (Milne, 2014:22). The Battle of Orgreave, as it became known, was, in the words of Seamus Milne, 'the single most dramatic and violent physical confrontation of postwar industrial relations' (ibid, 2014:22). The final injustice of it all, is that it appears to have been forgotten about so quickly. Reas' photograph and caption, and the narrative that underpins *I Can Help*, seems to be suggesting that the amnesia of the public has been helped along by consumerism and the distraction of brightly lit shopping centres.

Plate 23 shows two young mothers, sitting in front of a large sculpted mural which depicts a worker wearing a flat cap, standing in front of some terraced houses. The mothers are holding their young children and another family who look washed out by Reas' flash, walk past carrying balloons. The caption for plate 23's page provides the information 'Supermarket, built on the former site of Alvis Car Factory, Bradford.

It is clear from Reas' captioning that he is drawing attention to the specifics of the working-class jobs which have been lost in that area. Yet at the same time, he is making a more general point about how capitalism is easily able to repackage and gloss over the devastating impact of post-industrialism and Thatcherism, selling it back to and appeasing the communities who have suffered as a result. The promise of home ownership was another way that Thatcher attracted the support of the working-classes in the 1980s, and this is reflected towards the back pages of *Beyond Caring*. In this sequence of photographs, Reas focuses his attention on the new housing estates that were springing up.



Figure 9. A man cleaning car outside a newly built house in *I Can Help*. The promise of home ownership was another way that Thatcher attracted the support of the working-classes in the 1980s, and this is reflected towards the back pages of *Beyond Caring*. Photo: author.

In plate 30 we see a moustachioed man polishing the window of his small car, outside a newly built, characterless house. This is followed by plate 31 - a photograph inside a show home, which Reas' titles 'The New Economy' Show Home'. We presume the title is not only a literal reference to one of the books the estate agent has displayed on the glass table that we see in the living room, but also a political reference, to Thatcher's new neo-liberalised economy, and the hard-headed attitudes which accompanied it.





Figure 10. A show home in *I Can Help*. The caption 'The New Economy' Show Home' which accompanies this photograph –is a literal reference to one of the books displayed by an estate agent in the show home but also a political reference to Thatcher's new neo-liberalised economy at the attitudes that accompanied it. Photo: author.

All these readings are encouraged by Stuart Cosgrove's excellent essay at the beginning of the book, which demonstrates that Cosgrove fully grasps the ideology of Thatcherism. Cosgrove and Jones's essays leaves no doubt about the way Reas wants us to read his photographs:

The highest hosanna of free-market economics is the consumer's right to choose. A buoyant market-place, free from restrictive practices and unencumbered by state intervention is supposed to provide the consumer with the greatest freedom to choose. But choice is not necessarily a synonym for freedom, it often means the opposite.

(Cosgrove, 1988: no page number)

The overt political intentions of *I Can Help* stands in contrast with Martin Parr's *The Last Resort*, which I will now move on to. *The Last Resort* also focuses on consumerism as opposed to production, yet a different aspect –

that of leisure, and its critical and political intent is far less clear, despite the inclusion of Ian Walker's essay about the history of the place at the beginning of the book.

## **Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring* (1986)**

*Beyond Caring* is about the conditions in social security offices and job centres across Britain in the 1980s, which were dealing with millions of people, made unemployed because of deindustrialisation and the policies of the Thatcher government. It is a soft backed, landscape orientated book that is just over A4 and contains thirty-two colour photographs. The photographs are surrounded by thick white borders and appear on the right-hand pages, with captions for each image, printed on the otherwise blank left-hand pages.

As already noted in the introduction, in its first year the policies of the Thatcher led Conservative government caused a slump in manufacturing output that was so great, that it was nearly three times as high as in the worst year of the Great Depression. This loss of manufacturing jobs was not offset by an increase of jobs in the service industries, as it had been in the past, as they were also affected by the slump and by the public spending cuts of the Tories. Consequently, there was a dramatic increase in unemployment (Rowthorn in Hall and Jacques, 1983:73-74) and this led to the high demands being placed on the social security offices and job centres, that we see in *Beyond Caring*.

As Steven Cooper and Anne Hollows observe in an essay at the beginning of *Beyond Caring*, the social security system in Britain was originally designed for around '600,000 people' but in 1986 when the book was published, it was providing support for 'more than ten million' (Cooper, Hollows, 1986: plates 4-5). They note that as the numbers of unemployed increased, the Thatcher government 'diverted resources away from much needed staffing and office accommodation' (ibid, 1986: plates 4-5). Complexities to the benefits system brought in by the Tories meant that social security staff had to spend longer dealing with each case and this resulted in longer queues of claimants who had to wait longer. DHSS offices were often inaccessible to the elderly and disabled, many offices had toilets that were 'impossible to



find' and this was a problem when claimants were forced to wait 'often in excess of three hours'. A lack of facilities for children to play or for parents to change nappies also meant that mothers with young children were also deterred from visiting. Crowded waiting rooms meant little privacy for claimants who had to 'stat[e] their means' and this was yet another aspect to the whole degrading experience (ibid, plates 4-5: 1986).

The title *Beyond Caring* suggests a sense of despondency and hopelessness, in that to go beyond caring (or past caring), means you have given up. On a less personal level, it could also be read as a reference to the hard-headed attitude of the Tory government who could said to be beyond caring about the impact of their policies on working-class lives, and beyond caring about the state of the offices where job seekers and the unemployed were forced to spend hours waiting. In the words of Graham who had spent a year visiting hundreds of Social Security and Unemployment offices up and down the country, 'I became aware that a bureaucratic decision had been made not to prioritise improving things' [...] a decision has obviously been reached that this is an acceptable state of affairs, and certainly not an area worthy of serious consideration' (Graham, 1986: plate 6).

The cover of *Beyond Caring* is black with photographs featuring people sitting in waiting rooms on the front and the back. The front cover features a large photograph of a drab looking waiting room, lit by fluorescent lights. A man in his thirties, wearing a red jumper and grey suit, stands, leaning against a wall. A middle-aged man wearing what looks like a dark tweed suit, is sitting smoking and staring across at him. In the background, six other men sit on two benches, waiting to be seen. Above the photograph the title is printed in capitals in a white neutral typeface. The back cover features a much smaller photograph of the back of a woman sitting waiting, wearing a white head scarf and a red coat. Next to the photograph is a three-paragraphed blurb, which explains what the book is about.

*Beyond Caring* begins with an off-kilter photograph of an even drabber looking waiting room than the one seen on its front cover and then moves

on after the title page to an essay titled: Beyond Caring, which is written by Stephen Cooper and Anne Hollows from the 'Welfare Benefits Resources Network'. The essay explains why the social security system is in the state that it is. It is then followed by an essay written by Paul Graham, titled: 'State Benefits', which describes the circumstances surrounding the production of the photobook and Graham's experience of spending hours sitting in the waiting rooms, both as an unemployed person seeking support and then as a photographer recording the conditions of the offices for his project. The two essays are then followed by Graham's photographs.

Graham's strategy of photographing a variety of offices (mainly across London but also in other parts of the country such as Birmingham and Liverpool) rather than spending more time capturing images of forlorn looking people in a single office, reinforces the idea that unemployment and the poor conditions of unemployment and social security offices was a national problem. This is also why Graham's decision to caption the photographs on the left-hand page across from each photograph works well. Like Robert Frank's captions for *The American's* (1959), Graham's captions are minimal and unobtrusive – they list details such as the type of waiting room, the local area and the city in which it was situated and the year the photograph was taken. For example, for plate 29: 'WAITING AREA, HACKNEY DHSS, EAST LONDON, 1985' and for plate 30: 'BABY BEING FED, ACTON DHSS, WEST LONDON, 1985'.



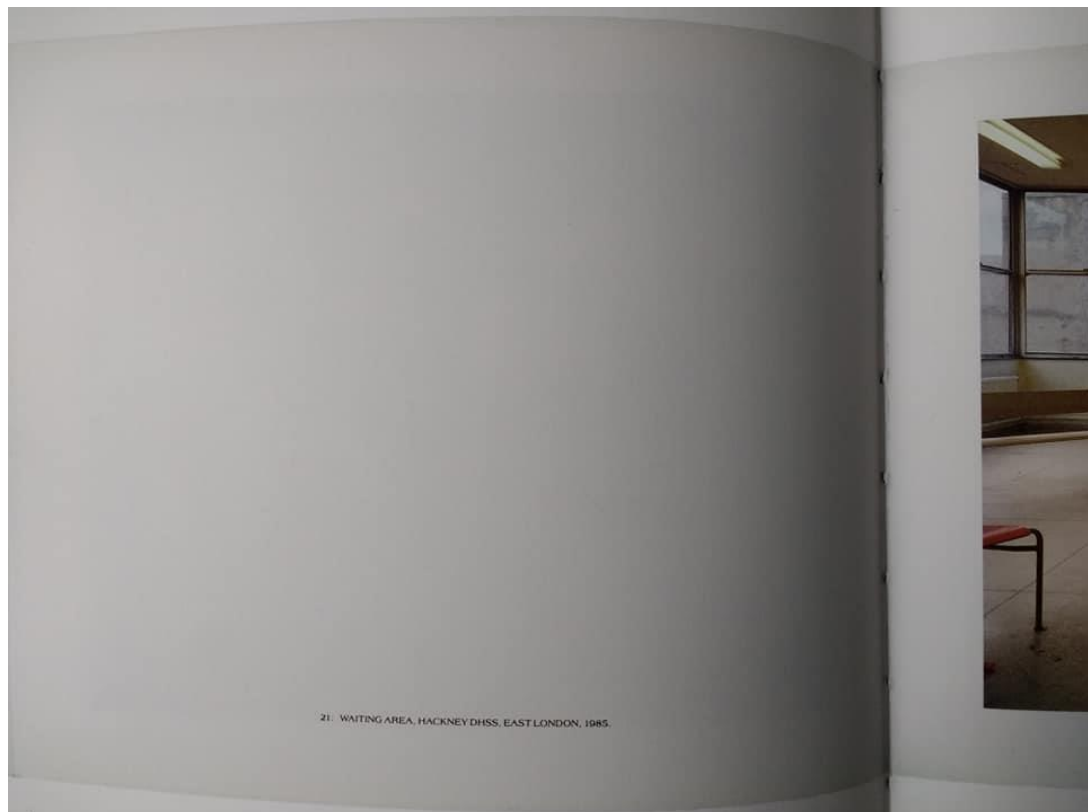


Figure 11. A caption in *Beyond Caring* which reads: 'WAITING AREA, HACKNEY DHSS, EAST LONDON 1985'. Like Robert Frank's captions in *The Americans* (1959), Graham's captions are minimal and unobtrusive – they list details such as the type of waiting room, the local area and the city in which it was situated and the year the photograph was taken. Photo: author.

*Beyond Caring* documents a public aspect of working-class lives as opposed to Billingham and Waplington's representation of the domestic and personal. Yet, at the same time as capturing the public, Graham manages to capture the personal and psychological, through the body language of individuals and the expressions on people's faces.

The individuals in Graham's photographs sit in crowded waiting rooms but most appear isolated - lost in their own private boredom or despair. It is through Graham's representation of isolation, that the humiliation and degradation of relying on welfare and being treated impersonally by the staff who work at those offices, can be felt. Technically, *Beyond Caring* has much in common with *Ray's a Laugh*, in that Graham's experimental approach to photographing came about because of the circumstances in which he found himself, rather than an approach that was chosen freely. Graham could not

obtain permission to take photographs within the job centres and social security offices, so had to take them covertly, and in order not to draw attention to what he was doing he had to take the photographs without looking through the viewfinder of his camera. Yet, like Martin Parr, Graham used a Plaubel Makina – a medium format camera which could capture a lot of detail and could allow for his prints to be greatly enlarged without loss of detail. This covert approach was not new to photography. In order to capture people's expressions when their 'guard is down and the mask is off' (Evans in Rathbone, 2000:109), Walker Evans concealed his 35mm Contax camera under his coat so that he could take portraits of people on subway trains, between 1938 and 1941. The awkward angles, and unconventional approach to taking photographs are part of *Beyond Carings* strength, in the same way that Billingham's unconventional approach is integral to the overall tone of *Ray's a Laugh*. In the words of Graham:

"All the photographs were taken without looking through the lens... I had to work in a secretive manner, with literally every photograph taken with a camera on a seat, around my neck or on the floor. This also meant I could work at extremely slow shutter speeds without a tripod, but more importantly each image had a haphazard composition with tilted verticals, intrusions and often an excess of floor or ceiling."

(Graham in Cotton, 2011: no page number)

Graham's photographs capture the corporeal as well as the spiritual impact of spending hours in crowded waiting rooms. The discomfort produced by Graham's awkward angles and off kilter photographs echoes the discomfort of the individuals we see sitting in the waiting rooms.



Figure 12. A job centre in *Beyond Caring*. The awkward angles in *Beyond Caring* create a sense of the discomfort of the individuals we see in the waiting rooms. Photo: author.

We sense the boredom and discomfort of people as they slump on hard yet brightly coloured chairs and benches. They are surrounded by the minimalism of the sterile looking yet shabby environment of waiting rooms, which are painted in muted, drab colours, lit by dingy florescent strip lights and littered with cigarette butts and other bits of detritus. In the photographs we see individuals who on the most part look bored - sitting forward, slumping back, standing up and sitting down. Yet in four photographs, individuals appear despairing. The individuals are all men whose backs are hunched over with their heads hanging low – two of whom have their heads resting on his hands, covering their faces. The powerful emotional effect of these images, impact on the way the rest sequence is read.



Figure 13. A man sitting hunched over in *Beyond Caring*. One of four photographs which show individuals who appear despairing. The powerful emotional effect of seeing men hunched over impacts on the way the rest of the sequence of photographs are read in *Beyond Caring*. Photo: author.

This repetition of powerful motifs to reinforce an idea, also occurs in *Ray's a Laugh*, in that Ray may only be seen drinking in a handful of images but the overall impact on those photographs effects the way the photobook is read. Because of this, *Ray's a Laugh* is often interpreted as being predominately about Ray's alcoholism, which Billingham has denied.



Figure 14. Ray with a class of homebrew in his hand in *Ray's a Laugh*. The repetition of powerful motifs to reinforce an idea occurs in Richard Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh*, in that Ray may only be seen drinking in a handful of images but the overall impact on those photographs effects the way the photobook is read. Photo: author.

I will now move on to Paul Reas' *I Can Help* which also shows a public aspect of working-class lives. Like *Beyond Caring*, it makes clear its political message using essays, but unlike *Beyond Caring*, Reas is humorously commenting on things how they are, without the slightest hope of changing things.

## **Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* (1986)**

Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* is about New Brighton – a run-down sea side resort on the Wirral coastline, which sits opposite the city of Liverpool. It is hard backed, just over A4 and has a landscape layout, with a royal blue, glossy cover. The focus of the cover is the title, which is printed in an irregular typeface, in large orange capital letters, which wraps around from the back to the front. It contains forty photographs, each with just over an inch of white border surrounding them. The photographs appear mostly on the right-hand page across from a blank left-hand page (only two spreads contain a photograph on both pages).

The title *The Last Resort*, suggests that the resort is the last place you would want to spend time and that you would only go there if you had no other option. This can be interpreted in a number of ways: as either a criticism of the run-down state of the area, a comment on the demise of seaside resorts in general (even though they have not gone away), or/and as highlighting that the working-class subjects we see in the book have limited options for how they spend their leisure time. Therefore, what for some, might be the last place they would choose for a day out, may be for others, their only choice.

The book begins with what appears to be an A6, sepia, Victorian, postcard, in the centre of a page, which contains a view of the beach and promenade seen through round spectacles and announces in capital letters across the top: 'SEEING EVERYTHING THERE IS TO SEE' and across the bottom: AT NEW BRIGHTON'. THIS CONTEXTUALISES THE HISTORY OF NEW BRIGHTON IN A SIMPLE WAY – THE NOSTALGIA OF THE POSTCARD.

This is followed by the title pages then an introductory, six-page essay by Ian Walker, about the history and current state of the area. Walker's essay is followed by Parr's photographs and then the book ends in the same manner it began - with another sepia postcard on which are more views of the beach and promenade as well as images of the bathing pool and lighthouse. In the



centre of the postcard is the image of what appears to be a Scottish Terrier. Written across the postcard along the top it reads: 'NEW BRIGHTON' and along the bottom: CHEERIO & LOTS OF LUCK'. The back of the book includes a short blurb about its theme, which according to whoever wrote it, 'presents the paradoxes of New Brighton in tableaux of utmost detail and refulgent flesh'.

As already noted, in Liverpool where many of the day trippers came from, in 1985 – one of the years in which Parr took his photographs, unemployment ran at twenty eight percent (Merseyside County Council in Frost and North, 2013:25). Liverpool had lost 40,000 jobs between 1979 and 1984, because of an exodus of manufacturing companies (Frost and North, 2013:17). The city was not only one of the poorest in England but also one of the poorest in Europe (Jacks, 1987:233). Up the road from New Brighton, in Birkenhead, unemployment at the mid - 1980s was also high and as Ian Jack described, people were going to all kinds of lengths to survive. Yet, reading Walker's essay and looking at Parr's photographs, you could be led to believe that that the run-down state of New Brighton is specific to just that area, rather than it being a symbol of the general malaise caused by the policies of Thatcherism, to not only the Merseyside region, but also to many other places in country.

*The Last Resort* differs from *Ray's a Laugh*, *Living Room*, *Beyond Caring* and *I Can Help*, in that Parr's photographs are more conventional in that they are all perfectly framed with no unusual angles or blurring except for perhaps in one image, taken indoors, of a toddler in a bingo hall. Yet taking documentary photographs in colour in the 1980s, as oppose to black and white was something which Parr led the way for in Britain, alongside Paul Graham. It is not just Parr's conventional framing that makes *The Last Resort* different from the other photobooks discussed, it is also because of a more detached attitude towards his subjects that *The Last Resort* communicates. This is not to say that all his photographs are unsympathetic towards its subjects, but just that the overall impression left by the book is

relatively cool and unsympathetic. Reas's photographs are somewhat detached, because like Parr, he is photographing strangers, yet there is something warmer about his images. There is an overall sense of sympathy for Reas' consumers, yet this sympathy is somewhat lacking in *The Last Resort*, except through Ian Walker's introductory written narrative about the history of the place and his account of his interactions with the locals.

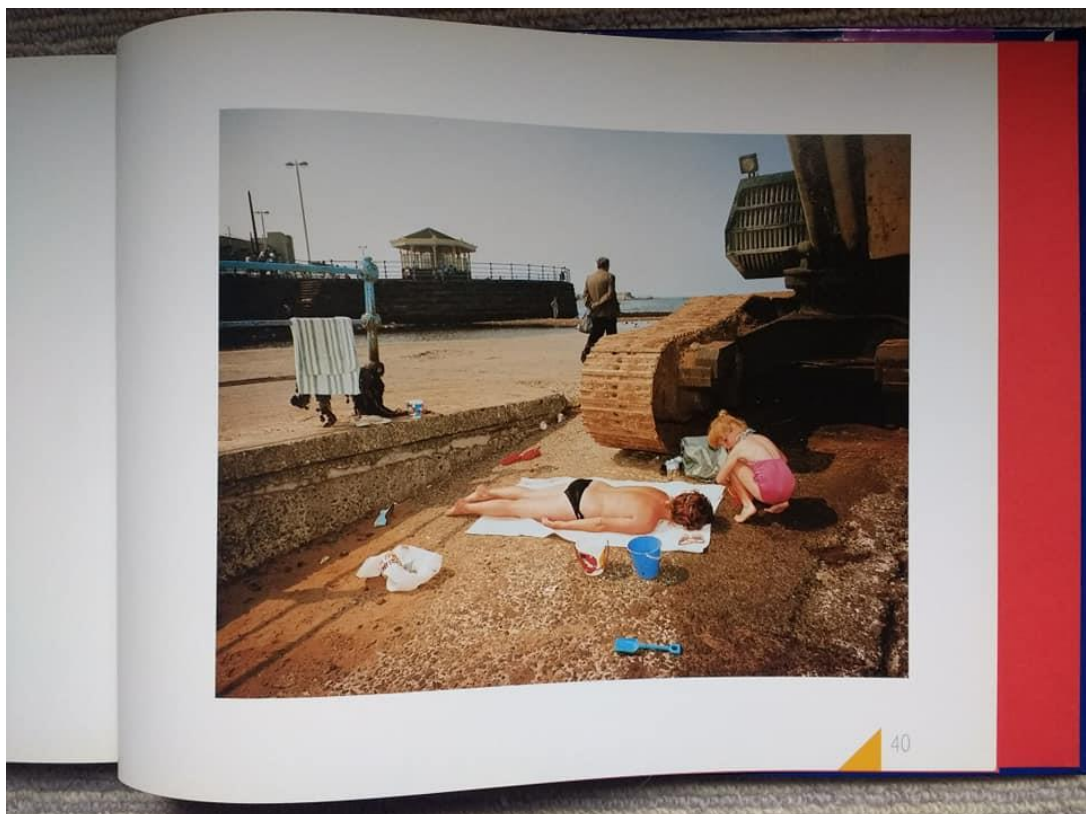


Figure 15. A woman sunbathing on a concrete floor, in front of a huge digger, while her daughter plays beside her in *The Last Resort*. It is not just Parr's conventional framing that makes *The Last Resort* different from the other photobooks discussed, it is also because of a more detached attitude towards his subjects that *The Last Resort* communicates. Photo: author.

Reas' sympathetic tone perhaps comes from his unconventional angles and the blurring in some of his photographs, which create a greater sense of shared experience, but it may also have something to do with his individual sensibility. Reas grew up in a working-class household and wanted to make a political point with *I Can Help*, yet in a light-hearted way, and it is most

likely that he would have identified with what had happened to the working-classes as a result of Thatcherism.



Figure 16. A woman pushing a child in a supermarket trolley in *I Can Help*. Reas's sympathetic tone perhaps comes from his unconventional angles and the blurring in some of his photographs, which create a greater sense of shared experience, but it may also have something to do with his individual sensibility. Photo: author.

Yet in *The Last Resort*, there is a sense that Parr's middle-class background made him fascinated by the working-class individuals and families he photographed and their poverty, and perhaps was more interested in his own personal vision than making a political point, even though he states in an interview that the work was political. Parr's sensibility comes across as being akin to the social landscape school of the late 1960s, whose '*aim [was] not to reform life, but to know it*' and whose '*work betray[ed] a sympathy – almost an affection – for the imperfections and frailties of society*' (Szarkowski in Parr and Badger, 2004:236-237), there is a sense of Parr pointing out society's imperfections without really wanting to change them. This is not to say that a photobook or exhibitions of photographs can change society, but they certainly contribute to a dialogue about changing things.

Another of Parr's technical innovations could also have encouraged this reading of *The Last Resort*, as in order to overcome the problem of shadows cast by the sun between 11 am and 3pm (Parr, 2010:36), Parr used a flash outdoors. This is what gives some of his photographs an almost surreal, cut-out quality and creates a sense of working-class individuals and their flaws being examined under a microscope.



Figure 17. A surreal looking photograph of a woman stroking a dog while her daughter looks on with a doll in a pram in *The Last Resort*. The use of harsh flash in bright sunshine in *The Last Resort* creates a surreal, cut-out effect and gives the impression that the day tripper's flaws are being examined under a microscope. Photo: author.

His use of a medium format, Plaubel camera, which allows for greater enlargements for the gallery wall, also allowed for the capturing of more detail, like the microscope. Amongst Parr's images there are some which appear sympathetic towards their subjects. In the second photograph which was taken in natural light, on what appears to be an overcast day, we see through a dirty, broken window of a shelter, a young man holding a baby

and smiling. The image is tender, in that he appears to be enjoying fatherhood and holding his child. In another image taken in natural daylight, which follows a particularly surreal photograph of a woman patting a dog and child pushing a pram, we see two young children, around the age of four or five, standing outside a chip shop with a woman who appears to be looking after them. The floor is covered in rubbish, the boy is crying, has red cheeks and we feel sorry for him.



Figure 18. A young boy stands outside a chipshop with his mum and sister, he is crying and they are surrounded by litter in *The Last Resort*. An example of one of the few sensitive photographs in *The Last Resort* that appears to have been taken without a flash, in natural light. Photo: author.

In another image another child is crying – this time it is a baby in a push chair on a concrete hill on which a woman who seems to be his mother, is sunbathing. The woman's hand is covering part of her face, to try to prevent the sun getting into her eyes, but we can see she looks unhappy. The harshness of the flash adds to the sense of the discomfort of the baby crying



and gives the image a surreal, cut out quality. Depending on how this photograph is read, the women could be seen either as a neglectful parent or worn down by the strain of parenthood. Overall the sympathetic photographs taken in natural light are outnumbered by the unsympathetic photographs taken in unnatural, harsh light, which appear to be critical of their subjects, rather than the environment and socio-political climate that the subjects find themselves in.



Figure 19. A young women lies sunbathing on a concrete hill while an infant in a push chair behind her cries in *The Last Resort*. The use of harsh flash in bright sunshine adds to the sense of the discomfort of the baby crying. It also contributes to the overall cool and detached tone of *The Last Resort*. Photo: author.

I will now move on to Chris Killip's *Pirelli Work* and *In Flagante*, whose photographs are black and white. Killip's photographs and photobooks stand in stark contrast to Parr's *The Last Resort* because of the dignified and sympathetic way he represents working-class people. Unlike Parr, Killip makes it very clear through his photographs, statements and the essays that

accompany his photographs, that he is critiquing Thatcherism and not the subjects of his work.

### **Chris Killip's *Pirelli Work* (2006)**

*Pirelli Work* is about the work force of a Pirelli tyre factory. It is a black, hardbacked book, and is around A4 in size but is square in shape. It contains fifty black and white, theatrically lit portraits of Pirelli tyre factory workers, at work in their individual job roles inside a dark factory. It has no blurb on the back to tell the reader what it is about and on the front is just a single black and white photograph, of a man working at a machine. Below the photograph is the name of the photographer and the title of the book, written in a neutral typeface, in small, capital letters. It contains fifty photographs, which are a mixture of landscape and portrait layouts, each with between an inch and inch and a half of white border surrounding them. The photographs appear on both pages, with the occasional photograph opposite a blank page. It begins with Killip's photographs and ends with two essays, the first is Killip's account of the project, which is titled: 'What Happened', the second is Clive Dilnot's analysis of the project and its socio-economic and historical context, titled: 'Chris Killip's Portraits of The *Pirelli* Workforce'.

The title *Pirelli Work* is a literal reference to the tyre company whose workers and factory appear in the book and to work they carry out, but by the inclusion of the word work instead of tyres, Killip could also be emphasising that the book's focus is about the nature of work itself, which Dilnot's essay suggests it is.

Although Killip's photographs were taken in 1989, they tell us nothing about the impact of Thatcherism. What they do represent is a sort of benchmark, both economically and culturally, of what has been lost to the working-classes because of the mass de-industrialisation that came about because of Thatcherism – skilled jobs, autonomy, dignity, security at work and a decent wage that could support a family. Not that we can know for sure that the jobs we see in *Pirelli Work* are secure or well-paid, but given the fact the management of the company wanted to honour their staff by commissioning



the work, we can plausibly presume that it is a work place where workers are valued.

Killip's photographs also represent what has been lost in terms of the representation of working-class people, in that, as already noted, they began to be represented in the new colour documentary photography of the 1980s, in an ironic, undignified or less dignified way, and as consumers rather than producers.

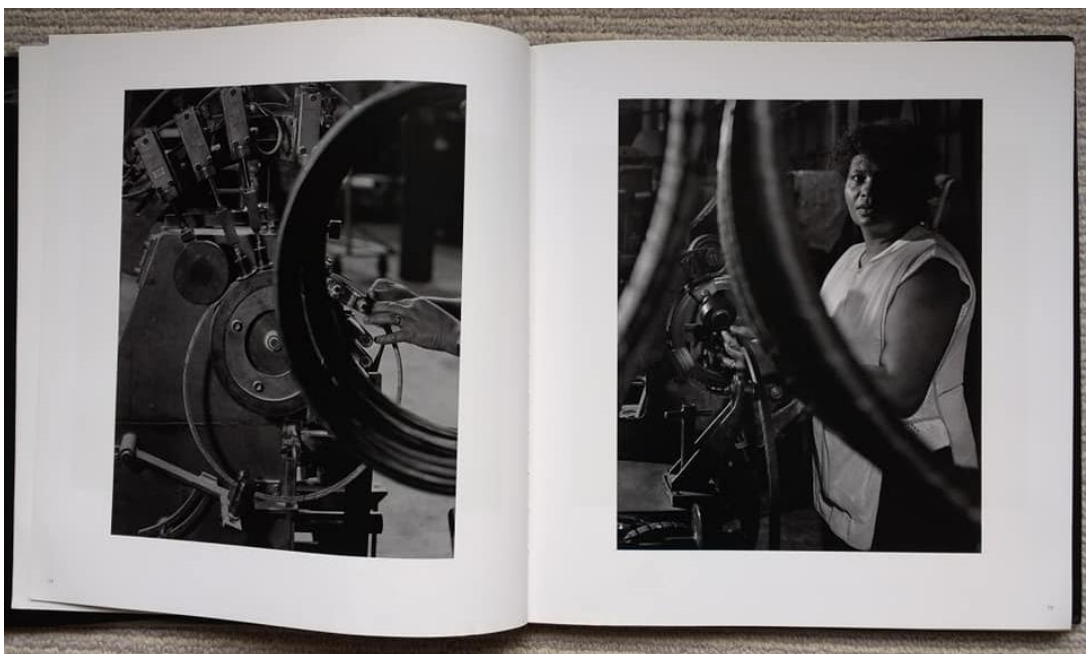


Figure 20. A pair of photographs in *Pirelli Work*, one of which shows a dignified black female worker. The working-classes are represented as dignified producers in *Pirelli Work*. Photo: author.

It is important to highlight that this shift occurred around the same time that not only were the political representatives of the working-classes – the unions, were being symbolically and publicly defeated by the Conservative party after the year-long miner's strike (1984-1985), but also that the Labour party was accepting Thatcherism as the centre ground of politics and shifting to the right under the leadership of Neil Kinnock, and that intellectuals in the humanities were beginning to move away from discussing inequality in terms of class, and replacing it with a focus on race, gender and sexuality.

The idea for photographing the work force came from Pirelli UK's press officer Tom Northey and Sandro Veronesi, the managing director of Pirelli who commissioned the project. Veronesi wanted a publication of the photographs to be distributed to the workers, but this was not possible, yet conceptually, it is an important part of understanding the context of the work and the value placed on the subjects of the work (Killip, 2006:62-63). Much like the value I place on the subjects of the photo zine practice, for whom, when possible (when I can afford it) I give copies of the photobooks to. The photographs were taken by Killip in 1989 and exhibited once in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1990 but it was not until 2006 that Killip produced a photobook of the work.

Chris Killip's work is different from the previous photobooks discussed in that both *In Flagrante* (1988) and *Pirelli Work* (2006) are made up of black and white photographs and both have much more in common with the documentary work of the generations who came before than the social landscape school of the late 1960s. Killip's photographs of the downtrodden British working-classes of the 1980s have more in common with Lewis Hine who took photographs of adult and child labourers from 1908 until his death in 1940, and the photographs taken of dustbowl farmers and their families, taken by those who worked on the Farm Security Administration photography program between 1935 and 1944.

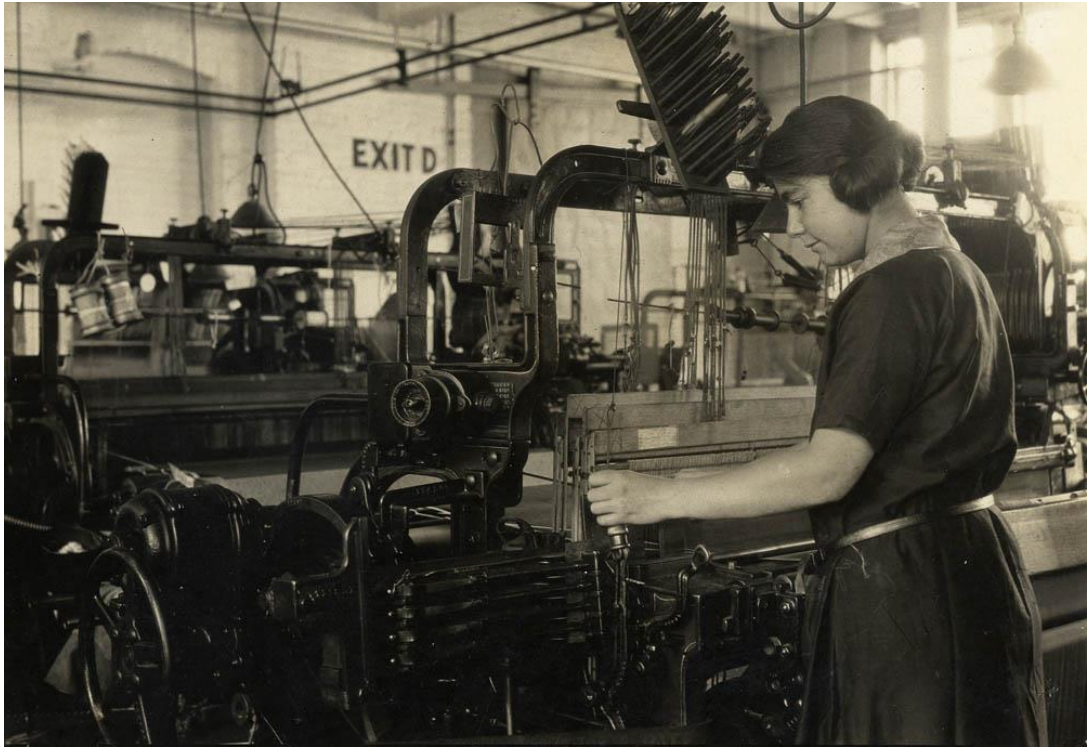


Figure 21. Lewis Hine (1921) *Woman at a modern automatic silk loom, New Jersey.*

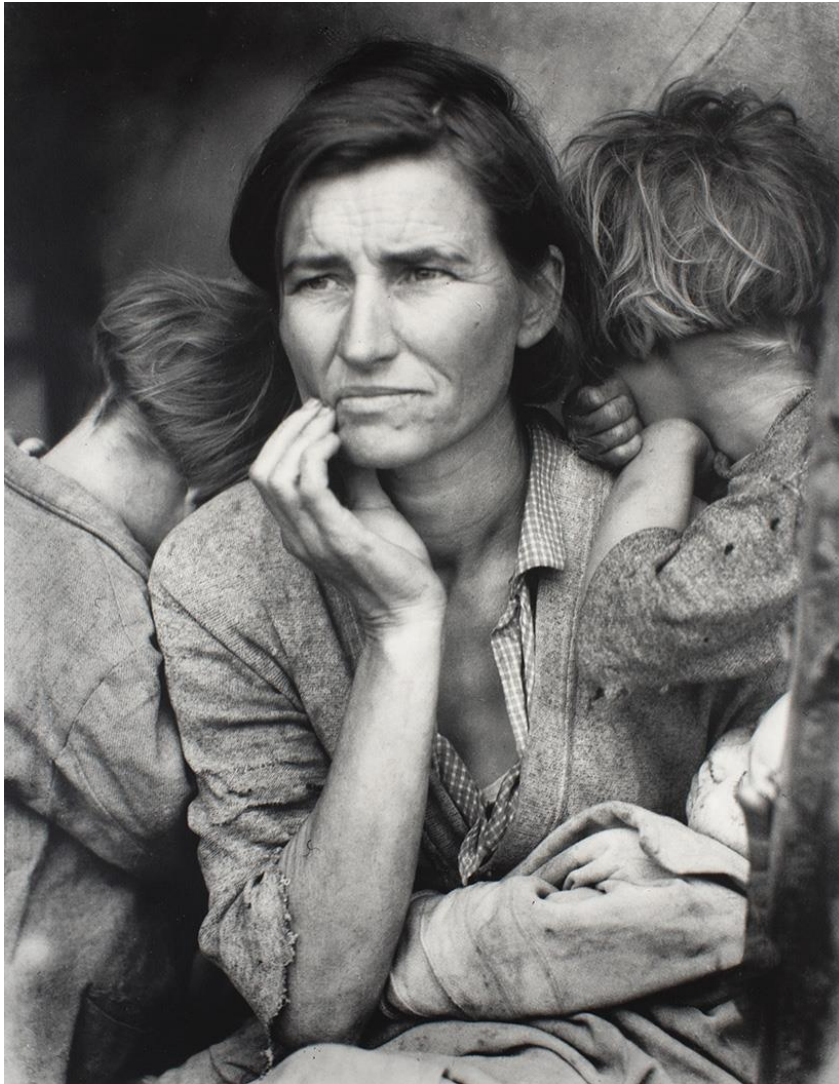


Figure 22. Dorothy Lange (1936) *Migrant Mother*. Lange was one of the many photographers employed by the U.S.A government's Farm Security Administration programme to photograph farmers impoverished during the Great Depression.

*Pirelli* work is an anomaly in the narrative of post-industrialism and the working-classes, in that it represents individuals employed in traditional working-class manufacturing jobs as opposed to either consuming (as in Reas' *I Can Help* and Parr's *The Last Resort*), being unemployed (as in Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* and Killip's *In Flagrante*), or working within the service industry as in the shop assistants, also in Reas' *I Can Help*. Manufacturing obviously still existed in Britain in the late 1980s and still exists today, albeit on a very small scale. Yet, the labouring body no longer features in representations of the working-classes in the same way that it did between 1917 and 1973 (Roberts, 1998:180). *Pirelli* work is also an anomaly

amongst the photobooks analysed in that Killip represents the working-class as dignified workers rather than undignified consumers and unemployed paupers. His attention to the staging of the photographs communicates to the viewers that these are subjects who are worthy of our attention, the theatrical lighting creates a sense of drama – akin perhaps to watching Laurence Olivier make his dramatic speeches in black and white films. Killip's approach, like the other photobooks discussed, came about because of the technical restrictions of his environment.

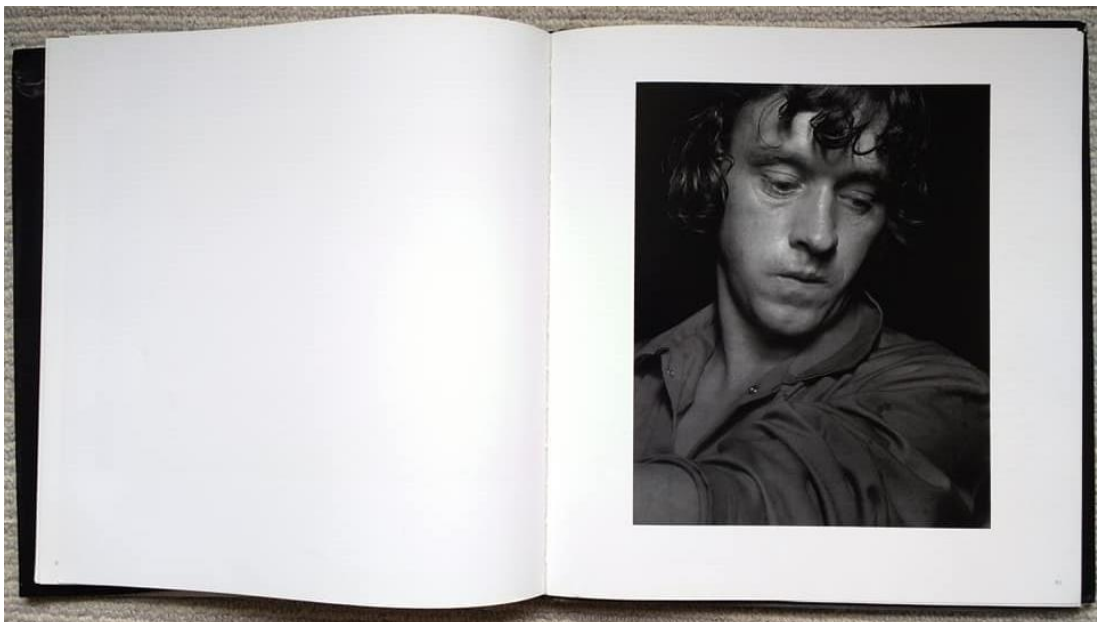


Figure 23. A close-up photograph of a man working in *Pirelli Work*. The workers in *Pirelli Work* are theatrically lit which creates a sense of drama. Photo: author.

Killip describes in an essay at the back of *Pirelli Work*, titled 'What Happened', the horror of discovering after already accepting the commission, that because rubber is light sensitive when it is processed, that the factory's windows were painted black and therefore, the factory was dark (Killip, 2006:62-63). After months of struggle, Killip had little choice but to fall back on the techniques he had learnt when supporting commercial and fashion photographers in the 1960s, an approach which he had abandoned when he began his own practice which relied on natural light (Killip, 2006:62-63). The months Killip spent in the factory before giving in to the use of artificial

lighting were not wasted, in that Killip got to intimately know the factory and its processes and was around and had got to know the workers, so they were comfortable and relaxed in his presence. This understanding of the day-to-day experience of working at the factory would have undoubtedly fed in to the way in which Killip took and edited the photographs, and this is perhaps why there is an intimacy about them, despite them being photographs of individuals in a public space. The lighting and the concentration of most of the workers faces creates an impression that the project is about individual psychology rather than an observation of the external facts of the situation. The use of black and white photography with strong lighting creates a series of photographs which Clive Dermot astutely describes as 'solitary theatres of work' (Dilnot, 2006:74). The *Pirelli* photographs, in Killip's words, are "a dissection, an examination, an uncovering and ultimately a confrontation: a showdown," both with work and what we assume of it vis-à-vis those who work." (Killip in Dilnot, 2006:82). Yet as Dilnot observes, the photographs are essentially about 'acts of labor [*sic*] as *essentially* focused concentration' (Dilnot, 2006:78). Killip 'offers a small dictionary of the modes of mental engagement in work, running the gamut from the heavily physical to the wholly cerebral. In these two sequences the line between labor [*sic*], work and mind definitively dissolves. [...] Labour becomes mind and the picture is the portrait of consciousness as work' (ibid, 2006:78).

Killip's photographs feature only two women, one of which is a portrait of a black woman who looks directly at the camera (fig?), her face half covered by shadow and opposite on the left-hand page, we see only the hands of what appears to be a woman. There is another image in which we see only the top of a head between machines, which appears like it might be that of a woman, but it is likely that it is a long-haired man, whom we have already seen within the sequence. The lack of women in Killip's photographs is for the obvious reason that because of the nature of the work, less women were employed by the factory. Amongst his photographs we also see several black and Asian workers. A couple of the photographs of Asian workers are seen



from a distance and the men look lost amongst the machinery. They are the few photographs in the sequence which appear less like portraits of workers and more like photographs which are intended to give the reader an impression of the scale of the factory.



Figure 24. A male worker in the Pirelli tyre factory, taken from a distance in *Pirelli Work*. It is one of the few photographs in the sequence which appear less like portraits of workers and more like photographs which are intended to give the reader an impression of the scale of the factory. Photo: author.

Killip's own account of the project appears at the back of the book, followed by Clive Dilnot's essay, in which he analyses the work and situates it within the history of British documentary photography and within the socio-economic history of Britain.

I will now move on to analysing *In Flagrante*, which documents the effects Thatcherism and de-industrialisation in the north of England on many people

over a period of years, as opposed to focusing on one group of people, in one place, at one point in time.



### **Chris Killip's *In Flagrante* (1988)**

*In Flagrante* is about the impact of Thatcherism and de-industrialisation on working-class lives. It contains fifty black and white photographs that were taken between 1975 and 1987. It is a white, soft backed book, that is around A4, but is wider in size, so gives the impression of being larger than it is. Many of the photographs are large and square, as if cropped, and are spread across one and a half pages. A few are landscape in layout and occupy just one page. Because of the squareness of many of the photographs that are printed across two pages, there is a large white border that surrounds each of them. The book begins with W. B. Yeats's poem: 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven', which sits opposite a photograph of a man painting a stormy landscape on a beach. It then moves on to the title page and a smaller portrait length photograph of a couple sitting in a shelter, followed by a short statement about Killip's photographs, and then moves on to Killip's sequence of photographs. The photographs are followed by, and the book ends with, an essay that is co-authored by Sylvia Grant and John Berger, titled: 'Walking Back Home'.

The title *In Flagrante* is Latin, and according to the online Oxford English dictionary, it translates as 'in the heat of the crime'. Used adverbially, it means 'in the very act of wrongdoing, especially an act of sexual misconduct' (Oxford English Dictionary, no page number). Killip's use of the term for the title can be interpreted as a critique of the wrongdoing of governments whose policies contribute to the misery and destruction we see in the photographs of *In Flagrante*. What we are seeing in Killip's photographs are the lived consequences of deindustrialisation, accelerated by Thatcherite policies. The use of Latin can also be understood as pointing towards those who are privileged, whose schooling includes the learning of Latin and whose lives were either enhanced or remained unaffected by the destructive policies of Thatcherism. It can also be understood as pointing towards the politicians, who are removed from the lives of ordinary people and who played a role in what we see within the photographs of *In Flagrante*, who

learnt Latin in the private schools and grammar schools that they and their children attended.

We are informed by Killip, after reading through the photographs and the essay by Sylvia Grant and John Berger, that the photographs span the period from 1975 to 1987. Killip used a large format 4 x 5 Linhof Technika camera to take his photographs, the same sort of camera that was previously used by press photographers. This not only gave him negatives that capture a lot of detail and could be greatly enlarged, like the photographs of Parr, Waplington, Reas and Graham, but also meant that with his cumbersome equipment, there was no way he could hide what he was doing. In this way, Killip's working methods echo the ethics and politics of an older generation of documentary photographers and photobook producers – specifically James Agee and Walker Evans. As Carol Shloss observes, it was the sheer volume of Walker Evan's photographic equipment that 'made it easier for Agee to see the nature of the transaction they both confronted [...] If Agee's talents were "veiled and disembodied," Evans's skills were not' (Shloss, 1987:191). The way that Evans interacted with the subjects of his photographs also made a deep impression Agee – Evans 'talked to various people, he told them his intent, he asked their permission, he let them arrange themselves comfortably, he took the pictures only when they were ready. And he himself stood openly facing them'. Agee 'wanted to find a humane way to live and write, a way to gather material that did not damage those observe, a way in short to balance the moral claims of the tenant farmers against his own desire to produce a text about them' (Shloss, 1987:180-181) and the visibility of Evan's photographic practice provided him with a model.

In the first image of the photographic sequence, we see a silhouette on the road of Killip holding his large fold out camera, his silhouette just touches the feet of the destitute woman who is sitting on the kerb in her dirty coat and gloves, with her head on her knees. Her clothes are old fashioned as she is wearing what appears to be a head scarf, and her smart, yet dirty clothes,

reminds me of those worn by my deceased grandmother's generation, who were born before the second World War and who wore head scarfs when they went out in, in order to protect their perms. A photograph of the same woman is also the last photograph in the sequence. This time she is lying on her side with her knees draw up towards her chest, in a bus stop. She is looked down upon by a boy wearing dark clothes who is holding a stick and standing next to a dog, and at the bottom of the image we again see Killip's silhouette holding his large camera.

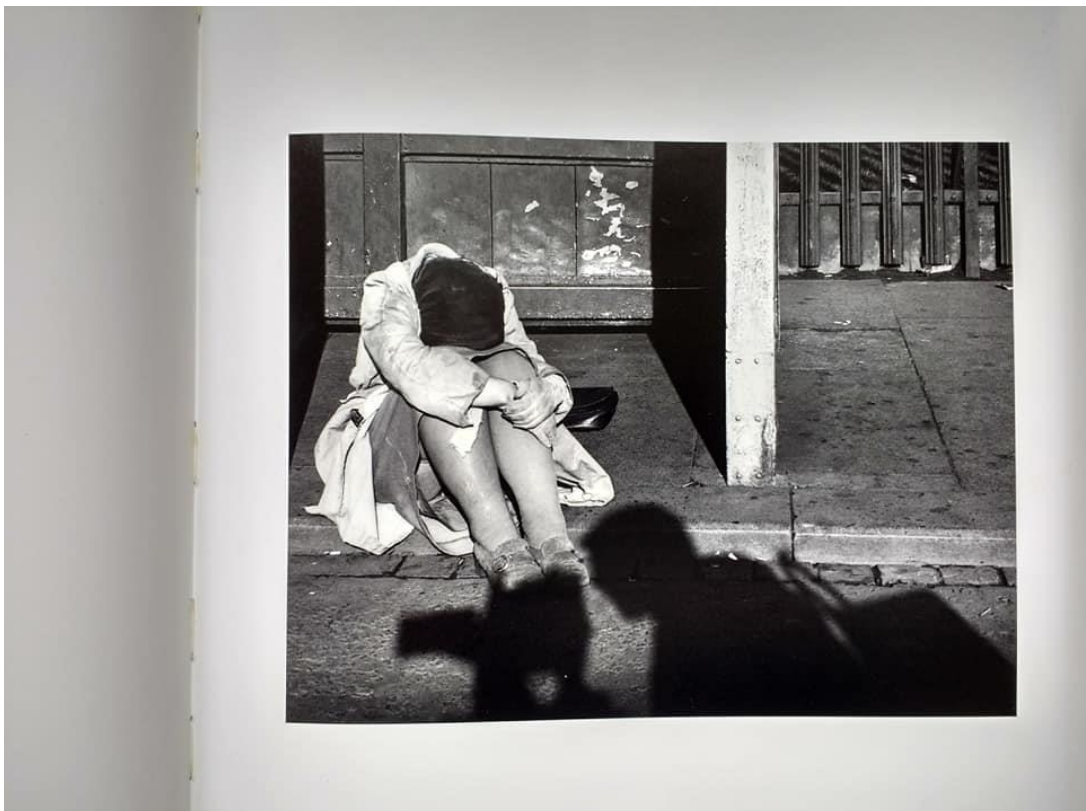


Figure 25. A destitute woman sitting on the floor, in front of a bus stop in *In Flagrante*. The first photograph in the sequence not only shows the destitution and despair of a woman whose old-fashioned clothes suggests she is from an older generation but also draws attention to Killip the photographer (and his role in the photographs we see in the book) through the silhouette of him holding his camera. Photo: author.

The destitution of this women is obviously something Killip wants to leave in the mind of the viewer but also by the inclusion of himself, the

photographer, he appears to want to reinforce the presence and role of the photographer within the photobook.

The first photograph in the sequence which includes Killip's shadow, also follows a statement by Killip on the page before, in which he makes the ethics of his role as photographer and witness of other peoples' lives clear:

To the people in these photographs I am superfluous, my life does not depend upon their struggle, only my hopes. [...] This is a subjective book about my time in England. I take what isn't mine and I covet other peoples' lives. The photographs can tell you more about me than about what they describe.

(Killip, 1988: no page number)

In making this statement, it seems that Killip may have been influenced by James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous men* (1941). In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Agee foregrounds the ethics of documenting the lives of people less fortunate:

It seems to me curious, not to say obscene and thoroughly terrifying, that it could occur to an association of human beings drawn together through need and chance and for profit into a company, an organ of journalism, to pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings, an ignorant and helpless rural family, for the purpose of parading the nakedness, disadvantage and humiliation of these lives before another group of human beings.

(Agee, 1941:7)

The way in which Agee writes, Like Killip, arguably tells us much more about Agee and Evans than it does about their subjects. Agee also begins the written section of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* with a speech by King Lear which is made when he sees the wretched conditions of those living in a hovel:

'Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are, That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you From seasons such as these?

(Shakespeare, SCENE IV. The heath. Before a hovel: 1605)

Similarly, Killip uses a short poem by W. B Yeats before the title page - 'He wishes for the cloths of heaven' (1899), which mentions poverty: 'But I, being poor, have only my dreams'[...] Tread softly because you tread on my dreams' (Yeats in Killip, 1988: no page number). The poem is on the left-hand page, sitting opposite a photograph of a man painting a landscape on a dark and rocky beach. In placing poetry and a representation of painting opposite each other, Killip could be making a reference to the arts in general and to 'legitimate culture', which are usually only accessible to those from more privileged backgrounds. Those whose basic material needs have already been met, as opposed to the subjects of Killip's photographic essay who appear to live hand-to-mouth and have little time for "the finer things in life". It could also be read directly from the poem that even without money people have their kindness and humanity and the ability to dream. Killip could also be asking for viewers to 'tread softly' as we step on the dreams of those we see in the book. Or he could be suggesting that the documentary photographer needs to tread softly to avoid damaging his or her subjects.

In framing the photo sequence in this way, Killip encourages even more empathy with his subjects than would already be felt from looking at the photographs alone, yet the message behind his sequence of photographs is so unambiguous, that even without an essay, we would understand what the work is about. Like Reas and Graham (with essays written by other people), yet with more economy, in Killip's short introduction, he also contextualises the socio-economic position of his subjects before the audience sees his photographs, and distils the essence of Thatcherism which does not value people or community and uses the market as a measure of everything:

The Objective History of England doesn't amount to much if you don't believe in it, and I don't, and I don't believe that anyone in these photographs does either as they face the reality of de-industrialisation in a system which regards their lives as disposable.

(Killip, 1988: no page number)

Like *The Last Resort*, in *In Flagrante* we see a mixture of an older generation of traditional working-class people - middle aged men in flat caps and middle-aged women in long coats and head scarfs, in contrast with the young – glue sniffers on a beach, punks at a concert and children living on a caravan site, playing and helping their parents to collect coal.

We also see a teenage boy sitting alone in front of a run-down looking house, we presume he may be unemployed and know that he is very poor because the fly of his trousers is held together by what appears to be many safety pins. His boots look very worn and he wears a hand knitted jumper and a dark overcoat, as if his clothes might have once belonged to an older person or have come from a charity shop. This image, combined with images of teenagers and young men sniffing glue on a beach and head banging at a punk concert, creates a sense that there are a lack of jobs and nothing for young people to do so they find their own ways to pass the time.

The people who appear the most depressed and downtrodden in *In Flagrante* are the older generation. This is reinforced by two photographs that sit opposite each other towards the end book. On the left we see what appears to be an old man sitting on a wall, his hands are keeping him steady and he holds a key in one hand. He wears a long coat and we can see that the stitching on one of the pockets is coming undone. We see that the laces in his black boots are too short, so they can only be laced through a couple of the boots' eyelets -barely enough to keep the boots on his feet. We presume the man is old because of his clothing and because his hands look wrinkled. Opposite the old man is another woman with a headscarf who appears to be sitting in a bus shelter. Her clothes look clean and smart and she wears a brooch and a scarf to protect her hair from the wind, but her head is bent right over, which could be a sign of very old age, but like the photographs of hunched over men in Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring*, the photograph creates the impression of someone who is very depressed. By pairing these photographs, it seems clear that Killip wants us to understand how bad things have become for the older generation within this period.

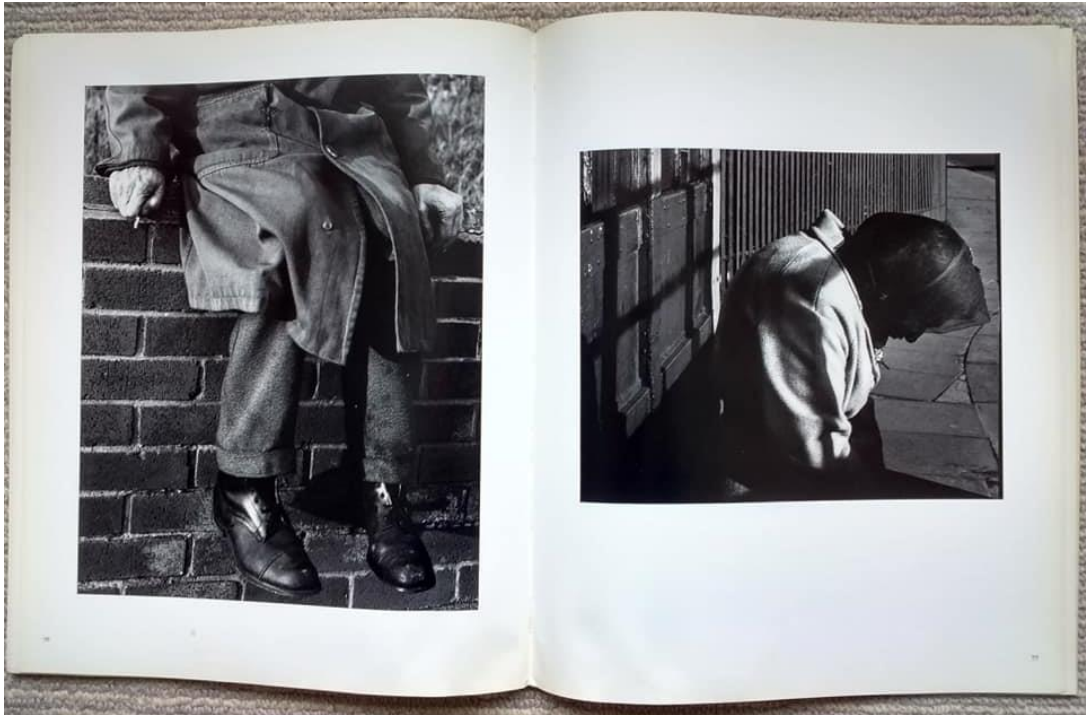


Figure 26. A pair of photographs that feature older individuals in *In Flagrante*. The people who look most downtrodden and despairing in *In Flagrante* are the older generation. Photo: author.

Following this pair of images, we see another pair of images taken on a beach. On the left, a middle aged, old-fashioned looking couple sit smoking on some rocks. The man wears a dark suit and a flat cap, and the woman wears a headscarf and a long, striped, woollen coat. On the right, is a close-up of abject detritus washed up on the beach – a condom, a broken glass, a sanitary towel, a chicken bone and a dog poo sit amongst shells and rocks. This pairing appears to be a comment on the destruction of an older way of life by the new and about the carelessness and selfishness of people. Or perhaps given the old rusty barrel behind the couple, Killip simply wanted to make the viewer aware of just how horrible the beach was where the couple sat – akin to Parr showing the rubbish in the water where people bathed on hot days in New Brighton.

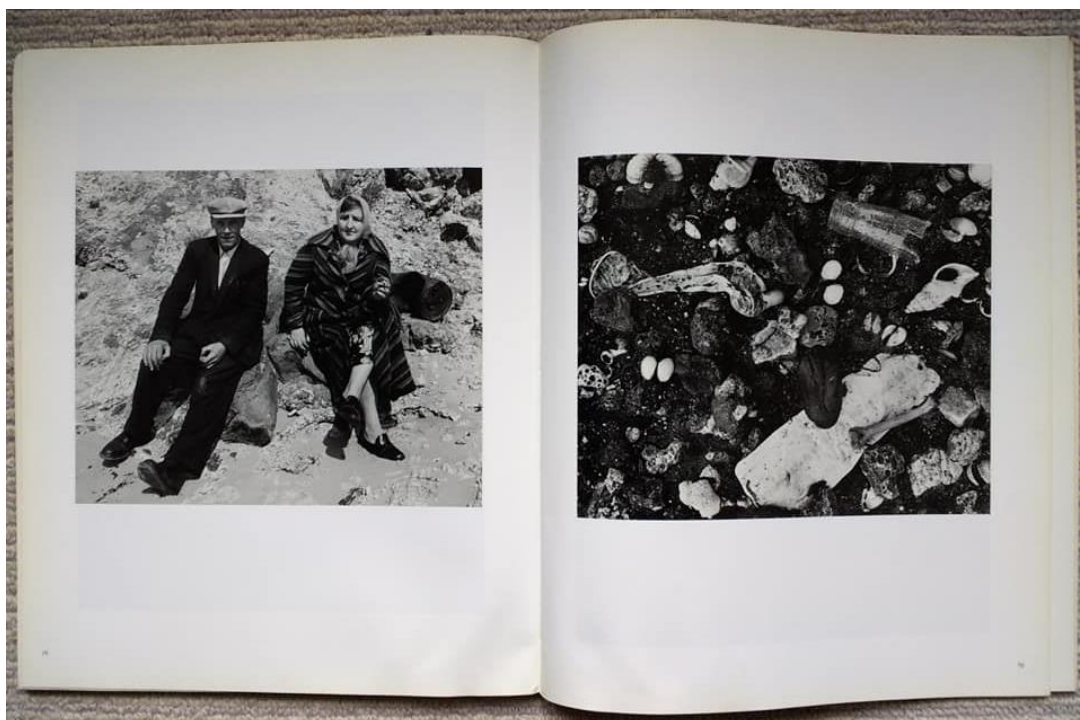


Figure 27. A pair of photographs of a man and woman sitting on some rocks on a beach and a close-up of waste washed onto the beach in *In Flagrate*. The pairing of a photograph of a middle-aged couple with an abject close-up of domestic waste washed up on the beach seems to suggest a loss of respect and the destruction of a way of life. Photo: author.

Killip is the only photographer amongst those analysed, whose aim appears to be to draw attention to the destruction of the traditional working-class and working-class communities. He is the only photographer to point towards the governmental structures which have brought it about within his photographs.

Midway through the book, we see a double page spread of an image of civic robes on display which include large labels which read - 'MAYOR'S ROBE - JARROW', 'MACE BEARER'S ROBE' and 'MAYOR'S ROBE - SOUTH SHEILDS'. This is followed on the next pages by a photograph of families on a protest march - in the centre of the image, a big placard which conceals the face of the young woman carrying it, reads 'Socialist Worker Victory to the Miners Stop the Tory attack'. Just behind her is a comical looking man, who despite wearing a plastic police helmet and a pig mask concealing the upper part of his face, looks deadly serious as he stares directly at the viewer. The badge on his coat reads 'Dig Deep for the Miners'. To his left stands an older



woman with a boy pushing a push chair containing a bag. It is clear from the photograph that this is a protest which is supported by the community. By placing this political photograph after the photograph of the mayoral costumes, we can presume that Killip wants us to make a connection between the two.

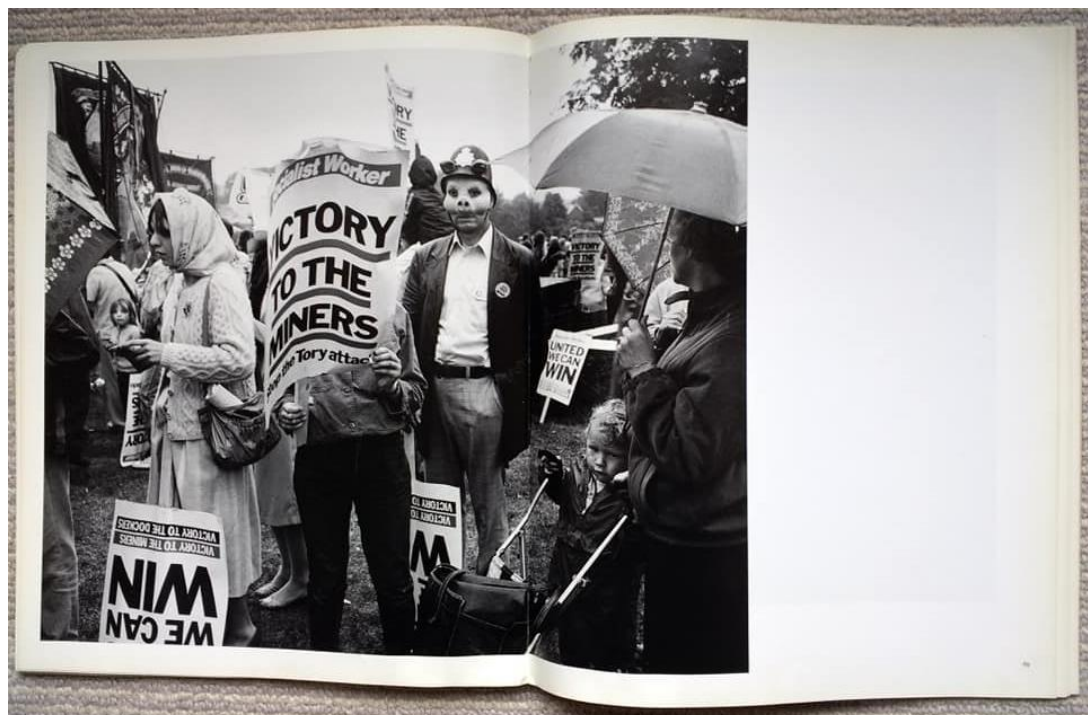
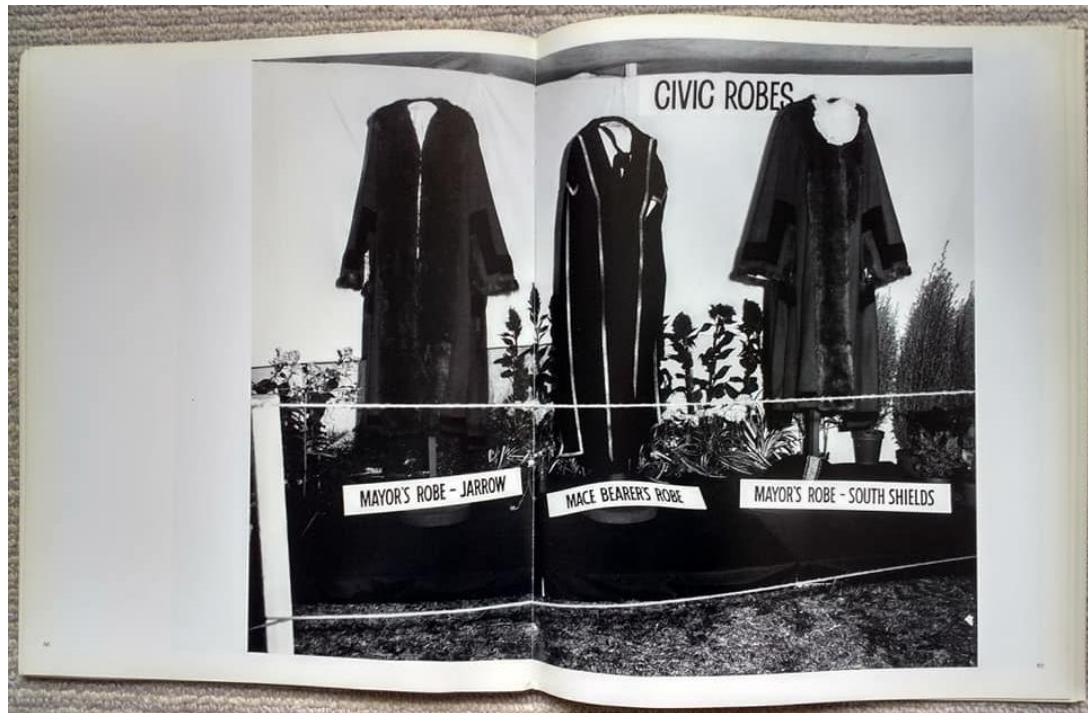


Figure 28. A pair of photographs that each take up nearly two pages. One features mayoral robes and the other, a march for the miner's strike in *In Flagrante*. Killip's

sequencing of these photographs in *In Flagrante* suggests that he wants to make a connection in the viewers mind between the pomp and ceremony of local politics and the bigger picture of the Miners' Strike. The Mayoral robes can be read as a symbol of power and privilege. Photo: author.

Following this image are a pair of photographs that sit on pages opposite each other. The photograph on the left features a boy from the gypsy encampment lying on a hill of coal – the boy looks relaxed and the image is tranquil. In contrast, in the right-hand photograph we see the threat of violence. A man stands casually, leaning in the doorway of his terraced house, holding a cup of tea and a cigarette, while a group of policemen stand just a meter away from him, at the side of his house. They are wearing full riot gear with plastic shields. The policemen look at the viewer, some have smiles on their faces. This creates a sense of an inevitability about what is happening, as if they are all playing a role that none are taking too seriously. The man in the doorway is obviously poor – his trousers are heavily stained, and he wears a black and white patterned, zip up cardigan and some dark slippers. He looks relaxed and unfazed by the intimidating presence of the policemen, whose faces are partly concealed by their helmets. The fact some of the policemen are smiling gives the impression that they may be surrounding the man's home because they have been instructed to do so, not because they feel the man in the doorway is a real physical threat to them. Or they may well have presumed that Killip worked for a newspaper, because of the large press camera he was using to take the photograph.

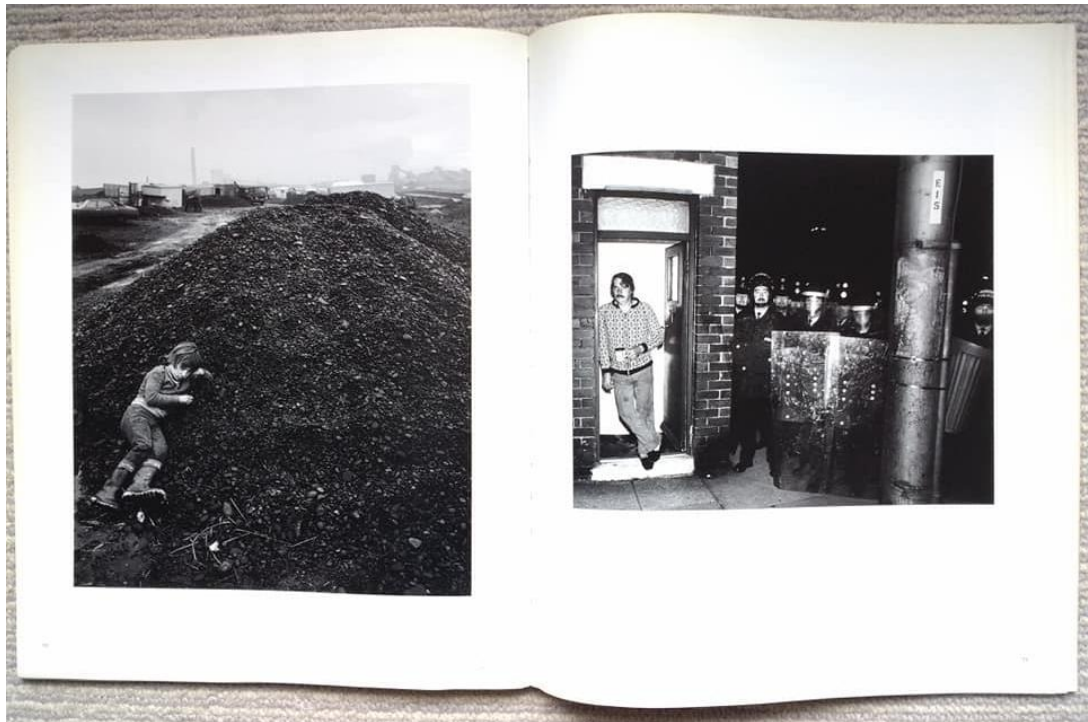


Figure 29. A pair of photographs, one of a boy on a hill of coal and the other of a man standing in the doorway of his home, surrounded by police in *In Flagranti*. The photograph of the boy on a heap of coal is tranquil in contrast to the other, which suggests potential violence in the form of the police men with helmets and riot shields. The pairing of the photographs suggests the man in the door way is a coal miner who may be under surveillance for being involved with flying pickets or other strike activity. Photo: author.

Much like the introductory essay in *The Last Resort*, in the essay that follows Killip's photographs, John Burger provides a history of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the place where most of Killip's photographs were taken. Burger describes its industry and community and provides an account of post-industrialism in the area and the effect it has had upon the working-classes. He echoes Killip's opening statement when he says, 'everything which constituted the loves of those living here is now being treated as irrelevant' (Berger, 1988:87). Alternating with paragraphs of Berger's essay are paragraphs of Sylvia Grant's evocative and moving essay, written in italics to visually separate it from Berger's. Grant describes her humiliating trips to the job centre which sound much like the job centres we see in *Beyond Caring*, and describes a sense of loss in the present conditions people find themselves in:

*Those men. I'll never forget those men, the ones whose fingers didn't resemble mine, the ones who cried to thank me for staying with them*

*as they smoked a cigarette, the ones who are on the bottom line of "for each according to his ability."*

(Grant in Killip, 1988:88)

Berger makes the connection between Thatcherism and the political system, and what is happening in Killip's photographs and reflects on the history of social documentary, whose practitioners were hopeful of bringing about change with their images. He notes that in contrast, Killip is much more realistic about what his photographs will achieve – he understands that 'a better future for the photographed is unlikely' (Berger, 1988:87).

Amongst all the images of misery and discomfort, we do see glimpses of happiness, predominately through the photographs that feature children and animals. We see a boy from the gypsy encampment sitting on the side of a hill, holding a frog and appearing lost in the moment. In another pair of photographs that sit on pages opposite each other, towards the end of the book, we see scenes of contentment. In the left-hand photograph, a teenage girl sits on a floral sofa, playing with a puppy. On the right, there is an intimate and moving photograph of a father with his hands around the waist of his daughter who he is kissing on the face. His daughter is smiling and touching his ear – obviously enjoying time with her dad, despite evidently not having much in terms of material possessions.

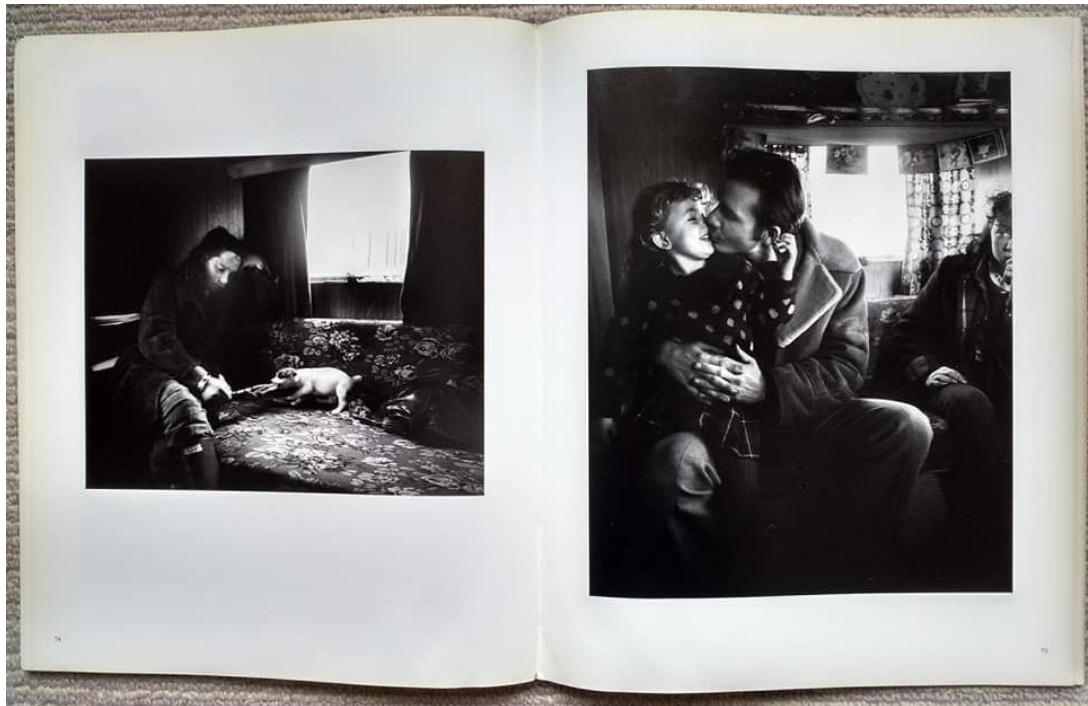


Figure 30. A pair of photographs taken inside caravans, one of a teenaged girl playing with a puppy on a sofa and the other of a man kissing his young, smiling daughter in *In Flagrante*. Glimpses of happiness in *In Flagrante* are predominately shown through children and animals. This pair of photographs show the love and affection between families living in caravans. Photo: author.

Overall, *In Flagrante* is very moving and encourages empathy with its subjects. This stands in stark contrast with the ironic approach that was encouraged by photographers like Martin Parr and promoted by the gallery system in the late 1980s, which is analysed by Clive Dilnot in his essay at the back of Killip's *Pirelli Work*. In his essay, Dilnot describes the publication of two photographs of *In flagrante* in the magazine *Aperture*'s 1988 issue, titled: *British Photography: Towards a Bigger Picture*, as 'appear[ing] almost as end-note embarrassments, valedictions for a project that-at least in the mind of the editors [...] has already passed into history' (Dilnot, 2006:68). According to Dilnot, *In Flagrante* in the late 1980s embarrassed the photography and art establishment – 'it embarrasses because in large part because the political and social-even cultural-moment for it seems to have passed' (Dilnot, 2016:69). 'What was emerging' according to Dilnot, 'what demanded representation-and urgently-in this other view, was not labor [sic] but the world that conservative politics and the market were together then

creating' (Dilnot, 2016:69). In the late 1980s it wasn't 'embodied dignity (or anything like it) that h[eld] centre stage but something much nearer to its opposite, a kind of flaunting of how far degradation can go-and it is those who deal most unsparingly with this new condition who now necessarily move to the fore' (Dilnot, 2016:69). For Dilnot, it is Martin Parr who is 'emblematic of these developments' (ibid, 2016:69). In the work of Parr, according to Dilnot, '[w]hat Parr touches on-and Killip cannot-are two conditions essential to the workings of the market: disengagement, or the removal of affect, and the erasure of history' (Dilnot, 2016:70).

The fact that Parr's work captures the particular structures of feeling brought about by Thatcherism, meant that although the work was politically unbeneficial to the subjects of his work at the time it was produced, *The Last Resort* is now very useful for understanding the structures of feelings that Thatcherism brought about and how this affected the market of the art world – i.e., which photographers did well out of it and which photographers fell out of favour.

## **Comparing the photobooks**

In this section I will analyse the seven British photobooks in relation to each other. The comparisons and contrasts already made in my analysis of individual books have helped to draw out the differences and nuances of each book and to understand their relative strengths and weaknesses in relation to representing class and experience. So now I will concentrate on exploring the strongest divisive element which emerged during my analysis – abjection.

### **The political uses of abjection when representing class**

One of the key elements that can affect all representations of the working-classes, whether it is in a newspaper, a documentary programme, a chat show, or in documentary photography, is the abject.

The term abjection derives from Latin – ‘abjectus’, which means ‘thrown or cast away’ (Collinsdictionary.com, no page number). Abjection is a psychological response to something rather than the quality of the thing itself, and so it can be culturally determined. The most basic example of this I can think of is the eating of animals and animal parts in different parts of the world. In Britain jellied eels and pig’s trotters are considered a delicacy by some, yet they would make most people retch (literarily cast out). As Julia Kristeva’s observes in her seminal book, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1941), ‘[f]ood loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection’ (Kristeva, 1982:2). It is not just food that provokes abjection, ‘[f]ilth, waste or dung’ (Kristeva, 1982:2) also has a similar effect, as do corpses – ‘[t]he corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life’ (Kristeva, 1982:4). Yet, it is not ‘lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection’ according to Kristeva, ‘but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules’ (ibid, 1982:4).

Abjection can be caused by the signifiers of class, whether it is working-class speech which is often considered as a debased form of the “legitimate”

speech of the dominant class (Charlesworth, 2000:220) and by other signifiers such as dress and behaviour. As Charlesworth rightly points out, 'the lives of working people take place through modes of comportment that are based on accommodation to symbolic hierarchies that mark them negatively' (ibid, 2000:220).

Abjection is political, as it can work against sympathetic readings of situations and environments that are often beyond peoples' control. As well documented by Imogen Tyler in *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (2013), abjection is often weaponised by governments for gaining support for welfare cuts and to scapegoat minority groups such as gypsies, immigrants and refugees. Therefore, any representation of the working-classes as abject has political consequences.

Like *Ray's a Laugh*, *Living Room* is apolitical in that it appears to offer no overt critical point of view. The poor material conditions of the families' homes in *Living Room*, are an inescapable fact and they do not appear to be the focus of Wallington's photographs. Yet in *Ray's a Laugh*, at times there is a focus on the dirtiness of the Billingham's home, through three double page spreads interspersed with photographs of the family. In one of the spreads we see a close-up, taken from a low position, of a dog licking the filthy kitchen floor, in another, we see a heavily stained kitchen wall and ripped wall paper behind an arching cat. In another, we see what looks like a close-up of a stained fridge door with a beetroot purple stain, still partly wet, dripping down past a cat magnet and two sentimental harlequin magnets.



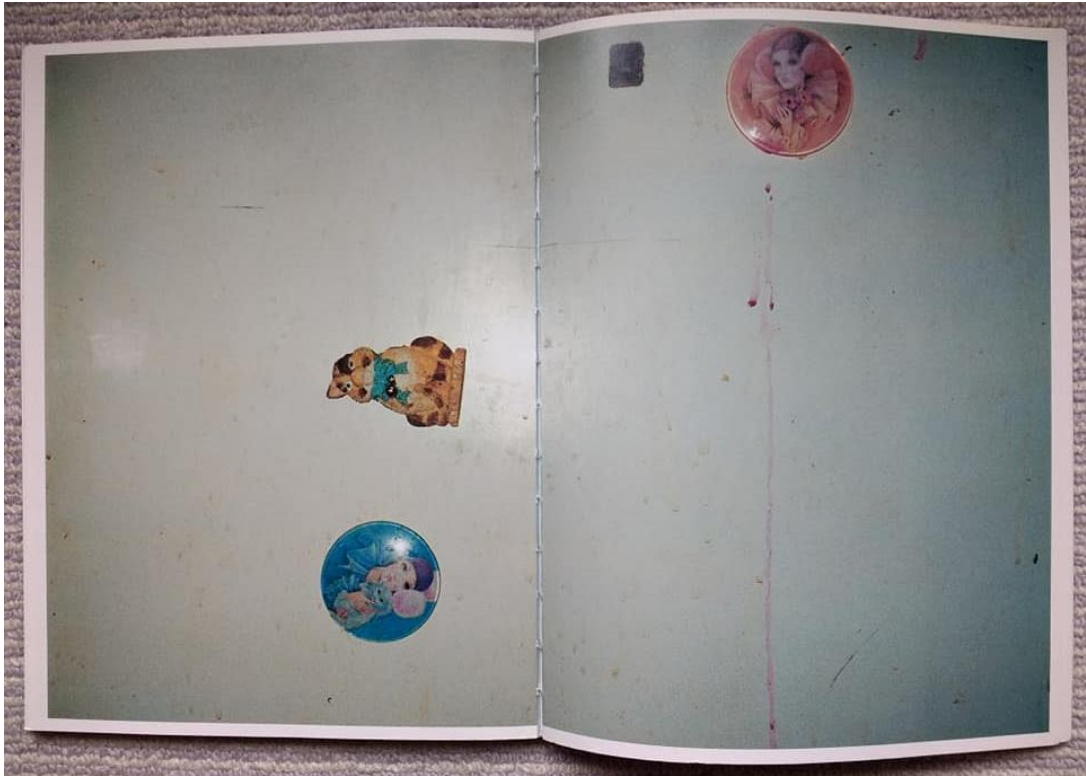


Figure 31. An abject dirty fridge door in *Ray's a Laugh*. Photo: author.

In this way *Ray's a Laugh* seems to revel in the abjection of the family, and there is nothing in Billingham's interviews or commentary about *Ray's a Laugh*, to tell us if those images were selected by Billingham or by Scalo, the books publisher. Combined with the photographs of Ray's drinking, Liz's smoking, her tattoos and nicotine stained teeth and nails (which we see in the close-up photograph of her feeding a kitten with a syringe), the two photographs of the aftermath of their physical fights, and with their excessive number of pets, the photographs in *Ray's a Laugh* appear to run the whole gamut of abjection.

*Living Room* does show dirty floors, messiness and worn out décor but it is much more focused on the personalities and the everyday routines of the families more than anything else. This is perhaps because the book features children and by their very nature and because of their lack of experience, children are more carefree and less aware of the aesthetics of their surroundings. Yet the same judgements that a reader might make about the Billingham's family could also be made about the families in *Living Room*.

It is worth contrasting the politics of the photographing of mess and bad décor in *Living Room* and *Ray's a Laugh* with Graham's photographing of mess and bad décor in social security and job centre waiting rooms, for a different purpose. One photograph in *Beyond Caring*, focuses on an empty can of Tenants beer and some cigarette stubs under some seats, yet most of his photographs show the mess on the floor in the background, simply because it is there, due to the volume of people coming and going. In the words of Graham, "[i]t was my deliberate intention to register the drab natures of these interiors, the limited spectrum of florescent lights, the dull, dour colour schemes of government design, punctuated only by garish formica DHSS seating or warning notices... It is as if each waiting room has been leached of colour, drained of hope and left with only a florescent flicker..." (Graham in Cotton, 2011: no page number).



Figure 32. A beer can and cigarette stumps under a chair in a waiting room in *Beyond Caring*. Graham's photographing of litter in *Beyond Caring* serves the political purpose of making visible the deliberate neglect of the spaces where benefits claimants and job seekers were made to wait for hours. Most of his photographs show the mess on the floor in the background, simply because it is there, due to the volume of people coming and going. Photo: author.

The waiting rooms are public spaces, so we are less likely to hold the people we see sitting waiting personally responsible for the mess we see, unlike the families in *Ray's a Laugh*, *Living Room* and in *The Last Resort*. The showing of this mess and drab decor in *Beyond Caring* serves the overt political purpose of the book, which its essays make very clear. This demonstrates how the use of colour for documentary photography is an important part of capturing the textures, aesthetics and misery of everyday life for some people. Drab décor and florescent lighting make a bad situation feel worse and more oppressive, and to fully understand the experience of being in a place, colour photography is ideal for showing this sensory dimension of experience. Yet, this is not to say that black and white photography cannot achieve the same thing – as Killip's close-up on a beach of a washed up used condom, sanitary towel and other abject litter, demonstrates. If the same photograph was taken in colour, the abjection most likely would have been

greater. You only need to think about Keith Arnatt's *Pictures from a Rubbish Tip* (1988-89) – a series of five colour close-up photographs of chicken bones and other waste, which are both deeply disgusting and because of their colours, aesthetically pleasing, to understand what is meant by this.



Figure 33. *Pictures from a Rubbish Tip* (1988-89). One of Keith Arnatt's abject yet beautiful photographs of waste from a rubbish dump. From the *Pictures from a Rubbish Tip* (1988-89) series. Photo: author.

It is an important point to consider, that perhaps because Killip's photographs in *In Flagante* are in black and white, that we are less distracted by the abject in his work and more focused on the signs of poverty and distress.

In *The Last Resort* there is a lot of litter, as Parr deliberately chose to photograph New Brighton when it was at its busiest and dirtiest. In seven of his forty photographs we see people surrounded by piles of litter, including a boy dipping his feet into the water of the marine lake in which it is hard to



see the water beyond all the rubbish that has been tossed into it. This creates an impression that perhaps the subjects of the work don't care or are too stupid to care about their surroundings and may be responsible for some of the litter we see flowing out of bins or floating on the marine lake. This also contributes to the feeling that Parr is critiquing the subjects of his photobook rather than their individual circumstances, despite what his political intentions may be.



Figure 34. An old couple eating chips near an overflowing rubbish bin in *The Last Resort*. One of seven photographs in *The Last resort* (1986) in which people are surrounded by litter. Photo: author.

By making these comparisons we can conclude that colour and black and white each offer a way of focusing on different aspects of experience – colour perhaps offers a more sensory experience yet at the same time risks focusing the viewers' attention on the abject, which can work for or against the political intentions of the work (if there are any). Black and white photography, because of the way it rids the photograph of what could be

described as distracting details, and in doing so, softens abjection, offers perhaps, a more symbolic, metaphysical sense of experience.

### **How the British photobooks have informed and influenced my practice**

*Ray's a Laugh* has significantly influenced my photo zine practice, as it provided a model for me to work towards and against. Understanding how the abjection in *Ray's a Laugh* is problematic, in that it provokes disgust and therefore works against garnering sympathy for its subjects, but at the same time, necessarily reveals the extent of their poverty, demonstrates to me how complex the representation of class and poverty is.

Influenced by *Ray's a Laugh* and my analysis of British photobooks, I too photographed the material conditions of working-class lives for *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*, the final photo zine that was produced as part of the research process. The rubbish in *The Last Resort* and the filth and messiness of the Billingham's overcrowded flat and the appearances and disorderly behaviour of Liz and Ray, led to an understanding of the visceral reaction that abjection causes, which may result in a prejudicial response to poverty.

To avoid the risk of victim blaming, and misunderstandings of the causes of poverty, which cannot always be avoided, one way of getting around this is to focus attention on the material conditions of people lives rather than on the people themselves. This has similarities with the approach taken by Martha Rosler, for *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-1975). Rosler photographed empty shop doorways along the Bowery, a famous neighbourhood in New York where homeless alcoholics would shelter and displayed the prints alongside euphemistic words for drunkenness in a book and on a gallery wall. In the words of Rosler, [t]here are no stolen images in this book; what could you learn from them that you didn't already know?' (Rosler, 2004:191). Through this statement, she is referring to documentary photographs taken without consent (stolen) and that nothing new can be learnt by taking photographs of the homeless

drunks that hang around the Bowery. 'Bums', she argues, 'may be a surreptitious metaphor for the "lower class" but they are not to be confused with a social understanding of the "working class" (ibid, 2004:191).

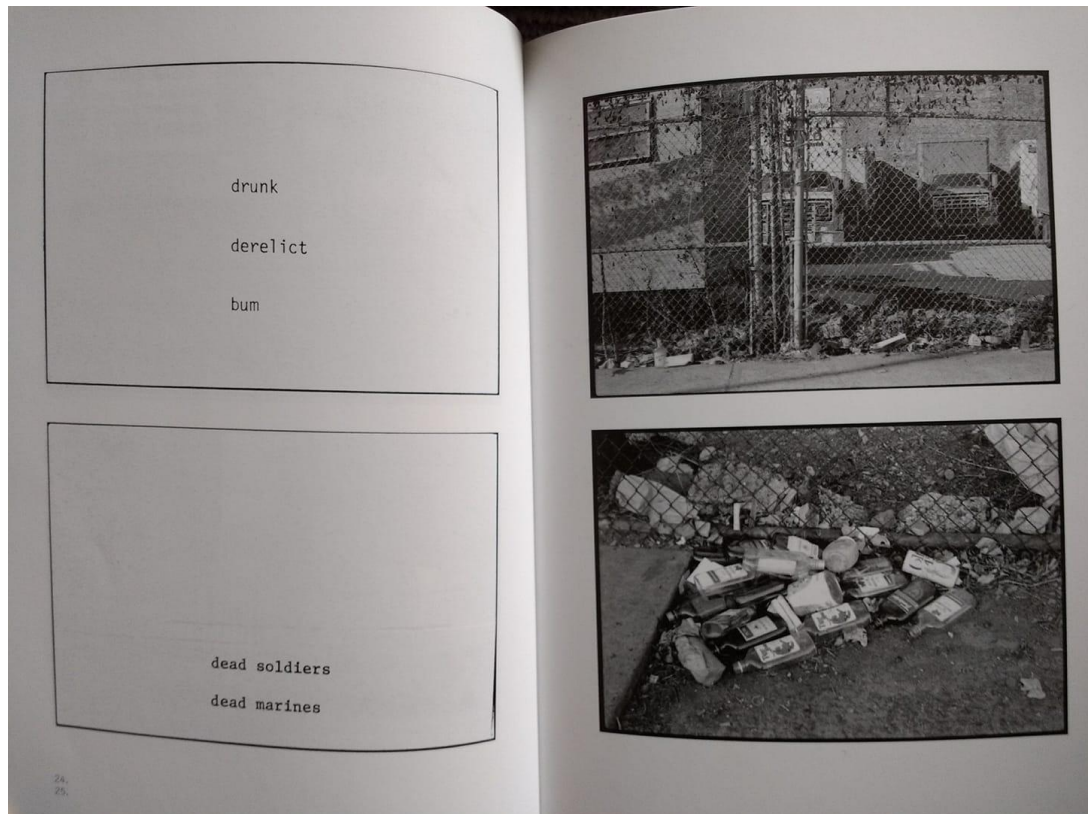


Figure 35. *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-1975). Martha Rosler paired photographs of shop doorways and empty bottles with euphemisms for being drunk to highlight the inadequacy of documentary photography and language to represent the truth of the social reality of the alcoholics and homeless people who hung around the Bowery. Photo: author.

By photographing my deceased father-in-law's bedroom for *He Served his Time at Cammell Lairds*, I felt more could be said about my his and mother-in-law's life through images of his personal environment and material possessions. My father-in-law, like Ray, was also 'a laugh' and I was close to him. He was not an alcoholic, but he did have heated arguments with my-mother-in-law, which at times I witnessed, and we now understand his behaviour as being partly to do with the beginnings of his dementia. Like Ray, my father-in-law, who lived in Birkenhead all his life, lost his job working at a factory (Vauxhalls) in the 1980s and his family struggled, but

unlike Ray, after a period of unemployment, my father-in-law did find work again and he didn't lose his home. My in-laws continued to live like paupers, long after their impoverishment, because the thriftiness that was adopted because of necessity, was deeply ingrained in their habitus.

As already noted, the titles of photobooks are very important, as they play a significant role in setting the tone of the work, helping to create a narrative in the mind of the viewer, and an understanding of the theme.

Through the title of *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*, I make a connection between the material conditions that are seen within the photographs and the autobiographical and the political. Through the title I point towards a myriad of things. Cammell Laird's ship yard has its own history and set of associations, but within the title it also stands metonymically for the decline of manufacturing and traditional working-class jobs. Apprenticeships also have their own set of associations which have changed because of Thatcherism.

As Savage points out, apprenticeships were 'the key institutional process by which boys became both men and skilled workers and thereby members of the working class' (Savage, 2000:128-129). But by the late 1960s this culture began to decline and by the late 1970s and 1980s, apprenticeships 'fell from 2.5 percent in 1970 to just over 1 per cent in 1990' (Savage, 2000:134). The new apprenticeships that replaced them in the 1990s were a bureaucratic form of training, with 'little role for independent manual worker input' (ibid, 2000:134).

The phrase 'serving time', has associations with not only the time invested in learning a trade but also with its other association - serving time in prison as a punishment, of restricted freedom and of doing something that is not of your own choosing, and time (life time) being lost. Cammell Laird's is not only a symbol of industrial decline and of Thatcher's weakening of the working-classes through her attacks on trade unions but is also representative of a generation of working-class men, who did similar jobs,



earned similar wages, and struggled to support their families in a similar way. *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*, is a way of making one man's life and struggle stand for the lives of the working-classes affected by Thatcherism, whilst at the same time paying tribute to that struggle, which would otherwise be lost to history.

Within my own practice I have always been mindful of the ethics of what I was doing and as noted, there were things I chose not to photograph such as my father-in-law when his dementia progressed to its later stages. *Ray's a Laugh* has helped me to think about the politics of representation and how important it is to photograph some things but perhaps not others. Had Billingham been more concerned about ethics, he may have chosen not to show the fights between his mother and father and his father's alcoholism, but that would not have been a true representation of the lives of his family or their under-narrated experiences. And as noted, Billingham did not intend to make a photobook, or to display his photographs in an art gallery, until he met Julian Germain and Michael Collins.

*Ray's a Laugh* has also been important for demonstrating to me that stains on walls, old furniture and ugly décor can reveal much about the cultural and economic capital of working-class individuals, as has *Beyond Caring*, in its use of colour to show the material conditions of working-class lives. What is sensational in *Ray's a Laugh* – the squalor of the Billingham's home, becomes in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*, a focus on not only the material conditions that an individual - my father-in-law, spent time alone in, but also about what he had to show for a lifetime of skilled, manual work. The title, in combination with the photographs, also metonymically draws attention to what men from similar backgrounds may also have to show for their lifetimes of manual labour. And unlike *Ray's a Laugh*, the material conditions of my father-in-law's life cannot be mistakenly blamed on addiction or character flaws.

*Living Room* has been influential to my own practice, in terms of thinking about how it is not necessary to always show the most extreme examples of

poverty amongst working-class people. Making visible the lives of working-class people who are not living in extreme poverty is equally worthy of attention and avoids some of the pitfalls of sensationalism that photographers can fall into.

Repetition of motifs in photobooks, such as photographs of Ray, drunk, in *Ray's a Laugh*, the photographs of people hunched over in *Beyond Caring* and the photographs containing rubbish in *The Last Resort*, which all reinforce an idea, is one that I have employed in my own work. In *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must Be Done*, three photographs of my father-in-law napping appear in the sequence of photographs, to create an impression in the viewers mind that this is something he did often throughout the holiday.

*Pirelli Work* has been influential to my practice in terms of thinking about distribution. Veronesi, the managing director of Pirelli wanted a publication of the photographs to be distributed to the workers, but this was not possible, yet conceptually it is an important part of understanding the context of the work and the value placed on the subjects of the work (Killip, 2006:62-63). This is much like the value I place on the subjects of the photo zine practice, for whom, when possible (when I can afford it), I give copies of the photo zines to. I regard the photo zines as a form of activism (although I realise it's a very limited activism), in that they allow their subjects to see their lives in a wider socio-economic and historical context, as other than to themselves, and to see their lives as worthy of art.

### **What I discovered from analysing the British photobooks and how it was useful for developing my practice**

Through understanding how the seven British photobooks collectively provide a more totalised picture of British society, affected by the Thatcherite acceleration of post-industrialism, alongside the television programme *The Wire*, and Craig Atkinson's photobook publishing project, *Café Royal Books*, which I will discuss in my analysis of my practice, has

helped me to understand how the production of many photobooks about different aspects of a single subject, can help to build up a more in depth understanding of that subject. In much the same way that James Agee is able to tell us in exhaustive detail, everything there was to know about the tenant families he and Evans lived with, by closely analysing different aspects of their lives under separate sections in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Each photobook is made up of single parts – individual photographs, which when sequenced, add up to a whole, and each photobook about a different aspect of a single subject, in my case – British working-class practices, can add up to a whole or a more total picture of a subject.

To my knowledge, the seven British photobooks are the best examples of the representation of British working-class life within the Thatcher period in the photobook, so to be able to narrow down these key examples and to understand every aspect of them, is to understand how photobooks have been used to represent working-class lives, and how this can be built upon.

By breaking down the different elements of the photobooks and comparing them, and by analysing the technical aspects of taking the photographs, such as the type of camera used, the use of flash or natural light etc, I was able to understand the influence of typeface, book design, inclusion or exclusion of captions and essays and how all of this all feeds into how the photographs are read, and how British working-class lives are represented.

I came to understand, that although the essays in the photobooks provide background information, and in many cases, reinforce the message of the photographic sequence, and narrow down the range of possible readings, that the strength of the photographs and their sequencing means that the photobooks would not suffer if they did not contain essays. Indeed, many people flick through photobooks and may not even read or care about the accompanying essays, and when photobooks are discussed, the writers of the essays that accompany the photographs are barely considered or

mentioned. There are exceptions outside of these examples, but this tends to be because of a genuine collaboration and partnership between writer and photographer, such as between James Agee and Walker Evans, for *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), and between John Berger and Jean Mohr for *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor* (1967) and *A Seventh Man* (1975). In these examples, the writing is much more foregrounded and has an equal, if not more important role. Indeed, if it were not for Evans's photographs being given their own chapter at the beginning of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, and if Agee didn't include his account of the role of Evans in his writing, then Evans's photographs could be easily be dismissed by a casual observer as illustrations for Agee's text. For less attentive readers, this might still be the case.

The impression given by the seven British photobooks analysed, is that the photographers worked on their own projects and then only asked writers to produce an essay once their photobooks were in production. Essays can be considered as a short cut for dealing with the difficulties of representing ideas through photographs. By deciding not to use an essay, it makes the producer work harder to consider different ways of communicating ideas, without resorting to text. By not providing an essay, the photobook practitioner forces the viewer to work harder to understand the meaning of the photographs and their sequences, the viewer must spend more time searching for clues, and this prevents photographs being read as mere illustrations. It must be noted that a disadvantage of this could be the potential loss of audience, as some viewers could find a lack of accompanying information confusing and frustrating. Understanding all of this led to my own decision to exclude essays from my own practice. But this does not mean I would rule out the inclusion of essays from my practice in the future. Analysing the photobooks has also led me to me wanting to work in the future in close collaboration with sociologists, anthropologists and/or writers of fiction or poetry to produce a photobook or several photobooks about working-class life.

Having discussed the way in which the British photobooks analysed have influenced my practice, I will now move on to an analysis of my practice.

## Part III: An Analysis of the Photo Zine Practice

### Introduction

The aim of the photo zine practice is to represent something of the lived experience of class, through the photographing of a range of working-class practices.

Mike Savage proposes that 'class identities are to be found in practices and accounts of practices' (Savage in Reay, 2005:912). Diane Reay extends this idea by proposing that class identities are also 'found in how individuals think and feel about those practices' and that 'it is class thinking and feeling that generates class practices' (Reay, 2005:912). Therefore, the argument underpinning my practice is that class identity can be made visible by photobooks about class practices.

Some of the thoughts and feelings Reay is specifically referring to, which are part of 'the psychic landscape of class', are the 'feelings of ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognition, abjection and the markings of taste' (Reay, 2005:911), which were expressed by working-class subjects that she interviewed in educational settings. Although these thoughts and feelings are internal, my argument is that they can be read externally in the behaviour, body language and facial expressions of working-class subjects and this in turn can be captured and/or represented by the photograph. One of the best examples of this I can think of is Bill Brandt's *Parlourmaid and Underparlourmaid ready to serve dinner* (1936) (Fig 3, p153), which appeared in Brandt's photobook *The English at Home* (1936) – a photobook about English society and the class system in which he pairs photographs of the upper-classes with photographs of the working-classes to underscore their differences.



Figure 36. Bill Brandt, *Parlourmaid and under-parlourmaid ready to serve dinner*, 1932; gelatin silver print, 15 1/8 in. x 13 11/16 in. (38.42 cm x 34.77 cm); Collection SFMOMA, Gift of Louise Dahl Wolfe in memory of Elizabeth Dahl; © Estate of Bill Brandt. <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/79.158>.

In *Parlourmaid and Underparlourmaid ready to serve dinner*, two parlour maids wearing white pinafores and matching hats, stand at the end of a dining table with their arms folded behind their backs and gaze in the same direction towards the right of the frame, at what we presume are their employers. Through their stiff bodies and the stern expression on the older Parlourmaid's face, we can read in the photograph all the ambivalent feelings of class that Reay describes, feelings of pride and resentment, inferiority and superiority and visceral aversion.

As viewers, we automatically relate the expressions and body language of the parlourmaids to their environment and our interpretation of the photograph is based upon our understanding of their job roles and status, and our own lived experience. This interpretation is also reinforced by the knowledge that the photograph appears in a photobook about the English class system. The photograph can be read as actually providing an insight into the Parlourmaid's thoughts, or as just our interpretation of what she may have been thinking and feeling.

*Parlourmaid and Underparlourmaid ready to serve dinner* (1936) not only makes visible Reay's 'psychic landscape of class' but also embodies Roberts's argument about photography's 'productive capacity for violation' (Roberts, 2014:1) – the way that photography is able to disclose that which prefers not to be disclosed, the 'power relations and material interests' which violation 'is itself embedded in' and that which 'social appearances hide' – 'division, hierarchy, and exclusion' (Roberts, 2014:2).

This is not to make a claim that the eight photo zines I produced for the practice element of the research capture the ambivalent thoughts and feelings that are part of working-class identity, which Brandt has made visible, but rather, to highlight the potential of photographs and photobooks to do so. The psychic landscape of class is complex, and these complexities are part of what makes photographs of, and photobooks about the working-classes so interesting.

It is important to note that that like other photographs taken by Brandt, *Parlourmaid and Underparlourmaid* was staged by Brandt using people he knew. At least one of the parlourmaids, the head parlourmaid 'who went by the name of Pratt' (Campany, 2006:5), was known to Brandt. Yet the staging of the photograph does not mean it is a work of fiction, in the sense that the reason Brandt was acquainted with Pratt was because she was the parlourmaid of two residencies owned by his uncle. According to Campany, the reason Brandt wanted to photograph her was because 'it seems he sensed right away that Pratt would make for an interesting subject'



(Campany, 2006: no page number). Which indeed she did. Like the photo zines produced for the practice element of my research, personal connections and serendipity also played a significant role in the creation of Brandt's documentary photography and as Campany observes, Brandt's apparent 'shift from documentarist to artist' (in later years he moved away from documentary to surrealism), was not as big a shift as it appeared. '[T]here could never be any simple distinction between his artistry and his documentary description. The two are inextricable and give us no clear answers. And in the end these tensions are at the heart of his work and its success' (Campany, 2006:8). In terms of my own practice, having trained as a fine artist, I consider myself to be an artist making photo zines in the documentary mode rather than a photographer. I say this not because I consider fine art to be somehow superior to documentary photography (as it has been seen historically) or as completely separate from documentary, but simply because of the many years I've spent training as a fine artist (and my lack of photographic training) and how that influences all of the decisions made when taking photographs and editing them together into a book form.

My photobooks focus on working-class practices and represent the main areas of working-class life: family, relationships, work, leisure and to a lesser extent – formal politics. Three are about work, including one that is also indirectly about relationships, family and leisure, four are about leisure and family and one is about politics. Both *Home Baked* and *Phil Manion North End Bakers* feature photographs taken in bakeries in the north of Liverpool and are about work. *Home Baked* is also partly about the routine of match days and football – a sport associated with the working-classes. *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* features a sequence of photographs of my late father-in-law's bedroom and is metonymically about work and family. *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is about a rally held for Jeremy Corbyn (the leader of the Labour Party) in the Liner hotel in Liverpool, and is about politics. *Skeggy, Funland* and *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must Be Done*, are about caravan holidays and day trips to seaside resorts, and *Lavinia's Christmas Party* is about a Christmas party

held in a sports centre, so collectively all four photobooks are about leisure and family.

Practical considerations, such as being able to gain permission to take photographs and access to places and people, and my own personal relationship with the subjects of the photographs, affected the situations I was able to obtain access to and photograph. I began the research with a clear idea about which aspects of working-class life I wanted to make photobooks about: work, family and leisure, yet serendipity played an important role, in that many of the photo zine projects developed organically from opportunities that came about through the people I knew. For example, I was able to gain access to take photographs in Phil Manion's bakery through my mother's neighbour and best friend Sue, an employee of the bakery who I have known and have been close to since I was a child. The opportunity to take photographs of a children's Christmas party – *Lavinia's Christmas Party* also came about through my friendship with Sue. Lavinia is a neighbour of Sue's mother Dolly (whom I am also close to) and it was because of my daughter's visits to Dolly with Sue, that we received an invitation to the party. In this way, my own working-class upbringing and so called "insider" status, directly impacted on the production process of the photo zines.

I also realised relatively early in the research, that although I risked being perceived as self-indulgent, photographing members of my own family was a way for me to record the most intimate dimensions of working-class life, in a way I would otherwise have found difficult to achieve.

When the eight photobooks are viewed as a collection, a more comprehensive, multifaceted representation of working-class experience is created in the mind of the viewer than the viewing of one of the photobooks would be able to achieve alone. This is much like how the seven British photobooks that were analysed in section two collectively provide a deeper insight into the socio-economic shifts brought about or accelerated by Thatcherism, than a single photobook produced within the same period

could achieve alone. My photo zines can only be an incomplete snapshot of the lives of a specific group of people. They cannot possibly represent the wide range of experiences of all working-class people, but they do address what I consider to be the most important, interconnected and overlapping areas of working-class life – work, family, leisure and to a lesser extent, formal politics.

### **The influence of the American crime drama, *The Wire* (2002 – 2008)**

The idea for creating a comprehensive picture of working-class life by photographing a range of class practices initially came from my memories of watching the US crime drama television series *The Wire* (2002 – 2008). In *The Wire*, key interlinking institutions of society (and capitalism) – or what Karl Marx termed the 'superstructure' (1857), are investigated by each of the seasons, through the narrative device of 'following the money' (La Berge, 2010:549), to create a total picture of how capitalism functions in society: the illegal drugs trade, the seaport system (with a focus on trade unions and working-class politics), the city, government and bureaucracy, education and schools, and the print news media.

Although *The Wire* is specifically about the City of Baltimore in the USA, the TV series can be read as a generalised critique of capitalism, America and society, in much the same way that that my photo zine *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is intended to be read as a generalised critique of the impact of Thatcherism on a whole generation of men, even though the photographs focus on the specific material conditions of one man's life.

Leigh Claire La Berge proposes that 'in its entirety', *The Wire* 'demonstrates how realism is always economic realism', (La Berge, 2010:548). Realism, according to La Berge, 'must always be economic realism in that capital itself is what is most obfuscated' (La Berge, 2010:555), and this is why, she argues, that '[p]overty has long been a site of realist fixation because it is what is most ideologically disavowed within capitalism' (ibid, 2010:555).

Indeed, if we consider the British photobooks analysed in the last section in La Berge's terms, then underpinning all of them, and at the same time obfuscated, is capital, and this is what has proven so difficult within my own practice to show directly. Only the effects of capitalism on the lives of the working-classes can be shown, and even then, it is difficult to communicate through photographs alone without a supporting essay or captions. As my photo zines do not include essays or captions, the only way that I could draw attention to the financial aspect of working-class life and experience was through the titles, and even this I could only allude to indirectly in two of them. The title *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is my attempt to make the connection between the low income and low rewards generated by manual labour and working-class employment in general, which impacts on the materiality, aesthetics and quality of working-class lives. The title *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is my attempt to make the connection between having to clean on the last day of the holiday, which the photobook is about, and the anxiety about money or a lack of money, which leads working-class individuals to try to "cut corners", and do things "on the cheap". This taste for necessity effects every dimension of working-class life - even holidays when people are meant to be relaxed and carefree. This is not to say that this is the same for all working-class individuals. Some may react to the taste for necessity by spending excessively on holiday to compensate for penny pinching at home during the rest of the year, and they may even go into debt to do so. But the essential point being made is that the relationship that all classes have to the economy effects the most intimate dimensions of their lives, and in ways that most people may not even be conscious of.

### **The photobook and the realist novel**

Each of the eight photobooks could also be read as individual chapters in a realist novel about British working-class life. Terry Eagleton's description of the novel could just as easily be used to describe the extent of what

photobooks can be used to investigate and to represent, and why they are so well suited to exploring the complexity of working-class lives:

The novel is a mighty melting pot, a mongrel among literary thoroughbreds. There seems to be nothing it cannot do. It can investigate a single human consciousness for eight hundred pages. Or it can recount the adventures of an onion, chart the history of a family over six generations, or recreate the Napoleonic wars.

(Terry Eagleton, 2005: 1-2)

You only need to flick through Gerry Badger and Martin Parr's three volumes of *The History of the Photobook* (2004, 2006, 2014) to appreciate the wide range of uses the photobook has been put to. From the documentation of algae, in what is agreed by most to be the first ever photobook - Anna Atkin's *Photographs of British Algae: Cynotype Impressions* (1843-1853) (2004:20-21), various types of bread in Owen Simmons's *The Book of Bread* (1903) (2004:56), and gas fires and milk in Ed Ruscha's *Various Small Fires: and Milk* (1964) (2006:140), to the production of a children's book - Emmanuel Sougez's *Regarde! (Look!)* (1932) (2004:102). From dogging in Tokyo parks - Kohei Yoshiyuki's *Document Kouen (Document Park)* (1980) (2006:296-297), to photobooks about solitude - Dave Heath's *A Dialogue With Solitude* (1965) (2006:104), apartheid - David Goldblatt's *In Boksburg* (1982) (2006:114-115), lynching - James Allen's *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (2000) (2006:230), the Vietnam war, Philp Jones Griffiths' *Vietnam Inc.* (1971) (2006:250-251), and the moon - James Nasmyth and James Carpenter's *The Moon: Considered as a Planet, a World, and a Satellite* (1874) (2004:35). Indeed, there seems to be nothing that the photobook cannot represent.

Within the novel can be found 'poetry and dramatic dialogue [...], along with epic, pastoral, satire, history, elegy, tragedy' (Eagleton, 2005:1) and all of this can also be found in photography and the photobook. If we consider the British photobooks that were analysed in the previous section, we can easily map out how the themes of each of the photobooks fit with Eagleton's

description of what the novel is capable of. For example, the satire and tragedy that can be found in *I can Help* and *The Last Resort*, the history, pastoral, tragedy and elegy in *In Flagrante* and to a lesser extent, the history, elegy and tragedy of *Pirelli Work*, the tragedy and elegy of *Beyond Caring*, and the pastoral can be found even within *Ray's a Laugh*, in the images of wildlife which interrupt the chaos of the photographs of Billingham's family, and tragedy in the lives of Ray, his family and their pets. *Livingroom* is harder to place, but perhaps has something of the tragic, in the poverty of the families despite their happiness, and in the history of the period in which they live.

To a certain extent, history, elegy and tragedy can be said to exist within all photographs because of the way that they arrest moments of time and are a reminder of aging, death and of past events and historical periods. For example, when parents take photographs of their children, they understand that their children will one day be adults and that the photographs will then serve as poignant reminders of a period that cannot be returned to. When photographs of aging parents are taken by adult children, they understand that the photographs will one day be a reminder of their parents once they have passed away. All photobooks are in a sense historical in that they represent snapshots of moments of history, even when they are not actually representing historical events, and all cultural products can tell us something about history and the time in which they were produced. Within my own photo zine practice, I capture the history of the Labour party through a rally for Jeremy Corbyn. *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* can be described as representing a significant moment for the Labour party and the British left and I was fully aware of this when I took the photographs. Corbyn's leadership and the struggle within the party represents more than just its specificity, it represents what is happening globally as neoliberalism is being discredited and opposed, in the same way that social democracy was around the period when Margaret Thatcher became leader of the opposition. The dramatic can be found in *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...*, in the images

of people making heartfelt speeches and men pointing aggressively. The use of black and white photography to take the photographs, also signifies history and the history of documentary. I capture the tragedy and history of my in-laws getting older in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must Be Done*, through the photographs of my father-in-law napping and the morning of my mother-in-law's seventieth Birthday. For me the poignancy is in knowing that the grandchild in the photograph who has evidently just got out of bed and is in her nappy, is likely to lose her grandmother before she is an adult and that the grandmother will also be aware of this. Poetry can be found in the beauty of the soft colours produced by the colour film and matt paper and in the form of many of the images within all the photo zines and in the way that sequences of photographs complement each other. Beauty is also found in the tragedy and pathos within some of the photographs already mentioned. *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* represents tragedy, elegy and history in that it is about the tragedy of my father-in-law's life and the tragedy of the lives of other British working-class men like him. There is gentle satire within *Lavinia's Christmas Party* in some of the humorous images of the party organisers dressed as elves and Father Christmas, yet the book is not satirical and is not about making fun of its subjects. It can be said to be historical in the sense that we know that parties put on for friends, family and neighbours, are a symbol of working-class solidarity and collectivity, which seems to have been on the wane since the Thatcher years, and the use of black and white photography is also of the past. *Home Baked* can also be said to be a symbol of history, as it points towards working-class leisure – the weekly routine of going to the match and having a pie. The book is a reminder of the history of when football was the game used to be affordable for most people, before it became the plaything of millionaires. The history of Anfield is also part of the narrative of *Home Baked*, in that the first photograph inside the zine focuses on a large sign in Anfield, which reveals that the area is under development. The list of developers on the sign, also reveals something of what is happening with capital behind the scenes. *Phil Manion North End Bakers* is also historical, in that it is a symbol

of older structures of feeling in that the bakery has not changed since the 1970s, and it feels as if it is stuck in some sort of time warp. This is emphasised by the graininess of the black and white photographs. The tragedy of *Manion North End Bakers* is that it represents a way of life and work that is close to being lost because it is an anomaly amongst the Greggs and Pound Bakery's that dominate the high street.

### **The under-narrativisation of certain experiences from the perspective of those who go through them**

The values underlying my research can be compared to the values of Jo Spence who was influenced by the factography of Dziga Vertov and was interested in what John Roberts describes as 'the *under-narrativisation* of certain experiences in the culture from the perspective of those who undergo them' (Roberts, 1998:205). It is this under-narrativisation of working-class experience within art, that has driven the PhD and the production of the photo zines. Many people, like my father-in-law, live anonymous lives of struggle, and it is a bitter irony that those who suffer the most are the least likely to have the tools or vocabulary to make sense of their struggle. This is not to say that working-class people do not have a clear sense of the unfairness of things or an understanding of politics, or that I want to paint them as victims, but rather, many working-class individuals do not view their own experiences as worthy of narration and are very accepting of their own deprivations, perhaps because they don't have much choice. For example, instead of being angry or upset about the deprivation and emotional and physical abuse they suffered in their childhood, my mother, her sister and two brothers prefer to make light of it. At Christmas when my mother hosts her annual Christmas party, they laugh about the same stories of us all being terrified by my nan. Indeed, as Simon J Charlesworth observes in *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience* (2000):

It is those whose lives have been most impoverished, in whom the abuse has been the most absolute, whose lives fall, almost beyond sense in the absurdity of an endless struggle with the 'now' of their lives, that are the worst afflicted. It is as though their absorption in



coping, in the immediacy of the strategies of surviving, means their awareness is maintained in the available, in the ready-to-hand, such that the contemplative condition is foreclosed upon.

(Charlesworth, 2000:135)

### **The Influence of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) and *Café Royal* books**

In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), James Agee divides part two of the book into chapters about different aspects of the lives of the three tenant farming families he is writing about. The headings for the chapters are as follows: money, shelter, clothing, education and work. This dividing up of different parts of working-class life into its key components, to describe every aspect of their lives in as much detail as Agee can muster, can be said to mimic what the camera does naturally. As Carol Schloss highlights, it was Agee's observation of Evan's taking photographs which inspired Agee's use of photographic metaphors (Schloss, 1989:193-194) and encyclopaedic descriptions of the tenant farmer's homes (Schloss, 1989:191-192).

Agee's division of different aspects of the lives of the tenant farmers under headings, are not unlike the different elements of working-class life I chose to investigate and represent with my cameras. In *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience* (2000), Simon J Charlesworth also divides up different aspects of working-class life (although without headings). For example, he analyses sexual relations (Charlesworth, 2000:221), nights out (Charlesworth, 2000:222), and drinking (Charlesworth, 2000:223), as well as working-class speech, which he devotes an entire chapter to (Charlesworth, 2000:203-274).

It is not difficult to imagine the pages of detailed description Agee would have been able to write about the Billingham's, their pets and their home, if he were alive in the 1980s and 1990s, and was able to spend a few weeks living with them in their tower block flat, or if he were to spend a few weeks

living with the families we see in Nick Waplington's *Livingroom*. Similarly, I would expect Agee to write in a similar manner about my in-laws and my father-in-law's bedroom (and my mother-in-law's bedroom which has been uncarpeted and without wallpaper for over twenty years). Yet, instead of pages of encyclopaedic description, I have been able to suggest the lives of my in-laws through the condition of my fathers-in-law bedroom, with a similar economical means that Walker Evans was able to show us the material conditions of the homes of the tenant farmers we see in the first part of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.





Figure 37. Two double page spreads from *He Served his Time at Cammell Lairds*. In *He Served his Time at Cammell Lairds* I have been able to suggest the lives of my in-laws through the condition of my fathers-in-law bedroom, with a similar economical means that Walker Evans was able to show us the material conditions of the homes of the tenant farmers we see in the first part of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Photos: author.



Figure 38. Walker Evans (1936) Part of the Bedroom of Floyd Burroughs's Cabin, Hale County, Alabama. Gelatin silver print. 7 1/8 × 8 5/8 in. (18.1 × 21.9 cm). From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). Photo: saved from the Metropolitan Museum of Art website. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/282741>.

*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is a touchstone in the history of photography and the photobook, for not only understanding the ethical problems faced by documentary photographers when bearing witness and documenting the lives of less powerful others, but also for understanding the range of strategies available for representing lived experience, and the subjectivity of documentary photographers and writers. As John Roberts observes, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* represents a 'compendium of many of the strategies of avant-garde literary and photographic form of the period':

An emphasis on "totalization" through the accumulation of multiple detail (Rodchenko, El Lissitzky); the equivalence between image and text (Breton and Boiffard); the idea of the photographic work as continuous (filmic) sequence (Tretyakov); and the notion of the work as an unfolding collaboration between author and reader/spectator (Moholy-Nagy).



(John Roberts, 2014:62)

Evans shared the values of 'Group f64' (1932-35), a collective that included Paul Strand, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams. What united and stimulated members of Group f64, was an opposition to the pictorialism of a previous generation of photographers, which was personified by the work of Alfred Stieglitz. Pictorialism was a photographic movement from 1880 to 1890, which treated photography as fine art and an 'impulse [...] to deny and obfuscate the mechanical and essentially documentary nature of photography' (Parr, Badger, 2004:61). Pictorialism was considered part of 'the salon world [and] life at one privileged remove from the ordinary' (Shloss, 1987:188). Evans and the members of Group f64, wanted to 'render[...] exact, unmediated experience insofar as such transparency was possible [...] and] to bridge the gap between photography taken with artistic intent and those taken for utilitarian purposes' (Shloss, 1987:188-189). This approach was termed 'straight photography' (Schloss, 1987:189).

According to Evans, in documentary photography 'actuality is untouched by the recorded as much as may be, it is uninfluenced ... The documentary artist .... Does what he can to not change it spiritually. He tries to *add* nothing to it: no ideology, no polemic, no extrinsic excitement, no razzamatazz technique.'" (Evans in Schloss, 1987:189).

This description also describes my own "no frills" approach to photography, in that I don't use a tripod and tend to use available lighting and/or the flash on my compact camera. My technique is very basic and not unlike domestic photography, except for the fact that I am a trained artist. It is about capturing what is in front of me with as little fuss as possible. This pared down approach not only accounts for the restrained style of Evan's photography in general but can also be used to describe Craig Atkinson's approach to the production of *Café Royal Books*, which I sought to emulate through the design of my own photobooks).



Biddy Boys 1972 — Homer Sykes  
£6.00



My Britain 1970—1980s — Homer Sykes  
£6.00



Housing Estates 1979—1981 — Stephen McCoy  
£6.00



Skelmersdale 1984 — Stephen McCoy  
£6.00

Figure 39. Café Royal Books. Screenshot of a selection of Café Royal Books for sale on the Café Royal website. <https://www.caferoyalbooks.com/>. Photos: Craig Atkinson.

## **Café Royal Books**

Café Royal Books is the name given by Craig Atkinson to the documentary photo zine publishing project he began in 2005, which is broadly about change in the UK and mostly features photographs that were taken between 1970 and 1990. Mostly using the photographs of others, every week Atkinson publishes a new A5 photo zine (usually in black and white but occasionally colour). This includes the work of well-known photographers such as Daniel Meadows, Chris Killip, Jo Spence and Martin Parr, as well as those who are lesser known.

Most of the photo zines do not have text but some include background information about the theme of the photographs on the first or last page. It is now a huge archive of work which Atkinson publishes as 100 zine box sets, many of which can be viewed on the Café Royal website or on the Café Royal Facebook page.

The design of Café Royal Books is unfussy, or in the words of Atkinson, 'the books are affordable, democratic, utilitarian and useful, without fuss or decoration' (Atkinson, no page number). The books titles are printed in Helvetica, a widely used sans-serif typeface which emerged from the Bauhaus - a design movement 'that incorporated no-nonsense materials and economic thoughtfulness' (Johnson, 2011: no page number). Helvetica 'was created as a neutral type, one that wouldn't visually convey emotion or meaning' (Johnson, 2011: no page number) and 'kind of mirrors [Atkinson's] hopes for the books' (Atkinson, 2018: no page number).

The overall focus of Café Royal books is about the narrative of what is happening in the photographs and their overall formal qualities. In keeping the design simple and the same for every issue, it allows Atkinson (a fine artist by training, who used to make abstract paintings) to focus on making the sequences and rhythm of the sequence as strong as possible within the limited time he has, and Café Royal Books are recognisable as a series when they are sold within the Open Eye Gallery and Foyles book shops.

After attending a book binding workshop at the Manchester Metropolitan University, which was part of the *Artful Prose* programme I took part in, I experimented with ways of presenting my first documentary project, *Phil Manion North End Bakers* and *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*. Figure 7. It was at this point I realised that the utilitarian design and affordability of Café Royal Books was something I wanted to use within my practice and that like Café Royal Books, my practice would be shaped by the parameter of the booklet form – either A5 or A4 in size with a maximum of forty pages and printed on uncoated paper.

### **The materiality of the photo zines and their distribution**

The aim of this research is to provide an insight into the lived experience of class across a range of class practices and this is kept tightly in focus using a simple format for presenting the work. The multiplicity, accessibility and distribution of my photo zines to the subjects of the work are some of its key values. By keeping the work in a simple A5 or A4 booklet, there is a potential for hundreds of copies to be printed off and their affordability means that they can be given to the subjects of the work.

This approach can be compared to the ideals of the factography of the Soviet avant-garde in the 1920s and 1930s, which asked the question ‘how do I extend the formal limits of photography in order to represent the revolutionary dynamism of the proletariat, of which I am a constitutive part?’ (Roberts, 2014:61). As opposed to US and European photography of the same period (and although it came later, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*), which asked ‘how do I tell the truth of a class I have little or no access to?’ (ibid, 2014:61).

The photo zine form used for my practice has its own visual syntax, it provides a hypertextual link to more throw away, ephemeral, vernacular, low culture and cheaply produced publications such as the zine, the magazine, the pamphlet and the brochure. By keeping the design of my books in a simple fixed codex form, the viewer stays focused on the content of the



images, rather than the materials – in a similar way to how an audience is absorbed by a film in the cinema when the lights are turned off, rather than distracted by the surroundings of the venue where the film is shown. Similarly, as already noted, the choice to make most of the photo zines full bleed is another strategy for absorbing the viewer in the world of the photographs. A border around a photograph creates a sense of a window on the world, seen from a distance whereas full bleed puts the viewer in the thick of the action. The visual syntax of a single image on a page with a white border is that of the coffee table book and a style of photobook making that is prominent amongst the British photobooks I analysed in the second part of the thesis.

### **How Technical Experimentation Shaped my practice**

As noted in the last section, the technical issues which influenced the production of *Beyond Caring*, were a result of Graham needing to take photographs of job centre waiting rooms covertly, and they contribute to its overall tone and sense of lived experience. Parr's use of flash to overcome the midday sun, also contributes to the overall critical undertone of *The Last Resort*. In much the same way, the technical issues involved with photographing a range of environments has affected the way my practice has evolved and the tone of my photo zines.

The 35mm film used for the photo zine practice, with its visible grain and colouration, all contributes to a visual syntax that recalls not only the history of photography and its reproduction but also the different uses of photography. It is a syntax which references vernacular photography and the diaristic use of cameras in domestic settings and on family holidays. It recalls a moment in British photographic and reprographic history in the early 1980s, when, influenced by American photographers such as Stephen Shore, William Eggleston and Joel Meyerowitz, photographers like Parr and Graham, moved away from using black and white to using colour. Likewise, the 35mm black and white photographs used for some of the books have their own visual syntax which recalls the much longer pre-colour history of

photography, when “serious” photographers photographed in black and white. Black and white photography is also more intimately linked to the history of the working-classes because of its use in documentary photography to document and represent the working-classes. Lewis Hine, Walker Evans, Jacob Riis, Dorothy Lange, Margaret Bourke-White, Chris Killip, August Sands, Bill Brandt are the photographers that immediately spring to mind.

*Phil Manion North End Bakers* was the first photo zine in the series. The graininess of the photographs is the result of needing to use a high ISO on an SLR (a Pentax K1000) that I did not have a flash for. Similarly, the use of black and white film and the graininess of *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* also came about because of the lack of a flash and the necessary use of a high ISO. I continued to work with black and white film because the 400 ISO film I was using could be pushed to higher 800 and 1600 ISOs, whereas colour film cannot be pushed, and at that point I did not know that 800 ISO colour film was available. This technical difficulty was serendipitous, in that the use of black and white photographs reflected the themes of the books, and that what I was representing is part of the past in present and an older structure of feeling. As noted, structures of feelings are ‘a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period’ (Williams, 1977:131). By the time that structures of feeling are fully recognised, new structures of feeling will already be emerging ‘in the true social present’ (Williams, 1977:132). As already noted, the Phil Manion bakery appears to be stuck in a time warp as it has barely changed since the 1970s. Many of the speakers who spoke at the Corbyn event were deeply involved with left wing politics during the 1980s and represent an older style of trade union politics.

After much experimentation, I began using a Pentax ME Super which produces the same results as a Pentax K1000 and a Pentax MX but has an electronic rather than a manual light meter. The electronic meter turns red

and makes a beeping sound if there is too much or not enough light and so there is less risk of accidentally over or under-exposing photographs. Importantly it also reduces the time needed to spend on making sure the light meter is in the right position. Through this process, I realised that spontaneity was an important part of the process of capturing lived experience, in that if I wanted to capture a subject doing something interesting (usually in a domestic setting), I needed to be able to grab my camera quickly and be able to take a photograph with as little fuss as possible. This eventually evolved into experimenting with 35mm compact cameras as many older compacts have high quality lenses which can produce the same high-quality photographs as SLRs, but with the least fuss and most spontaneity possible.

I also began to use a waterproof, Canon Sure Shot A1 35mm compact for taking photographs in or around water, so was able to capture photographs on the beach or at or in the pool on holiday. The Canon Sure Shot A1 also has a flash that can be set to automatically go off no matter what the lighting conditions, and so with Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* photographs in mind, I was also able to experiment with using flash in bright lighting conditions. Once the ISO is set on a film camera it must stay the same for the entire roll of film and so I took multiple cameras on holiday with films of different ISOs. For example, I used 200 ISO film in the Canon Sure Shot A1 waterproof camera, which I used outdoors and near water and used 400 ISO film in a Pentax PC35 AF-KM 35mm compact camera, which was used mostly indoors. Both compacts were eventually chosen as the main cameras I used for the rest of my research because of their relatively wide angled lenses, which allow for close-up photography. As I discovered from the many compacts I experimented with, most compacts cannot take close-up photographs without blurring because their lenses are not wide angled enough.

My experiments also led me to understand that close-up photographs are better for communicating a sense of intimacy with the subjects represented,

and so for a project about lived experience, intimacy was a vital part of the work.

### **The methodology of the photo zine practice**

The eight photo zines that were produced for the practice are all forty-pages, printed on uncoated paper and are either black and white or colour and are A5 or A4 in size. None of the zines have captions or essays and the decision to produce what W J T Mitchell would refer to as “pure” photo essays was made quite early in the research. I wanted to focus entirely on what could be communicated and narrated through the sequencing of photographs, with only the title of the books to narrow down the possible range of interpretations that a viewer might make. The photographic sequences are about showing working-class practices and everyday lived experience and the titles of the books play an important role in communicating their overall message.

The methodology of the practice involves me taking responsibility for every aspect of the production and distribution of the booklets. Projects usually come about through the relationships I have with one or more subjects of the photographs. Photographs are taken, the film is processed in the dark room, the negatives are scanned into a computer and then cleaned up (there is quite often dust marks or scratches) using Adobe Lightroom and Adobe Photoshop and then the photographs are inserted into a booklet template in Adobe InDesign.

A systematic method for producing the photo zines developed over time, as follows:

Firstly, The photographs that are considered good enough to use are inserted into an A5 booklet template in Adobe InDesign; Secondly, all of the pages of the booklet are printed out and then each page is folded in half to recreate the appearance of how they will look when folded within the final zine; Thirdly, All of the images are laid out on the floor or a large table then sequenced into a loose narrative. Images that work well together formally

are paired up so where possible there is a rhythm that will flow through the zine; Fourthly, a sequence of no more than forty pages is chosen by removing photographs that either do not fit with the narrative or do not work formally with the other images, for whatever reason (different lighting, colour etc), or take the zine beyond the forty page limit. If the photographs take the zine beyond forty pages then a decision must be made about which images can be removed without upsetting the sequence; Fifthly, the final sequence is replicated on Adobe InDesign in both A5 and A4 booklet templates; Finally, the booklets are sent to the printers for sample copies.

Over time I realised that some photo zines worked better as A5 and others as A4, but with many of the photo zines it was difficult to decide. A5 is a little bit bigger than the size of a paperback book, and so like a paperback which is usually read privately (even in public places), it feels more intimate and portable than A4. A4 is a size usually associated with commercial magazines which are displayed on shelves and flicked through in public places, yet because the pages in my A4 photobooks are uncoated, they do not have the same gloss and do not look commercial. The larger pages in the A4 versions allow more detail to be seen in the photographs and come closer to the experience of looking at photographic prints in a gallery, yet the pleasure this brings comes with some loss of intimacy.

I also realised by the time I was working on *Lavinia's Christmas Party*, that white borders around images create a sense of peering through a window or a letter box and therefore increases the distance the viewer is likely to feel from the subjects represented, both physically and psychologically. A full bleed image on the other hand, because there is no frame (except for the edges of the book, like the edge of a cinema screen), creates a sense that the viewer is more inside the image, and therefore psychologically closer to the subjects represented. In this way a full bleed photograph in a photo zine can be said to come closer to lived experience.

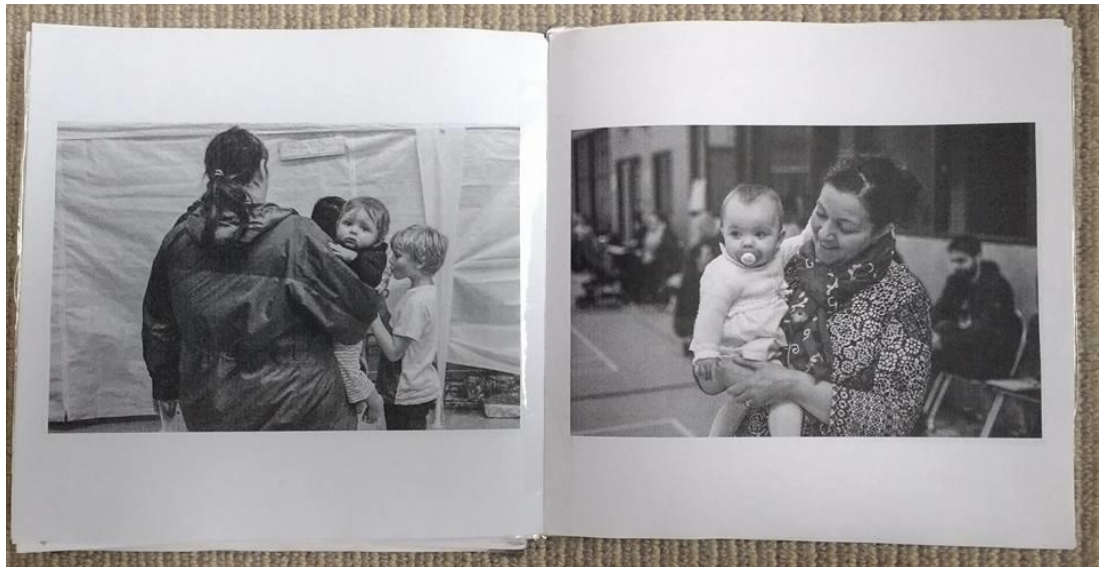


Figure 40. A double page spread using white borders in a mock up version of *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. The white borders create a window effect which makes the viewer feel more distant from what is happening in the photographs. Photo: author.

Through the process of producing the first photo zine in the series – *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, I discovered that forty pages was the maximum number of pages that could be used to produce a booklet, as using more than forty pages would result in creep (a separation between pages in the centre of the booklet which distorts the image across the page) and would prevent the booklet from staying closed. Booklet pages also need to go up in fours for them to function as a booklet, so if it was necessary to print less than forty pages, the page count would need to be thirty-six or thirty-two pages, etc. The process almost always resulted in more rather than less than the 40-page maximum, as I decided that more images create a greater sense of the lived experiences of the subjects of the photo zines and their environment. Working with photographs that were quite often taken within a short space of time, for example, over a period of three hours for *Lavinia's Christmas Party*, meant that it wasn't often that there was an excess of good images that could be used, so the process of choosing the forty pages (usually around nineteen double page spreads and single images on the front and back), was as much about getting rid of images that were considered weaker (not intimate enough, taken from too much of a distance,

not aesthetically pleasing or a weak composition), as it was about creating a loose narrative. Through experimenting I also realised that there were some images that had more of a sense of finality about them, which would often be used as the last page on the back cover. This sense of finality is something that is quite abstract and difficult to describe, but it can be found in images in which not a lot is happening, or the subjects in the photograph are relaxed, rather than very busy photographs with a lot of movement, or in photographs in which the subjects don't appear to be as relaxed. I also realised that the first image in each of the photobooks was about setting the scene and the tone of the narrative, just as much as the cover photograph, yet I didn't want to place my best photographs first, as the first image viewers see in photobooks are quite often one that is easy to forget, and one that the viewer may spend less time looking at if they are impatient to see how the rest of the sequence develops.

### **The importance of time in the photobooks**

Although not obvious, the representation of time is also an important part of the practice. The photobooks are made up of photographs of two types of duration – photographs that were taken on the same day, over the space of several hours and photographs that were taken over days, months and in one case, *Funland*, years. Several booklets were a result of photographs that were taken during one-off sessions of photographing, over two to three hours. The photographs for *Phil Manion North End Bakers* were taken over two to three hours, during which, as many images as possible were taken to get a sense of the place while there was access to the environment. A request was made to return to Phil Manion because of dissatisfaction with several photographs that were over and underexposed, but this request was refused, so the photographs already taken had to be used. *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is made up of images that were taken over two hours during a rally for the second Jeremy Corbyn Labour leadership election, *Lavinia's Christmas Party* and *Home Baked* were also made during one session which lasted around three hours.

Lavinia's Christmas party was a one-off event and the photographs for *Home Baked* were taken during a match day (the time before, during and after a football match when the bakery is very busy). The *Phil Manion North End Bakers* session was an attempt to capture a typical working day for the staff who work there, and the photographs I took for *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* were taken by shutting myself in my father-in-law's bedroom for over two hours.

The rest of the photobooks are made up of photographs that were taken over the course of days, both *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* (2017) and *Skeggy* (2017), are made up of photographs taken over the course of holidays and are an attempt to capture a sense of those holidays. *Funland* is the most longitudinal work as it is made up of photographs taken during two short holidays and one day out, which were combined to create a fictional account of a weekend away. The black and white photographs used for *Funland* (2015 – 2017) made it easier to combine images taken at different times of year and in different environments.

This sense of time is important to lived experience. In Ben Highmore's *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (2011), in a chapter titled: 'Doing time: work-life', Highmore discusses the 'cyclical nature of everyday life' (Highmore, 2011:86), and how much of our lives is spent waiting:

Waiting to get going, waiting to clock-off, waiting for a tea break, waiting for a promotion, waiting for redundancy or retirement, waiting for holidays, waiting for the rush to be over, for the queue to shorten, for the crowds to die down, for the boss to leave, for the pay cheque to come through. Waiting to stop work so that you can do other things: soak tired muscles, fall asleep in front of the TV, cook tea, wash children, go to bed, get up again.

(Ben Highmore, 2011:86)

It is this sense of tragic banality (tragic in the sense of it can be described as time doing what you have to do out of necessity (wasted time), rather than time spent doing what you would like to do), that I hoped to capture with



the photo zines, as well as all of the other things that make up our complex lives and the lived experience of class. In *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (1981) Jacques Rancière describes the mental torture of repetitive work when he quotes the writing of Gauny, a joiner who because he is also a poet, can articulate the mental suffering caused by the banality of labour:

You did not know the sorrows of sorrows the vulgar sorrow of the lion caught in a trap, of the commoner subjected to horrible sessions in the workshop, the penitentiary expedient gnawing away at spirit and body with boredom and the folly of long labor [sic]. Ah, Dante, you old devil, you never travelled to the real hell, the hell without poetry! Adieu!

(Gauny in Rancière, 1981:17)

As Rancière observes, 'aren't the worst of true sufferings precisely those of thought?' (Rancière, 1981:17). Gauny's description of the mental torment brought about by repetitive manual work, could just as easily be applied to working in call centres, or to any job that is repetitive and unrewarding, of which many of the working classes must do to earn a living. This is not to say that all working-class individuals find their jobs boring or unrewarding, or that the contemporary work place is as draconian as the work place and longer hours worked in the nineteenth century. But having spent two years working in call centres, where I was treated and felt like a battery hen, taking call after call and having to enter a code into my phone if I needed to go to the toilet, and after many years spent working in pubs and shops, I can testify to the banality and mental torment of repetitive work. And it is this sense of work time and clock watching which I allude to in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, through the double page spread of a clock on an old faux wood panelled wall.

### **The Importance of the Titles for the Photobooks**

The titles of the photo zines are key to setting their tone and for narrowing down the range of possible interpretations of the photographs. Without

captions or text to accompany the photographs it is more difficult to communicate complex ideas and so the titles go some way to compensating for this.

For example, I wanted to communicate how anxiety about money effected many aspects of the family holiday in France, from booking a holiday in a privately rented static caravan to save money, and deciding not to go on day trips, to my husband losing his wallet with half of his holiday spending money in it, and the friction it caused with my mother-in-law. The photographs of the family sitting inside the cramped space of the caravan do hint at the economic aspect of the holiday, but this secondary ostension is far too subtle, so it is through the title that I attempted to make the message clearer.

The title *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* came from the instructions sent to me by the owner of the static caravan. Staying in a static caravan, for which we were required to spend our last day cleaning, was a choice made from necessity because we could not afford a more expensive holiday. The instructions used for the title reveals not only the underlying economic structure of the holiday but also refers to how working-class people are quite often told what they *must* do, by more privileged and more autonomous others.

One of the last photo zines in the series about a caravan holiday is simply titled *Skeggy* - a slang word for Skegness where the holiday took place. As Pierre Bourdieu observes, slang is 'the form par excellence of 'popular speech' (Bourdieu, 1991:94). Popular speech is looked down upon as a vulgar and degraded form of "legitimate" speech and is negatively associated with 'the low as opposed to 'the high', 'the coarse' as opposed to 'the refined' and with 'the rude' (ibid, 1991:93). Yet, slang words have positive associations for working class people as they are regularly used in a light-hearted way, and with affection, to refer to friends, places and shop names. For example, in our childhoods, my husband and I referred to the cut price supermarket Kwik Save, where our parents got their weekly shopping from,

as “The Quickie”. My husband and his brother’s friends at school were always referred to by their surname with an ‘e’ on the end, so Mathew Sutton was known as ‘Sootie’ and Paul White (my husband) was known as ‘Whitey’. Therefore, the use of slang for the title of a photo zine about a caravan holiday seemed a good way of underlining the classed nature of caravan holidays.

*Funland* was the only photo zine in the series to have a title that was based more upon the fact the image on the front cover had such bold writing, that it seemed appropriate to have that as the title, rather than as a tool for communicating to the viewer how they should interpret the images. Like *Skeggy*, it is obvious that the work is about working-class leisure and so less instruction is needed from the title to narrow down the possible range of interpretations.

### **The mixture of photographic syntaxes and genres of photography in the photobooks**

A feature of the photo zines is the combination of a range of photographic syntaxes and genres of photography. Interweaved with the documentary style photographs are images that resemble family snapshots because of the way in which subjects are posed for the camera. Within the photo zines the family snapshot, in which subjects appear to be very aware of being photographed, is a reference to the role of the photograph in family life for capturing memories. It is also about the agency of subjects and their greater control over their own image, rather than the photographer in an almost predatory manner taking photographs without consent. In *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* two photographs have the visual syntax of holiday snaps – the photograph of the family sitting outside a café who smile for the camera and the photograph of the grandparents sitting on a bench in a playground who also smile for the camera and look directly at the viewer. In the rest of the photographs in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* the family appear to be unaware of being photographed. In *Lavinia’s Christmas Party* there are three genres of photography: two family snapshot

style photographs which capture children being photographed by their unseen parents with Father Christmas in his makeshift grotto; documentary photographs of subjects who appear to be unaware of being photographed and portrait photographs where the subjects appear more formally posed to have their portraits taken.

Having analysed the methodology of the photo zine practice and having positioned it within the context of the history of social documentary photograph and the photobook, I will now move on to provide a more detailed description of the photobooks on an individual basis. This will be done in the order of production, in order to reflect the research process and the development of my thinking.

### **The emotional impact of white borders and double page spreads and their importance to the communication of lived experience**

As previously noted, single photographs on a page with white borders have the visual syntax of coffee table books and create a window effect, which distances the viewer from the subjects and events depicted.

When producing a mock-up zine of photographs with white borders for *Lavinia's Christmas Party*, I noticed that the white borders made me feel more distant from what was happening within the photographs than the mock-up book of full bleed photographs. After discovering this full bleed was then used for all the photo zines that followed.

Full bleed photographs feel more direct as they take up more of the viewers visual field and so the viewer has less of a sense of the edges of the frame. In this way, full bleed photographs can be described as having a greater sense of 'presence' as they feel less mediated than photographs which have white borders. The concept of 'presence' is usually applied to a range of visual technologies, including virtual reality and 3D IMAX films, which according to Matthew Lombard and Theresa Ditton, are:

designed to give the user a type of mediated experience that has never been possible before: one that seems truly

“natural,” “immediate,” “direct,” and “real,” a mediated experience that seems very much like it is not mediated; a mediated experience that creates for the user a strong sense of presence.

(Lombard and Ditton, 2006: no page number)

This is not to say that photographs and photobooks offer a sense of presence anywhere near that of new technology or even that of television or cinema, but ‘presence’ is still a useful concept for thinking about the differences between full bleed photographs and photographs surrounded by white borders.

With full bleed photographs, the viewer is forced deeper into the scene depicted and is therefore less able to be detached from what they are looking at. This is not the same as saying that photographs with white borders elicit less subject identification, you only need to look at Killip’s *In Flagrante* to understand that this isn’t true. Yet, perhaps this is because the photographs in *In Flagrante* are so large that they take up more of the viewers visual field, and so the white borders, despite their size, are less of a distraction. Full bleed photographs somatically create a greater sense of physical proximity for the viewer. This theory is also supported the use of very large prints in gallery spaces, which quite often don’t have borders or frames.

### **The importance of The front and back cover and the first and last pages**

The photographs used on the front covers of the photo zines play a crucial role in communicating their overall theme and in helping to set the tone. The photographs on the back covers of the zines are important for giving the viewer a sense of finality and are sometimes a way of distilling a sense of what the zine is about in a single image. The first photograph inside each of the zines also plays a crucial role in setting the scene for the rest of the book in the same way as the opening shot of a film. For example, in *Home Baked* a photograph of a street sign communicates to the viewer something of the

economic background and the regeneration of the area in which the bakery is located, which effects the way the bakery is thought about by the viewer. In *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, a photograph of one of the two Phil Manion shops is used so that the viewer sees the outside of the shop before going inside where the rest of the photographs were taken.

The first image in the photo zine can also be used to make a comment on the act of looking and the nature of documentary photography. As already noted, Killip does this in his first image in *In Flagante*, with the inclusion of his shadow next to the destitute woman sitting on the floor by a bus stop. In *Skeggy* I draw attention to the similarities between the domestic act of taking photographs on holiday and documentary photography in the first photograph inside the zine. In the photograph a young blonde girl sits on a small ride in an arcade and looks directly at the viewer. The sign on the ride states 'Have a Ride and Photo' which communicates to the viewer that the girl will have her photo taken by the ride, which is mimicked by the photograph. In the first photograph in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* a small girl walks out of the sea towards the viewer, with her hands raised and her eyes closed, as if she has salt water in her eyes and cannot see where she is walking. Through the girl's closed eyes attention is drawn to the centrality of the act of looking to documentary photography. Attention is also being drawn to a sense of the power structures behind documentary photography – between those who look and those who are looked at. Whether the girl has her eyes open or not she cannot prevent us from looking, yet through the closed eyes and temporary blindness, the vulnerability of the documentary subject is made more visible.

Having covered all aspects of what can be said about the photo zines in general, I will now move on to a closer analysis of each of the photo zines, in order of their production.

## **A Content Analysis of the Photo Zines**

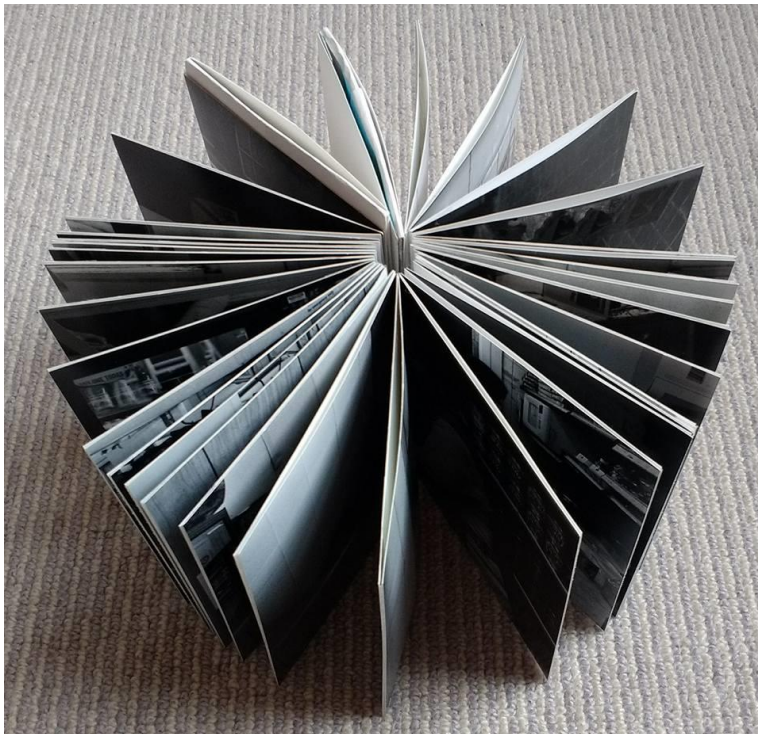
To reiterate, following Diane Reay and Mike Savage's proposition that working-class identity is generated and reinforced by working-class practices and accounts of working-class practices (Reay, 2005:912), I have developed a method of investigating working-class identity and the lived experience of class through the production of a collection of eight photo zines about different aspects of working-class life.

The purpose of this section is to critically analyse the photo zine practice through an analysis of the production process and a content analysis of individual photo zines. Critical analysis of the photo zines (and of photobooks in general) involves understanding how meanings are generated by the relationship between images, their positioning within a sequence and when text is included, the dialectics between text and images (Di Bello, Zamir, 2012:1).

The content analysis of each of the photo zines is divided into two related parts – context and format. In each of the context sections the overall theme/s are discussed, important background information about the subjects or objects of the work and the circumstances surrounding their production is provided, and the meanings and ideas that have emerged from the themes of the photo zines and from the production process is analysed. In each of the format sections individual images and their relationships with other images is analysed, as is their position in the sequence and the dialectal relationship between images and text – which for most of the zines whose only text is the title, is about the relationship between the titles and photographs.

## How the Practice Developed

Having decided to produce a collection of photo zines about key areas of working-class life – work, leisure, family and to a lesser extent, formal politics, I wanted to begin with one of the most important areas of working-class life – work. I asked my mum's neighbour Sue, who I have known since I was a child, if she would ask permission for me to take photographs in Phil Manion North End Bakers where she worked. At this point in the practice I had no experience of taking photographs in the documentary mode and was still getting used to using a Pentax K1000 SLR film camera. I did not know what the lighting conditions would be like inside the bakery and on the day of photographing I was very nervous and took several over and under exposed photographs because I forgot to check the manual light meter. Fortunately, I took enough photographs to compensate for the ones that did not turn out well. Around the same period, I took part in two workshops which both included the production of accordion books and so *Phil Manion North End Bakers* started its life as an A6 accordion book of photographic prints with a matching book of workers writing. Both are housed in a cake box, with specially made shop labels.





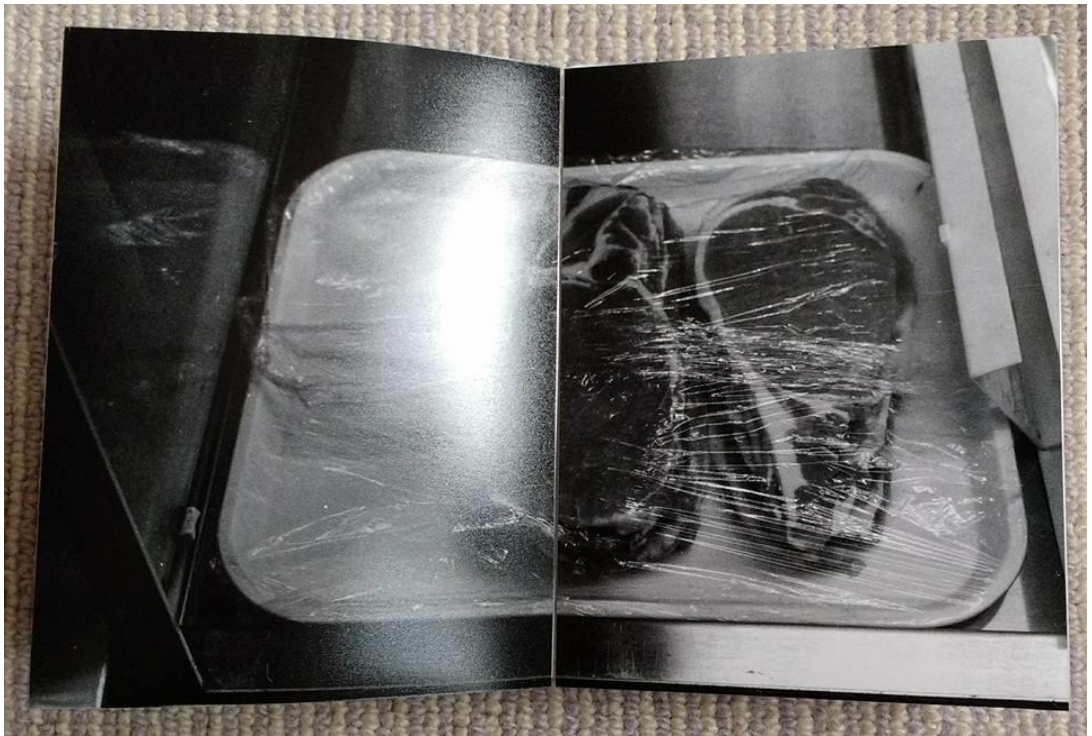




Figure 41. Photographs of the first version of *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. The first version of *Phil Manion North End Bakers* was an accordion book of photographic prints accompanied by a booklet of workers writing, displayed in a cake box with specially made shop labels. Photos: author.

Influenced by Café Royal Books I then decided I would produce photo zine versions of the work and then present them in the type of clear fronted paper bag in which cakes and sausage rolls are often sold. This was done in order to make a tactile and visual link between the bakery depicted in the photo zines and the materiality of the work. Through the process of producing the photo zines and because of the influence of Café Royal Books I then made the decision that all future works would be forty-page photo

zines. As previously noted, the utilitarian design and affordability of Café Royal Books was something that greatly appealed to me because it meant that multiple copies could be printed and given to each of the subjects of the work. The distribution of the zines is a key part of the values underpinning my research. As noted in the introduction, the photo zines, their distribution and discussions with family and friends about their experiences and my research over the last five years, have allowed me to create relationships between the past and present, between myself and the subjects of my work and between myself and the audiences of the work – both academic and non-academic (Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis, 2015:23). The zines not only present and enact the research but also serve as family albums and repositories of memories of holidays, a deceased father, father-in-law, husband and brother, and of our daughter's childhood.

*If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is the second photo zine in the series. The opportunity to take photographs at a rally for the Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn in the Liner Hotel in Liverpool, came about because of my increasing involvement with the Labour party and my membership of Momentum following the failed coup of MPs on the right wing of the party. This zine allowed me to make visible a political aspect of working-class lives. This is not to say that all working-class individuals are politicised or interested in formal politics, but that for some, and particularly those in Liverpool, as highlighted by Brian Marren in *We Shall Not be Moved: How Liverpool's Working Class Fought Redundancies. Closures and Cuts in the Age of Thatcher* (2016), politics does play a significant role in their lives and their identity. My experience of photographing the bakery meant that I was a little more confident at taking photographs in a public space and in knowing the kinds of photographs I needed to take. I had learnt that using just one camera would mean I would need to change my film more often and so I took two cameras to the rally. I also realised that to take interesting photographs that I needed to move around a lot while the rally was taking place and to try to get some close-up shots as well as medium range shots and shots which might work well to

contextualise the other photographs. When producing *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* I was influenced by my personal connection to the rally and wanted to distribute the photo zines to many of the people who had taken part, so rather than being quite ruthless in the editing process I included more photographs of the people who took part and sequenced them roughly in the order that people spoke at the rally. This also influenced my decision to make the photo zine A4 in size rather than A5 like *Phil Manion North End Bakers* and to insert smaller landscape photographs on single pages rather than larger photographs spread across two pages so that more photographs could be included. If I were to rework *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* I would edit out several of the photographs and would make the remaining photographs full bleed, double page spreads.

*Home Baked* is the third photo zine in the series, which came about after I was told about the bakery, which had emerged from a project for the Liverpool Biennial in 2012, by one of my supervisors. Homebaked provided an ideal opportunity to not only photograph people at work but also to photograph football fans. Knowing that artists had already been involved with the bakery meant I knew that it was likely I would gain permission to photograph there. *Home baked* was also an opportunity to see how the use of colour film would look for producing photo zines. Having visited the bakery before the day of photographing, I knew that I would be able to use colour 400ISO film without a flash as both the café area and the baking area had plenty of natural light. The cost of producing colour photo zines was considerably more than black and white and so it meant that I could not afford to give each of the subjects of the work, but I did provide the manager of Homebaked with a copy to show to the staff and display in the shop. Consequently, the trustees of Homebaked who saw the photo zine and really liked it, purchased copies from me (at cost price) to give to each of the employees.

*Lavinia's Christmas Party* is the fourth photo zine in the series.

Photographing a Christmas party held by a community in their local leisure centre, allowed me to show another public yet more personal dimension of working-class life. It also provided an opportunity to make visible an aspect of the private and family life of Sue, one of the workers who appears in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. The opportunity to photograph the Christmas party came about through my close relationship to Sue, who treated me like a member of her family when I was growing up. When I was a child Sue took me on a regular basis to her mother Dolly's house and so I also became close to Dolly. When Isabelle was old enough, Sue started taking my daughter on a regular basis to visit Dolly. Lavinia is Dolly's neighbour and that is how she came to invite Isabelle and I to the Christmas party. I realised straight away that it would be a fantastic opportunity to take photographs of working-class families and to document another aspect of working-class life. Through Sue I gained permission from Lavinia to take photographs and I provided consent forms which Lavinia asked each of the parents of the children attending the party to sign before the party took place. I knew from experience that children move around a lot and that the sports hall did not have any windows and had florescent lighting on high ceilings. Therefore, the photographs were taken in black and white so that I could use a high ISO without a flash and so that it would make the printing and distribution the work to the many subjects of the work affordable. After seeing a mock-up book produced by one of my supervisors for his research and after attending a photo zine editing workshop at MMU, I decided to produce my own mock-up book for *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. This helped me to better visualise how the final photo zine would look, to sequence the images, and to think about the use of borders for the zines. It was at this point that I realised that white borders had a window like, distancing affect whereas full bleed photographs increased a sense of psychological closeness and immediacy in the zines. *Lavina's Christmas Party* then became the first of the photo zines to be printed as full bleed. The zines that followed were

all full bleed and the making of mock-up books became a systematic part of the photo zine production process.

*Funland* is the fifth photo zine in the series. It is a project that I was working on over a long period. I was continually photographing my family and recording day trips and holidays and so had plenty of images to choose from and because they were all black and white, they worked well together formally. This photo zine was much easier to produce because I now had a systematic way of editing together photo zines, including printing out all photographs I was considering using, folding them in half to see how they looked as double page spreads, laying them out in rows to sequence them and then replicating the sequence in Adobe Indesign.

*At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is the sixth photo zine in the series, it came about because of a family holiday to France. For this project I felt most confident in operating the cameras. I had been experimenting for a while with several 35mm compact film cameras and had found two models – the Pentax PC35AF-M and the waterproof Canon Sure Shot A1, that unlike many compact film cameras had wide angled lenses that could be used to take close-ups. The quality of the lenses meant that I was able to take photographs that produced images of the same quality as the ones I had taken with Pentax SLR film cameras and in some cases better because there was less risk of images being ever so slightly out of focus. They have built in flashes and so this allowed for photographing in a wider range of situations with a lower ISO and this also meant more spontaneity and a realisation that the spontaneity involved with using compact cameras was helping me to come closer to lived experience. I was also more confident about which films to use and so took the waterproof Canon Sure Shot A1 with a low 200 ISO film for bright lighting conditions and for photographing around water and the Pentax PC35AF-M compact with an 400 ISO film for photographing indoors in lower lighting conditions. The overriding theme of the holiday was

money (a lack of it) and so, when editing together this zine, I wanted to try to somehow reflect that.

*Skeggy* is the seventh photo zine in the series; it was the result of a caravan holiday in Skegness. By this point I was using a compact camera to take all of my photographs and when photographing I always had in mind how the photographs would fit into a coherent narrative and how they would work as double page spreads. I was able to apply what I had learnt from using the compact cameras in France to a caravan holiday in Skegness. I knew I could use the compact cameras' flash when needed and so I was able to photograph in a wide range of settings and situations.

*He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is the eighth and final photo zine in the series, it is another attempt to make visible the economic aspect of the lived experience of class which I attempted to draw attention to in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. Photographing objects and spaces rather than people was something new in my practice. It came about as a response to the death of my father-in-law six months earlier as I wanted to produce a photo zine that could somehow distil many of the things I had thought about my father-in-law, his life and what it stood for. I spent two hours in my father-in-law's bedroom taking photographs with both a compact film camera and the SLR film camera, not knowing how the photographs would turn out or if the photographs would make a compelling photo zine that could communicate what it is that I wanted to communicate about his life.



## A Content Analysis of the Photo Zines

### Phil Manion North End Bakers and Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers (July 2016)

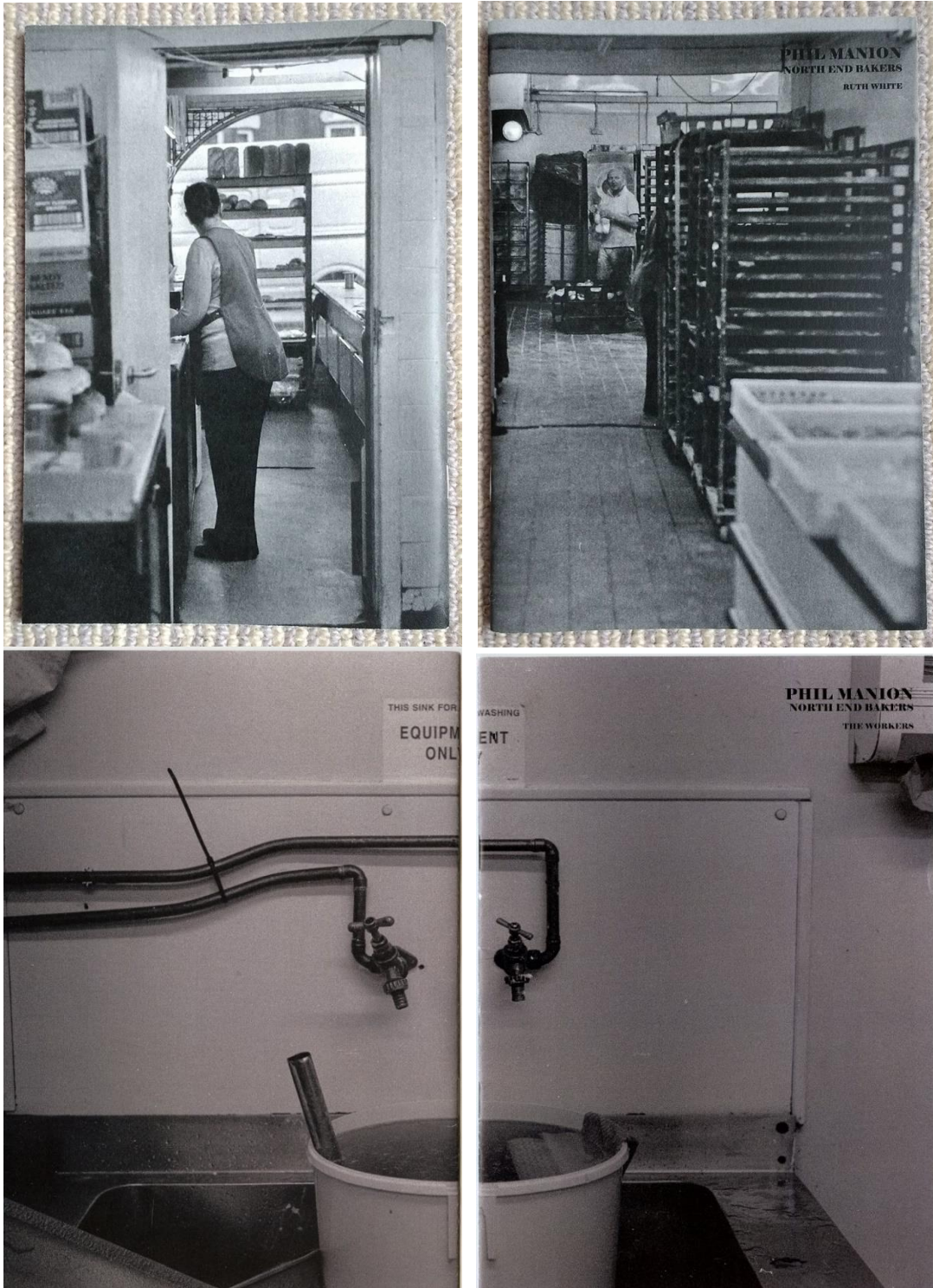


Figure 42. Photographs of The front and back cover of *Phil Manion North End Bakers* and *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*. Photos: author.



*Phil Manion North End Bakers* is an A5, forty page, black and white photo zine about an old bakery in Walton, a socially deprived area in the north of Liverpool. It is accompanied by *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*, an A5 colour zine of scans of statements, handwritten in biro by employees of Phil Manion about their lives inside and outside of the bakery.

*Phil Manion North End Bakers* can be compared to Chris Killip's *Pirelli Work* (2006) which reflects an older approach to documentary photography - using black and white film and representing working class subjects as dignified workers rather than hapless consumers. In *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, I also focus on a public aspect of working-class life but hope that like Killip that I still manage to communicate a sense of the personal through my approach and sensitivity towards the subjects I photographed.

## **Context**

Like *Funland*, the photographs in *Phil Manion North End Bakers* were taken in more than one location but are edited together and presented as if they were taken in one place. At the time of photographing there were two Phil Manion shops, both in Walton (not far from each other), which were photographed on the same day to document the business in its entirety. Eighteen out of the twenty-one photographs in the photo zine were taken in the larger shop which houses the bakery in the back where the bread and cakes that both shops sell are produced. In this way *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, unbeknownst to the reader, has a small element of fiction, but it is not truly fictitious in that it documents the day-to-day running of the shops and staff who work there with as little interference from the photographer as possible. This element of fiction is not something unusual in the editing together of photobooks. If we take one of the British photobooks discussed previously as an example – Richard Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* (1996), all of the photographs appear to have been taken in one flat but were in fact taken in two flats with similar layouts: Liz's flat where she lived with Ray

and Jason and their many pets and the flat where Ray lived on his own when he and Liz separated (Cotton, 2014: no page number), yet most viewers would presume that all of the photographs were taken in one flat. Knowing that the photographs were taken in two separate flats does not make the book a work of fiction or less of a documentary mode of photography, nor does it alter its meaning or how it is received. As David Bate highlights in his chapter on documentary and storytelling in photography in *Photography: The Key Concepts* (2018), this element of fiction was also part of the production of a much earlier photobook – Brassai's *Paris du nuit* (1933) - Paris by Night, for which Brassai' edited together his photographs of scenes of Parisian nightlife 'as though they had all happened in one night' (Bate, 2018:58).

As already noted, the main aim of *Phil Manion North End Bakery* is to create a sense of the day-to-day experience of working for the bakery. The selection of photographs from both shops was about using the best images out of a limited number to achieve that and to create a narrative that makes sense to the reader. Knowledge that photographs from both Phil Manion shops were combined does not change its ultimate meaning nor its documentary status.

Politically, *Phil Manion North End Bakers* has the potential to empower its workers by allowing them to see themselves and their work colleagues more objectively - as not only historical subjects but also as cogs in the machinery of the business. Each worker, to a certain extent, works alone and in the different areas of the building (the front shop, the middle packing and decorating section and the inner baking section) and they cannot physically be in all places at once, so they each have a relative fragmented impression of their position within the system. Yet looking through *Phil Manion North End Bakery* and reading each other's accounts in *Phil Manion North End Bakery: The Workers*, they are given an opportunity to see themselves as other than themselves and to see a more total picture of their place at work.

For an audience who does not know the bakery and does not work there, the zines offer an insight into the daily lives of the workers that they would otherwise not have.

The idea for creating two photo zines, rather than combining images and statements, came from reading James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), in which Evans's photographs are sectioned off in their own chapter at the beginning of the book from James Agee's text. The complete separation of the writing from the photographs in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, allows the sequence of photographs about the bakery to tell their own story, whilst the zine of writing that accompanies it, provides the viewer with a deeper insight into the lives of the workers. By giving the workers a voice and a more tangible presence through the content of their writing and the syntax of their handwriting, the importance of the subjects to the work is reinforced, which the distribution of the photo zines to each of the workers suggests.

In order to obtain statements from each of the workers about their experiences of working at Phil Manion they were given information about the purpose of the research and a questionnaire to prompt them to write about their lives both inside and outside of the work place. In the information sheet they were provided with, it is stated that they would each be given a copy of the finished zines. This was done so that they would understand how much I valued the opportunity of photographing them and that the photographs and questionnaire was a two-way transaction – they were not expected to give up their time for nothing in return:

### **Working at Phil Manion**

I would really appreciate it if you could please tell me about your job and life. Some of what you write may be included in the photobook I am making. You can write as much or as little as you want. I would love the finished photobook to give a real sense of what it's like to work in Phil Manion and of your

individual lives (A copy of the finished photobook will be given to you).

Examples of things I would like to hear about: How long have you worked in Phil Manion? How did you end up working there? What is involved in your job? Do you enjoy your job and feel proud of what you make or do? How does the work affect your life outside of the work place? What are your interests outside of work? Anything else about your work or life that you would like to share.

The questions were as much about encouraging the workers to describe in detail their experiences of working there as they were about trying to get a sense of their personal lives, so that they could be represented as fully rounded people, not just as employees of the bakery.

This idea of the revelation of class position and lived experience through hand written statements came from an analysis of Gillian Wearing's *Theresa and...* (1998) for my M. Res: *Making Visible: Social Class in the Art of Gillian Wearing* (2012). *Theresa and...* (1998) is a series of photographs of Theresa, an overweight, unemployed, working-class woman, who appears in each of Wearing's photographs with a different lover, whose handwritten statement about their relationship (most of which reveal emotional and sometimes physical abuse) appears next to each of the photographs.



Figure 43. Gillian Wearing. *Theresa and Ben* (1998) c-type colour prints 51 x 51 cm; 20 1/8 x 20 1/8 inches each.

The abjection provoked by the dysfunctional behaviour and appearance of the bodies displayed in the photographs for *Theresa and...* (1998) is reinforced by the content of the writing and the handwriting, grammar and spelling of the subjects which reveals their lack of cultural and social capital, in a similar manner to the writing of the runaways that appear in Jim Goldberg's photobook *Raised by Wolves* (1995). Yet the statements that appear in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers* were not intended to be used in the same way – it was not about revealing a lack or about provoking disgust in the reader or anything approaching it. It was about allowing the subjects of the work to speak for themselves (in a similar manner to those involved with Mass-Observation) and about how handwriting provides more of a sense of personal connection to those photographed. It is also another strategy for attempting to communicate the lived experience of class and class identity within the photobook.

The photographs and handwritten statements for *Theresa and...* (1998) which are intended to be displayed on the wall of a gallery are mutually

dependant on each other to function as a work of art. Yet like the British photobooks analysed in section two, which would function just as well without the essays that appear at the front or back, *Phil Manion North End Bakers* is not dependant on the handwritten statements in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*. *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers* can be read independently and is interesting in its own right but like *Theresa and...* (1998), for it to function properly, it is dependent on the photographs that appear in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*.

At the time of production, I thought that the booklets worked well as two separate publications and this decision was made partly because influenced by Café Royal Books, I wanted to make affordable photo zines which had a forty-page limit. Producing a forty-page zine with both the photographs and the writing would have meant not being able to include as many photographs or handwritten statements and this would have limited the way in which the workers and the bakery could have been represented. But, in hindsight, I can now see that they might work better as one longer publication and that the photographs and writing could still be kept separate (like the separation of photographs and text in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*), with the photographs appearing first, followed by the workers writing. Although primarily influenced by *Theresa and...* (1998), the strategy of using hand written statements was partly influenced by my circumstances. After taking the photographs for *Phil Manion North End Bakers* I had access to and was able to communicate further with the management and workers at the bakery indirectly through my friend Sue. In the photo zines that followed, handwritten statements were not used – for the simple reason that it never seemed appropriate. The focus of the research was an investigation of how working-class identity can be explored and revealed through the photographing of a range of working-class practices and through the editing and sequencing of photographs rather than exploring the interplay between photographs and text. Yet this is not to say that it is not something I am not interested in exploring in the future. *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him*

*They Know Where They Can Go...* was the next photo zine in the series, for which a transcription of the actual speech made by a woman who spoke at the political rally and was used at the beginning. The transcribed speech was a way of contextualising the rally without providing a written explanation or captions. In the photo zines that followed, no writing or speech was used. This was because the interaction of text with photographs was not the focus of my research and so was not something I deliberately sought out when producing the photo zines. When producing the remaining zines, no equivalent of the speech emerged and so the titles are called upon to do more of the contextual work. This can also be thought about in terms of being part of the refining of my working methods, like for example deciding to print both A4 and A5 copies of the zines in order to decide which worked best from the *Skeggy* photo zine onwards.

*Phil Manion North End Bakers* is essentially an attempt to communicate something about the lived-experience of work. Although the work done by most of the men in the bakery can be described as traditional skilled work, this was not a decisive factor in choosing the bakery. Gaining access to places of work is very difficult as the presence of a photographer is an unwanted disruption and so the decisive factor for choosing the bakery was the fact it was a place of work I could gain access to because I happened to know someone who had worked there for a long time.

Like *Chris Killip's Pirelli Work* (2006), *Phil Manion North End Bakers* can be said to represent a sort of benchmark, both economically and culturally, of what has been lost to the working-classes in terms of skilled employment (for the men in the bakery at least) and relative autonomy in the work place. In *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*, Mike Savage notes how 'manly independence and autonomy [...] became central features of manual working-class culture' (Savage, 2000:128) and that the idea of 'the traditional working class' is related to this emphasis on independence and autonomy. These images focus predominately on male industries whose

masculinity and heroism depended on presenting their workers as autonomous, free and not constrained by direct supervision' (Savage, 2000:128). The photographs of the bakers in *Phil Manion North End Bakers* (particularly the five photographs of Mick, the bald headed baker towards the end of the photo zine) and the accounts written by the workers in the accompanying zine - *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*, give us a sense of the independence and autonomy of the male bakers who as noted, are very proud of what they do. Reading between the lines this independence is what has led many workers to remain there for up to twenty-five years. There is a sense of the women being less independent and this emerges most strongly in their written accounts. For most of the women working at Phil Manion, the close distance of the bakery to where they live and the hours they are required to work, fits around their domestic lives, which is centred around looking after their children. The main pleasure they get from the job seems to come from banter with customers and camaraderie with their work colleagues. There is a sense that Phil Manion who owned the business before retiring had a relaxed attitude towards his employees and that is part of what has kept most of the workers working there so long.

Yet, this is not to say that Phil Manion's is an example of ideal working conditions or that the traditional working-class jobs of the past that supported entire families provided a good standard of living or didn't have their faults. I know from the things Sue has said in passing about Phil Manion that, although she enjoys working there, she is not entitled to sick pay and that she often works on her days off to cover for the sick days or holidays of other employees. I also know from conversations with my in-laws that, although the wages from my fathers-in-law's employment within the shipping and motoring industry (he worked for both Cammell Laird and Vauxhall Motors) provided enough wages to support his wife and three children, it was only through scrimping and saving each month - "robbing Peter to pay Paul", to quote my mother-in-law, that this could be done and



in relative terms the standard of living for those families that survived solely on the wages of the man of the house was not a good one. Brian Marren's interviews with those who worked at British Leyland's (BL) Triumph TR7 plant in Speke, Liverpool in the 1970s reveal that neither Vauxhall nor Ford workers on Merseyside had the same protection of a mutuality agreement which 'signified job control over seemingly trivial routines that had enormous effects of the welfare of individuals' (Marren, 2016:67), that BL's Speke Triumph workers had. Indeed, according to Kenny Routledge, a BL Triumph worker, many of his co-workers who had previously worked at the Ford's plant 'knew what a hell camp that place was' and that 'as bad as the manager could get at Leyland's they were still ten times better than the slave drivers at Ford's' (Marren, 2016:67).

Large organisations in the twentieth century benefitted from worker autonomy in that training could be left to 'the workers themselves (see More 1980)' (Savage, 2000:128-129). Apprenticeships played a significant role in shaping the identity of male British workers as they were 'the key institutional process by which boys both became men and skilled workers and thereby members of the working class' (ibid, 2000:128-129). From the bakers accounts in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*, we discover that one of the bakers trained for two years at college, another previously worked for a large supermarket (we presume he had had training as a baker because he lists all of the products he is able to make) and another did an apprenticeship at Sayers when he left school in the mid-1970s. Although it is not clear how much apprenticeships or training has shaped the men's identities, it is clear their training has given them confidence.

Apprenticeships seem to be something that are a less obvious career path for women. The women also don't appear to have any outside interests apart from their families, whereas most of the men have hobbies such as watching football, playing video games, collecting figurines and memorabilia, gardening, fishing, playing football, cycling and training for triathlons. Indeed, when I was growing up my mother had no hobbies apart from

playing Bingo, whereas my father liked to go fishing, attend football matches, watch football on the television and listen to it on the radio, and occasionally play golf in the park across the road from where we lived. As John Clarke and Chas Critcher observe in *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure in Capitalist Britain* (1985), women's role in the family left them with little time for leisure activities outside of the home (ibid, 1985:87), bingo was 'one of the few activities allowed to working class women by themselves, their husbands and their family responsibilities' as it was considered 'a sexually 'safe' activity' (Clarke, Critcher, 1985:87). Indeed, in the 1980s all my mother's free time at the weekend was spent looking after my sister and I while my father was out pursuing his leisure activities – quite often in the pub with his father. My mother-in-law who is now in her mid-seventies has never had any hobbies outside of her role as a mother. On match days she still looks after children (her grandchildren) and cooks a meal for when the men get back from the "match".

Having examined the circumstances surrounding the production of the Phil Manion zines and the many things they communicate about the business, the lived experience of its workers and British working-class employment in general, I will now turn to analysing the way in which the format of the photo zines has helped to achieved this.

## **Format**

Through the way that I sequenced the photographs in *Phil Manion North End Bakers* my intention was to create the impression of a typical working day and to provide the viewer with a sense of the experience of working there. I also wanted to replicate the experience of walking through the larger Phil Manion shop and bakery.

My experience of working in a variety of work places influenced the way in which the photographs were taken and what I chose to photograph. When

producing the photo zines, my memories of working in a betting shop when I was eighteen, influenced the decision to print the scans of the workers writing in colour to indicate the type of pen used (in betting shops cheap, small, plastic biros with very little ink are used as the shops know they will be taken home) as I understand that the subtlest details within photobook design affects their overall tone and how they are read. When taking photographs in the shops and bakery, photographs were taken of the objects and surroundings the workers would see each day (the machinery, the cakes and meats, the thin paper bags that cakes are sold in, the spaces, the décor), as well as the workers themselves. As already noted, I wanted to create a sense of the passage of time and clock watching, which is a part of many people's working lives, through the inclusion of a photograph of an old clock on the smaller shop's old wood panelled wall.



Figure 44. A clock on a wall in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. The photograph an old-fashioned clock on a cheap imitation wood panelled wall which was in the smaller shop that signifies the passage of time and "clock watching" at work. Photo: author.

*Phil Manion North End Bakers* is structured in a way to reflect the layout of the larger of the two Phil Manion shops where the baking and packing is done and my experience of walking through the building. Following an establishing shot of the outside of the smaller shop and a close-up of some cakes on metal trays, there are four photographs that show the female employees at work in the larger shop. A photograph of an old clock on a faux wood panel wall then acts as a sort of interruption and then we move on to a shot of a dark inner hall way where one of the women (Sue) is using a large machine to slice up an unseen loaf. We then return to the front shop but this time we see some of the depth of the bakery through a doorway, some stairs and another room where two men are working. We then move into the room next to the front shop where a young Polish man is packaging barm cakes and then into a room further into the bakery where equipment is washed in a large metal sink. In the room next to this we see a cake mixing machine and a steel work top where trifles and eclairs are decorated and then in the remaining six photographs, we see the heart of the bakery where dough is kneaded by a machine and bread is baked.



Figure 45. The outer shop where the goods that are produced by Phil Manion's are sold in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. Photo: author.

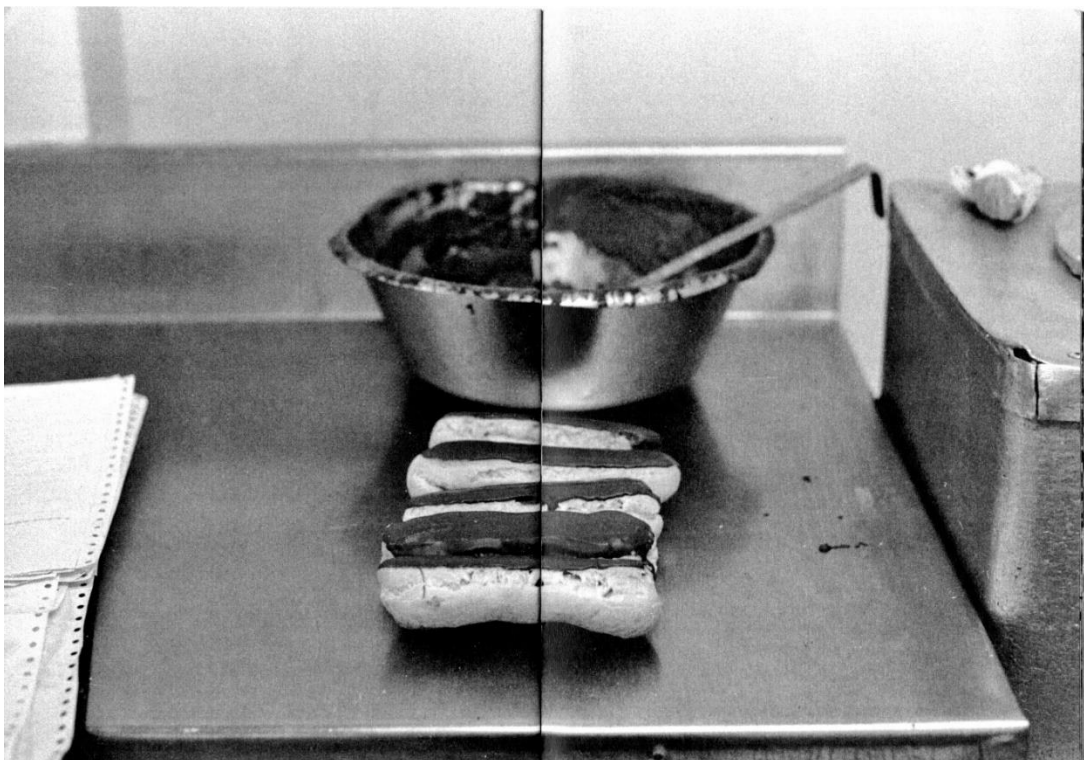
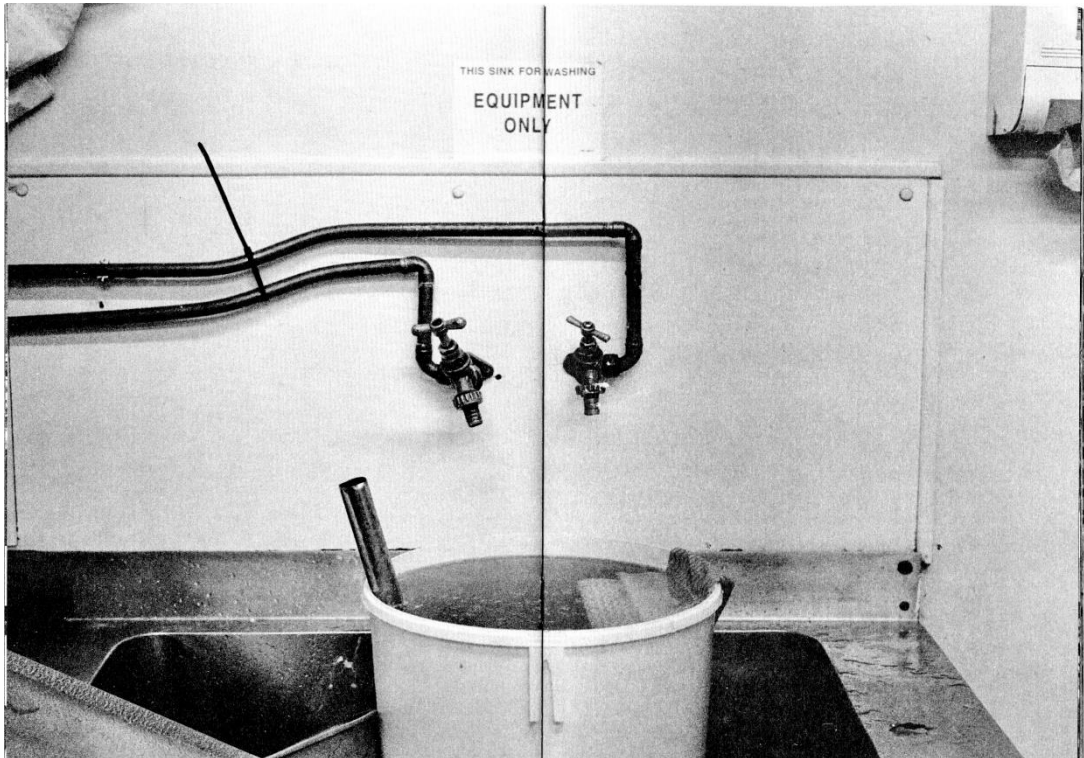


Figure 46. Two photographs of the inner preparation area where cakes are decorated, and equipment is cleaned in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. Photo: author.



Figure 47. A photograph of the inner most section/heart of the building, where bread and cakes are baked in large ovens in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. Photo: author.

There were many interesting aspects of the business that the photo zine represents that may not be obvious and so are difficult to communicate to the viewer. For example, the women who work for the business do the so called “unskilled” jobs and the emotional labour of serving and speaking to customers, while most of the men do the skilled, productive work, for which they do not have to put in any emotional labour or put on any “airs and graces”. This is dealt with in the photo zine through six double page spreads of the women at work in the shop area but in only one photograph can we see the customer who is being served.



Figure 48. Sue serving customers in the shop at the front of the building in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. Photo: author.

In one photograph we see one of the female employees, Sue, making a sandwich for a customer and through the doorway behind her we can see through a corridor, into a room where two men are at work – the posture of one of the men echoes the posture of Sue. This photograph captures the different layers of the business and different functions of workers. It also provides a sense that the space the men occupy is much more private whilst the women occupy a public space and are on display to customers and anyone who walks past the shop in the windowed shop area.





Figure 49. Sue packaging a barm cake in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. This photograph shows the depth of the building and that the women work in the public facing shop area while the men work in the private inner spaces of the bakery. Photo: author.



Figure 50. Two of Phil Manion's female employees busy serving customers in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. Photo: author.



Several of the photographs show the men producing the bread that Phil Manion sell. The men do not have to alter their behaviour to please the customers. All that matters are the quality and quantity of the bread and cakes they produce. As the writing of the workers reveals, the products are a source of pride for the men.

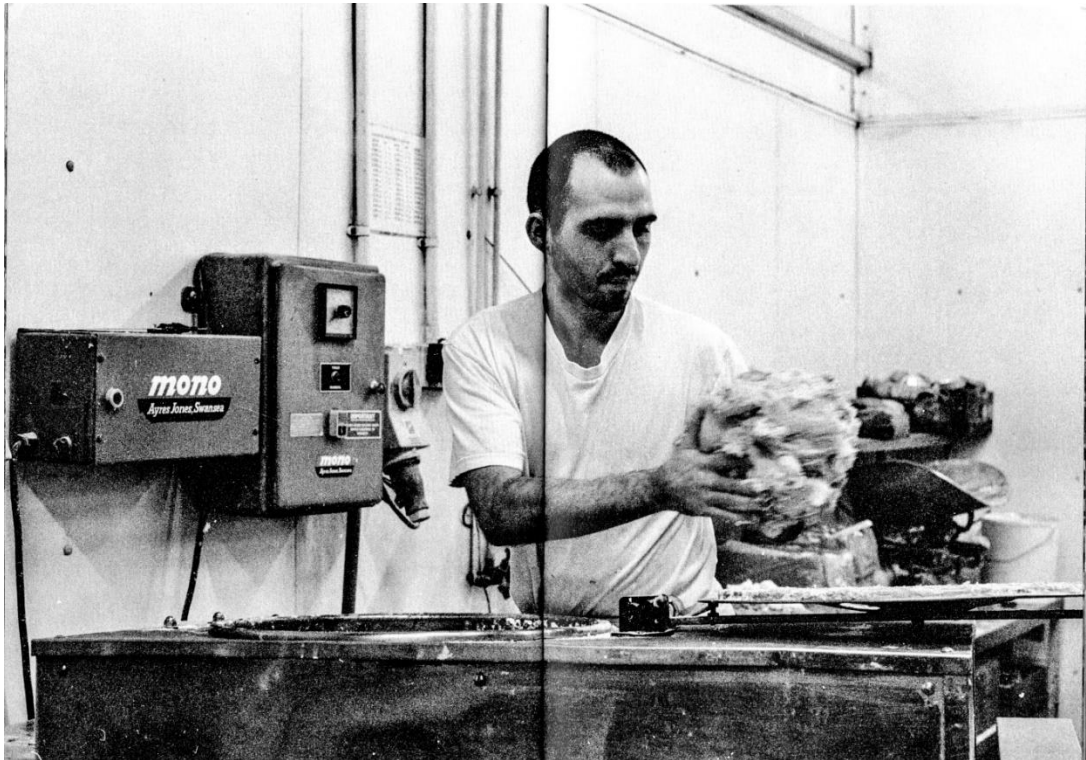


Figure 51. Gary Raby making dough for the bread in *Phil Manion North End Bakers*. His writing in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers* reveals that he takes pride in his work. Photo: author.



Figure 52. Mick (Michael) Mitchell the baker baking bread. *Manion North End Bakers*. His writing in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers* reveals that he takes pride in his work. Photo: author.

Gary Raby

I have worked in Phil Manions now for 11 years  
I ended up working here by word of mouth  
from a guy I worked with

I enjoy working here and really feel satisfied  
when a quality product is your finished <sup>fruit</sup> article.  
My job involves making the bread, pies, and tarts.  
the only thing that really affects my  
life out of work is a couple of hours  
sleep in the afternoon to make up for  
the early mornings,

outside of work I enjoy my kids  
I also fish, and play football

Just life in general because you  
never know what's round the corner  
make the most of it.

Michael Mitchell - Baker & Confectioner

I left school 1975 and served an apprenticeship  
in Sayers. when I was working there were plenty  
of large bakeries Sayers, Cousins, Cubbins, Scotts  
and Reeves all employing hundreds of staff, but  
sadly all gone. The reason they have gone is  
down to the way we shop we do all our shopping  
under one roof which cuts out your baker, butcher,  
and green grocers. Manions is one of only about  
half a dozen bakeries left every day is different  
if some one is off well we might be doing cakes  
bread or pies.

Figure 53. Statements written by two of the men who work in Phil Manion's in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*. Photo: author.

As Mike Savage observes, 'traditional manual cultures rest [...] upon distinguishing work output from conduct ('dressage') during work time. Because labour [is] defined in terms of output it [is] culturally acceptable to 'lark around' at work' (Savage, 2000:139). Whereas 'facework', which is associated with the service industry and is now the most common type of working-class job, requires 'the social skills associated with etiquette, femininity and even cultural capital' (ibid, 2000:139). Understanding this can help to explain why some working-class men might find it more difficult to find or tolerate work in the service industry than working-class women.

The only men doing relatively unskilled work in Phil Manion's was a Polish immigrant in his twenties called Marius, who was photographed packaging barm cakes and another young man, who worked with the middle-aged bakers and appeared to be an apprentice of sorts. The handwritten statements include one written by Marius which reveals quite a lot about his life and ambitions.



Figure 54. Marius, a Polish immigrant, packaging barm cakes in *Phil Manion North End Bakers* Photo: author.



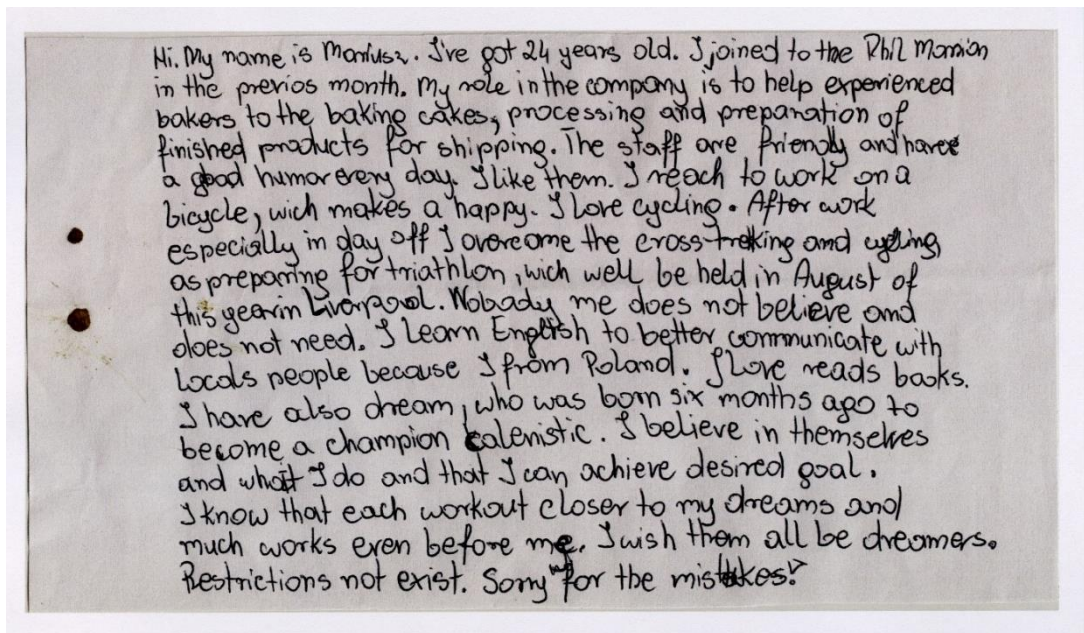


Figure 55. A statement written by Mariusz, the young Polish immigrant, in *Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers*. Photo: author.

## Summary

The hand-written statements reveal much about the history of *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, different aspects of the business, the reasons why people choose to work there, the pride the workers have in their jobs and the lives and interests of the workers outside of their jobs. By printing the statements in a separate booklet, the loose narrative of the photographic sequence which creates a sense of a typical day of work in Phil Manion and the lived experience of working there, is not interrupted by the writing and the writing does not distract from the flow of photographs. The writing provides additional depth to the viewers understanding once the photo zine has been looked at. The process of making these zines as well as critically analysing the British photobooks has taught me that photographs communicate lived experience well enough without text even though text can bring an added dimension to our understanding of the theme/s of the work.

I will now move on to *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...*, which also contains text which provides additional information about the subject and themes of the work but in a different way.

**If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go... (August 2016)**

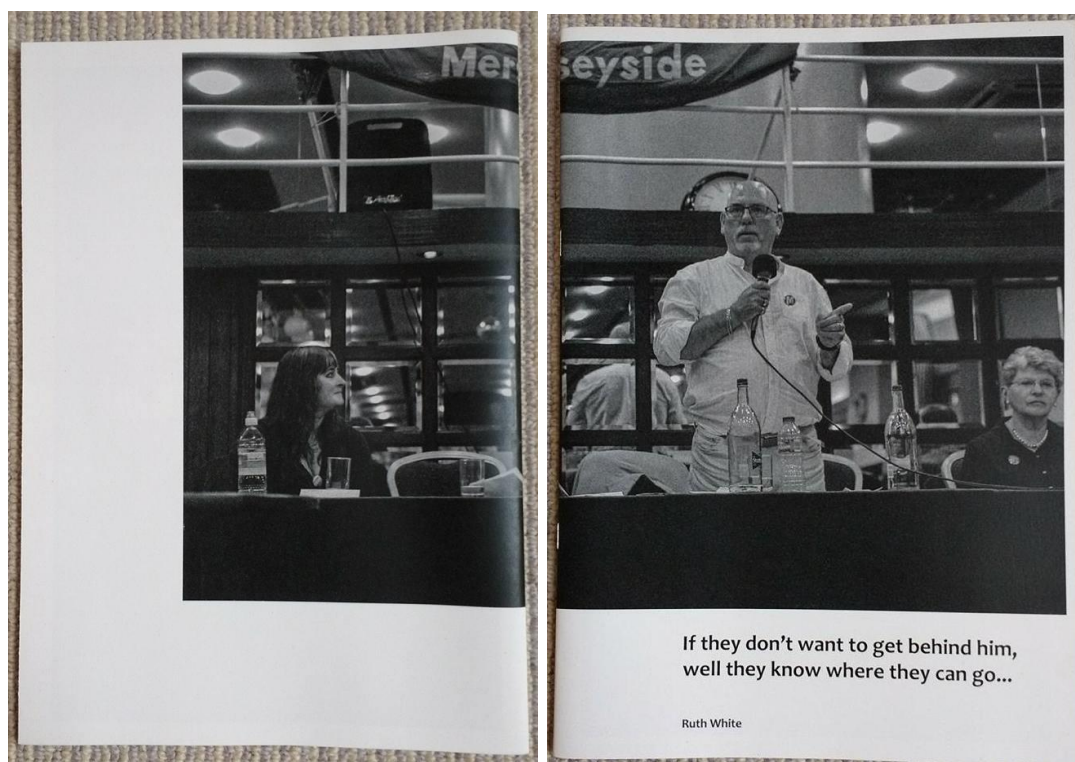


Figure 56. The front and back cover of *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go...* Photos: author.

*If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is an A4, forty-page, black and white photo zine about a rally held in Liverpool's Liner hotel to support the Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn in 2016, following the failed coup to remove him by a group of Labour MPs from the right wing of the party.

### **Context**

Following the coup, many Labour party members (including myself) joined Momentum – a left wing campaigning organisation, which was set up by Tony Benn's former campaign manager John Lansman, following Corbyn's leadership election. It was through the group that I found about the rally and asked for permission to take photographs.

Momentum is a coalition of left-wing groups which attracts the young and those who are new to politics, just as much as older left-wing groups and

the trade unions. Momentum's use of social media to reach out to people and to organise the left was something unavailable to the old left, yet the old left is now able to make use of it. *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...*, like the seven other photo zines in the series (although not intentionally), is a reminder that the past is always in the present. Or in Williams' terms, the old structures of feelings - those that are fully recognised after they 'have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations' remain in the culture as new structures of feelings are emerging (Williams, 1977:132). This can also be thought about in terms of autobiographic time - 'the process by which an individual, in reflecting on and living through his or her life course, 'constantly links the past with the present ... in the light of present events and future expectations' (Brockmeier in Dickinson and Erben, 2006:227) and in terms of working-class identity and how working class practices are quite often traditions passed down from one generation to another (through parents and grandparents). For example, many people (particularly in Liverpool), will vote for the Labour party because of a loyalty to the party which they inherited from the parents and/or grandparents, or they might get involved with the trade union movement because of a history of union involvement within their family.

The title *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is an extract from a speech made by a working-class woman made at the rally. It was chosen as the title as it captures a sense of what motivated people to attend (most of whom were Labour Party members) and how they felt. 'They', meaning the Blairite faction of the Labour party who were involved in the coup to try to remove Corbyn from his position as leader of the Labour party despite him being elected as leader by a large margin. The title also evokes a sense of 'them and us' associated with working-class resentment of the middle and upper classes. As Brian Marren notes in *We Shall Not be Moved: How Liverpool's Working Class Fought Redundancies, Closures and Cuts in the Age of Thatcher* (2016), the working-classes sense of 'them and us' is particularly strong for the working-



classes in Liverpool. Because of a 'close familiarity with unemployment, underemployment and poverty [which has] remained from one generation of Liverpool's working class to the next', there is 'a lingering sense of grievance [which has] germinated on Merseyside, and a working-class culture prizing resistance and fierce independence permeat[ing] the social milieu' (Marren, 2016:26). It is this sense of 'resistance and fierce independence' that can be seen in *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go....* The way in which activists in Liverpool were able to organise the rally at the Liner Hotel and another rally for Corbyn outside St Georges Hall, which was attended by thousands, demonstrated that the working-classes in Liverpool can draw upon their experience of organising for the struggles of the past. As Marren notes 'the region was host to a whole gamut of protest, in which nearly every tactical form of dissent imaginable was utilised by a working class increasingly at odds with the modernity encapsulating a post-industrial experience' (Marren, 2016:2). Some of those activists have put their skills to use for contemporary causes such as shifting the Labour party back to the left once again, following Tony Blair's decisive shift of the party to the right in the 1990s and 2000s. Indeed, as I became more involved and active with the Labour party and Momentum following the rally, I came to know that several people who are involved with organising the left in Liverpool had been involved with the Militant tendency in the 1980s.

The male speakers at the rally who gesture passionately in two photographs towards the end of *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* stand in marked contrast to the polished and controlled media savvy performances of MPs, many of which originate from PR backgrounds that were brought into the Labour party in the 1990s by Tony Blair. Media trained MPs avoid gestures such as pointing, as they can be photographed and used by the media to make them appear aggressive or authoritarian, and if you observe MPs on television, you will notice the same impotent thumb clenched over fist gesture, that many MPs have trained themselves to make.



Former Labour Prime Minister

Tony Blair



Former Tory Prime Minister

David Cameron

Figure 57. Tony Blair and David Cameron making the impotent thumb/hand gesture that many MPs use to emphasise parts of a speech without appearing aggressive.



Figure 58. A man making a speech at a Jeremy Corbyn rally in *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go....* This photograph captures a sense of an older Labourist tradition, which my use of black and white photography reinforces, in which working-class men passionately and sometimes quite aggressively, argued their position. Photo: author.

## Format

When sequencing the photographs for *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* my main intention was to communicate a sense of how it felt to be a member of the audience at the rally. I also wanted the order of the photographs to reflect the sequence of events during the evening and the photographs to show the passion of the speakers and the enthusiasm and support they received from the audience. By pairing up photographs of speakers and performers with photographs of the audience reacting, I provide a sense of the experience of the audience by showing what and who they are looking at and their enthusiasm and response to what the speakers are saying.

*If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* has a wrap-around cover. On the front, a stern, bald, bespectacled man stands behind a long table, appearing authoritative, with a microphone in one hand and gently pointing to an unseen audience with his other. Next to him a middle-aged woman with short hair looks out wistfully at the audience. This photograph was chosen as the cover as the bald man was the rally's compère and so played a central role in the rally and the flag hanging down above him communicates to the viewer that the rally was held somewhere in the north west region of Merseyside. On the back cover, a dark-haired woman sitting behind the table gazes up at the man with what appears to be admiration, this too can also be read as harking back to the past when men were more dominant in politics. Yet this is not to say this was how the sexual division of labour at the rally really was, as the woman is a councillor with a strong voice of her own and just as many women spoke at the rally as men.

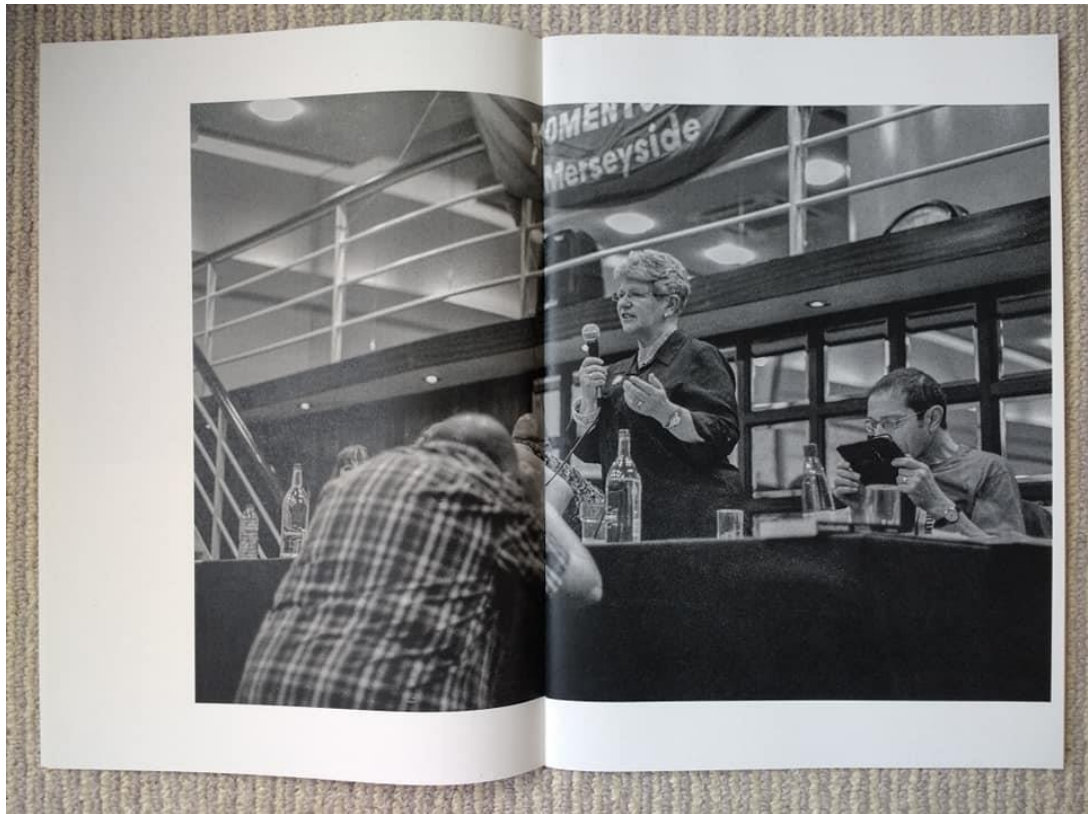


Figure 59. The only photograph of a women giving a speech in *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go...* even though several women spoke at the rally. I made this photograph larger than many of the others so although women are less in number in the photo zine, they have more of an equal presence to the men. Photo: author.

*If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is the only photo zine in the collection of eight in which text is included (*Phil Manion North End Bakers* does not contain text, although it is accompanied by a separate zine of workers writing). The text is a transcription of a passionate speech made by a working-class woman at the rally, which was transcribed from a recording of the rally on YouTube after the event.

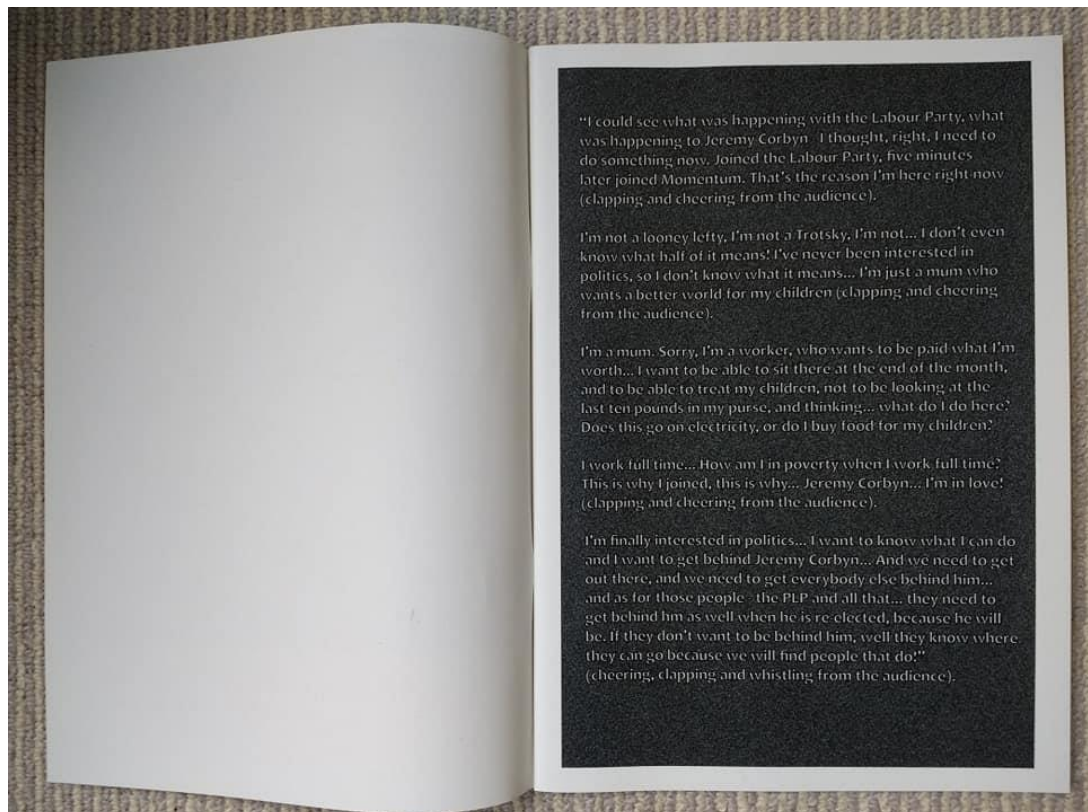


Figure 60. A transcription of a passionate speech made by a working-class woman at the Jeremy Corbyn rally in *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go....* A Photo: author.

The speech not only provides a context and sets the tone for the photographs, but also creates a minor 'blockage between photo and text' (Mitchell, 1994:292), in that there is not a straightforward link between the speech and the photographs that follow because the reader may be left wondering who the woman is and if she appears in the photographs. Like *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, in which there is not a 'straightforward collaboration [between] photo and text' (ibid, 1994:292) and the mystery of who the woman is and whether she appears in the photographs or not, provides a sort of reversal of Walker Evans's photographs and Agee's text. *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is otherwise a relatively conventional photo essay because of its straightforward narrative structure. It has nothing of the abstraction produced by what appears to be a lack of narrative in the sequence of Evan's photographs in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, which forces the reader to focus on the 'formal and material features of the images

themselves' (Mitchell, 1994:293) and leads the reader to wonder about which of the subjects that appear in Evans's photographs Agee is writing about. The separation of text and photographs in *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is also not what WJT Mitchell terms 'an ethical strategy' (Mitchell, 1994:295) in that it is not done to prevent 'easy access to the world they represent' (Mitchell, 1994:295) – the people at the rally are not impoverished Tenant farmers and do not need protecting from the same political agendas that Evans and Agee were angered by and fought against in the 1930s (Shloss, 1987:181-187). It is an ethical strategy that can be put to the similar uses by contemporary photographers, journalists, artists and photobook practitioners who also wish to block conventional readings of their photographs and the subjects within them.

It is also worth highlighting, that if it wasn't for the discovery of the video, it is unlikely that any text would have appeared in the photo zine and so it is another instance in the research of how serendipity and opportunity plays a role in shaping the practice.

The inclusion of the text not only provides the viewer with a sense of what the rally was about, but also provides a form of historical context and a sense of the kinds of things that the voiceless speechmakers we see in the rest of the book might also have been saying. Her statement "I'm not a looney lefty, I'm not a Trotsky" also highlights the way in which huge swathes of the media were working and continue to work to discredit the left and supporters of Corbyn. Yet like the hand-written accounts of the workers that accompany *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, the text is not an explanation of the work or of the theme, but rather, another component that adds further insight into the experience of being there. The text is printed in a white, neutral typeface against a black background, which I deliberately designed to have the same visible grain as the photographs in the book. As already noted, the title *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* is an extract from the woman's speech. It not only



captures a sense of working-class, informal speech, but also working-class loyalty, collectivity and solidarity (as opposed to middle class individualism), implying – don't pick on one of ours, and evoking a sense of "them and us" (them usually being those from the middle and upper classes), which has traditionally been part of working-class struggle, identity and a psychic economy of class (Skeggs, 2016:505-506). As already noted, class positions are relational so that individuals are also distinguished and defined by 'what [they are] not and especially from everything [they are] opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference' (Bourdieu, 1984:166-167).

Beverley Skeggs observes that years of living with precariousness produces an orientation towards others which has made the working-class in the UK resistant to the individualism that was introduced from the late 1970s onwards. Members of the working-classes look out for each other 'for sound economic reasons' - so that 'future problems may be shared' (Skeggs, 2011:506). As already noted, this is particularly true of Liverpool which has a long history of job precarity and unemployment (Marren, 2016:26).

When producing *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* I had been reading Chris Killip's *Inflagrante* (1988), a relatively large photobook in which many of his photographs are printed across two pages with large white borders. This allows Killip's photographs to be seen on a larger scale and in more detail than they would otherwise be seen if confined to a single page, and so I decided to do the same to highlight seven of the most interesting photographs of speakers and audience members. By doing this I was able to show in more detail the expressions and emotions on people's faces and in doing so, create more of an emotional connection with the viewer.



Figure 61. The audience clapping in *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go...* Printing photographs large across two pages allowed me to show in more detail the expressions and emotions on people's faces and in doing so, create more of an emotional connection with the viewer. Photo: author.

Most of the other photographs in *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* are landscape format and printed one on each page towards the top with large white borders. This layout produces an effect that is like looking through a letter box or a handheld slide viewer and so makes the viewer feel physically and psychologically distant from the subjects of the photographs.



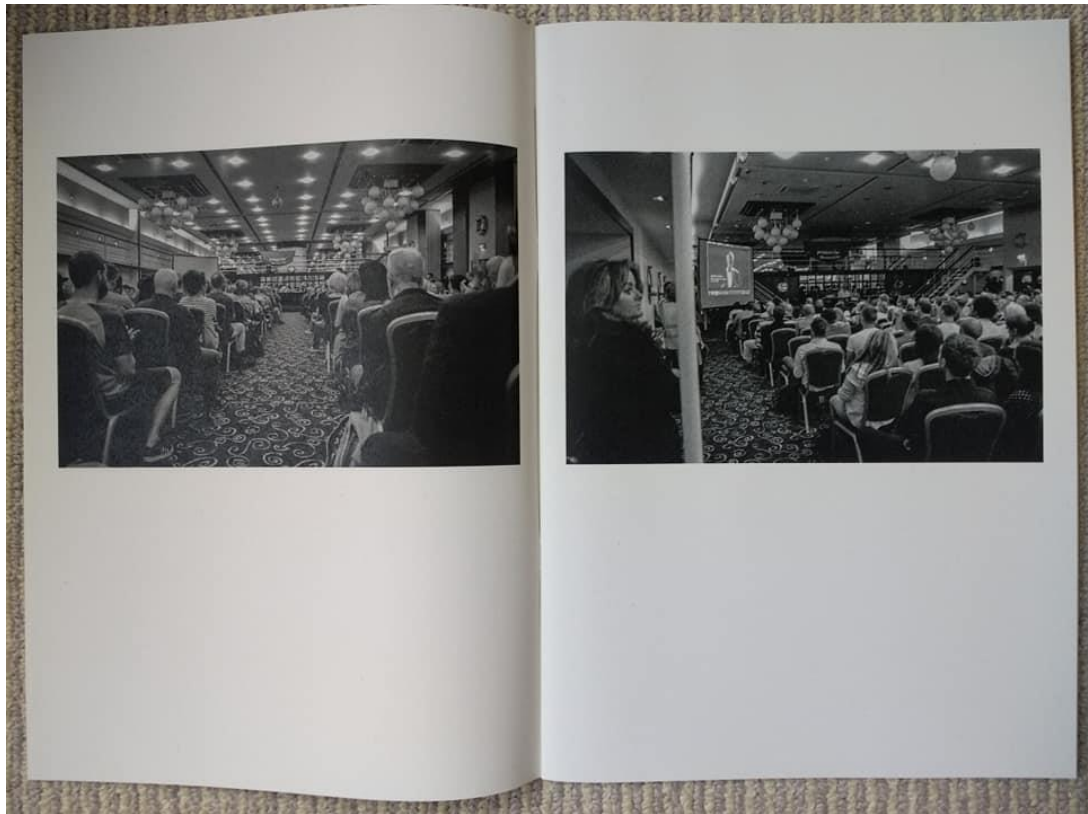


Figure 62. A pair of photographs of the audience of a Jeremy Corbyn rally in *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go...* The white borders around the photographs are like looking through a letter box or a handheld slide viewer and so create a distancing effect. Photo: author.

This distancing effect was not something deliberately intended – it was a consequence of attempting to fit in as many landscape format photographs as possible on to the forty portrait format pages available, in order to provide the viewer with a greater sense of the rally. Because of what I learnt from producing the six photo zines which followed, if I were to rework *If they don't want to get behind him, well they know where they can go...* I would most likely edit out several photographs and print the remaining ones as full bleed, double page spreads.

## Summary

Experimenting with printing smaller landscape photographs and photographs printed larger across two pages has demonstrated that printing some photographs larger can help to underline the importance of the subjects of those photographs and can in some ways compensate for less photographs

of that subject – i.e. many women spoke at the rally but there are less photographs of women yet the photograph of a woman making a speech printed larger than many of the other photograph compensates for this. Pairing up photographs across the page from each other has demonstrated how it is possible to show two view points and in doing so provide a greater sense of lived experience – i.e. photographs of audience members and of speakers makes visible what the audience was looking at.

The use of a transcribed speech demonstrates another way that the theme/s of a photobook can be contextualised.

I will now move on to *Homebaked*, the first colour photo zine in the series in which I decided not to use text but did contextualise the theme/s of the work (in a more subtle way) on the first page, using a photograph of a street sign which points towards the history of the area and the failed Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder Programme.

## Home Baked (December 2016)

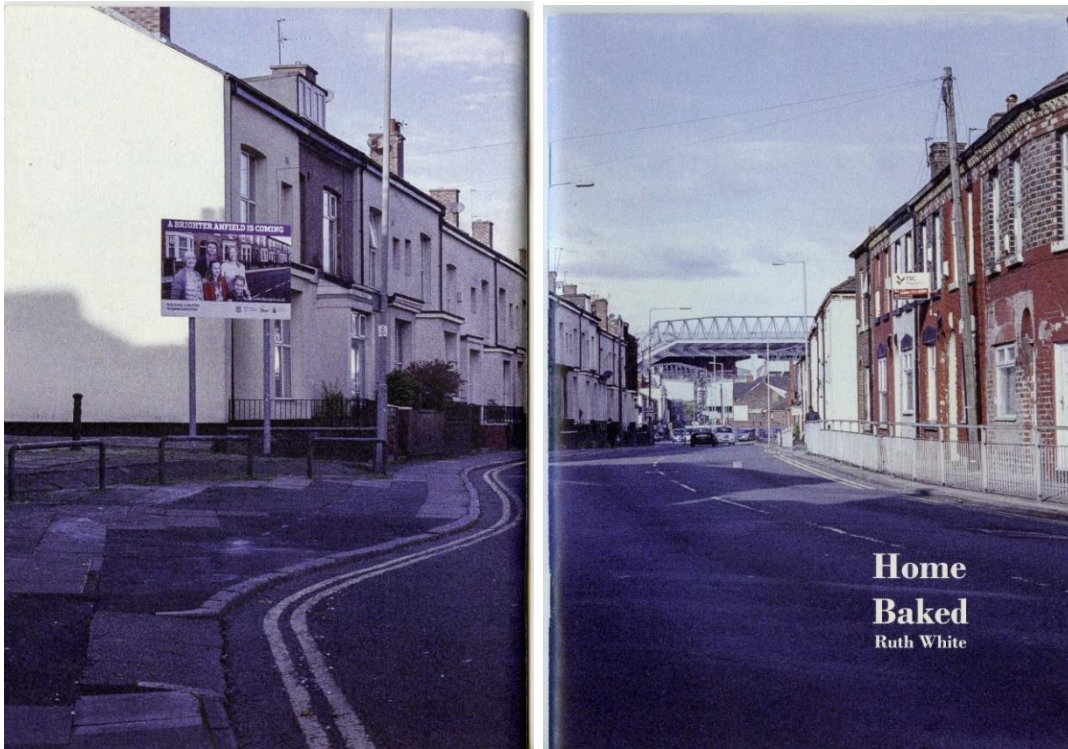


Figure 63. The front and back cover of *Home Baked*. Photos: author.

*Home Baked* is an eponymously titled A5, forty-page, colour photo zine about a bakery which serves the local community as well as the fans of Liverpool Football Club which sits opposite.

### Context

Like Phil Manion North End Bakers, Mitchell's, which opened in 1903, was able to survive the growth of supermarkets and many of the changes to local high streets. Yet the two elderly Mitchell sisters who worked there, were forced to sell the bakery after it was earmarked to be demolished as part of a Labour government's Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder Programme for the area. The programme which involved refurbishment or demolition of old homes and the building of new homes, was introduced in 2002 as an attempt to deal with 'falling house prices, high vacancy rates and, in extreme cases, housing abandonment in a number of towns and cities in the North and Midlands of England' (Leather, Nevin, 2011:856). 'In Anfield, the slow phasing in of the scheme meant that some residents would

not be bought out by the local authority for many years so were trapped living in homes surrounded by derelict properties' (Leeming, 2006:3). To add to this, in 2010 the programme was then brought to an abrupt end by a Conservative/Liberal Democrat government 'without a formal review of its performance or a risk analysis of the social and economic impact of its termination' (Leather, Nevin, 2013:858).

As part of an intervention for the Liverpool Biennale, between 2011 and 2014 the artists Jeanne Van Heeswijk and Britt Jurgensen facilitated the reopening of the Mitchells bakery, which became known as Homebaked. Heeswijk and Jurgensen describe the project as 'a small scale alternative' to the very apparent failure of Housing Market Renewal initiative [which was] built for and with the community' (Heeswijk, Jurgensen, 2014:2).

In January 2011 the Mitchell's bakery closed its doors. The Mitchell sisters left a poignant sign in the window which read: "We tried to stick it out, but we can't. God bless you for your custom" (Heeswijk, Jurgensen, 2014:4).

Following its closure, Heeswijk and Jurgensen decided to temporarily lease the building from the Mitchells and it became a meeting space for their project. Questions from locals about when the bakery would reopen prompted the idea to reopen it. After many discussions about how to organise the co-ownership of the bakery and the land behind it, they decided to use a Community Land Trusts (CLT) model, a model whose origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century and has been used effectively in deprived communities in the USA and more recently in rural communities in the UK. CLTs are 'non-profit, community-based organisations, run by volunteers, that develop housing, workspaces, community facilities or other assets that meet the needs of the area, are owned and controlled by the community and are made available at permanently affordable levels' (Heeswijk, Jurgensen, 2014:4). Homebaked 'be[came] one of the first urban CLTs in the UK' (Heeswijk, Jurgensen, 2014:4).

After many ups and downs, negotiations and an agreement by Liverpool City Council to buy the bakery from the Mitchell's and then gift it to the CLT for refurbishment and development, Homebaked is a fully functioning business which belongs to the local community.

I found out about Homebaked from a supervisor who suggested the bakery might be a good work place to photograph. Given that Homebaked emerged from an art project, I correctly presumed that the people involved with the bakery would be more open to an artist coming in to take photographs.

Although I had not done much research about the history and politics of Homebaked before taking photographs there, I was interested in it for many reasons: That it was an area I knew well, having spent a lot of my childhood in Anfield when being looked after by my grandparents who lived in a 'two up two down' just up the road from the bakery (in a street off Breck Road which runs across Oakfield Road where the bakery is situated); how deprived the surrounding area was (for many years I had spoken about the bitter irony of such a rich football club being situated in such a run-down area); that it was a place where football fans would go for a pre or post-match pie and football is a game associated with the working-classes; and how the Mitchell sisters had been forced to give up their family business.

After an initial meeting and discussion with Britt Jurgensen at the bakery, I was hoping I might even be able to meet the Mitchell sisters and photograph them in their home but sadly nothing materialised. Instead I was invited to spend an afternoon working as a volunteer in the kitchen in order to get to know the staff and volunteers a little bit. This meant that I was familiar with how the business operated, the people who worked there and that on the day of photographing it also meant that although I was not an "insider", I was not a complete "outsider". Following my day of chopping vegetables and chatting, I returned on a match day to take photographs. I was less nervous and more prepared than when photographing Phil Manion's bakery, as I was familiar with the staff, the layout of the building and the lighting.

Breck Road which runs across Oakfield Road where Homebaked is situated is a grim looking, long road of shops that leads to Liverpool's city centre. As children, my sister and I had stayed at our grandparent's house in Anfield every Friday night and my grandmother would usually walk us along Breck Road on Saturday mornings. In practical terms this meant that I was familiar with the layout of the roads surrounding the bakery and football ground and so I had an idea of which locations to take photographs to give the reader a general sense of the area. For example, the photograph of a terraced lined road which leads to the football ground in the distance was taken on the way to visiting the bakery which was then used as a wrap-around cover for *Home Baked*. My previous experience of producing two photo zines also meant that I was becoming more adept at thinking about the types of photographs that could be used to contextualise the bakery and what might work well for the front and back cover before the day of photographing.

This lived experience of the area and of the role of football in working-class life made me more of an "insider" taking the photographs than an "outsider", despite barely knowing the staff who work at the bakery. The deprivation of the area was not something new or shocking to me and the general buzz of a match day was also something deeply familiar. My childhood memories of Anfield are positive ones, so I understood that despite the obvious deprivation of the area, that people can live and find happiness there.

Having grown up in Walton Village, just a fifteen-minute walk from Everton football club's football ground (not far from Anfield), hearing the cheers and seeing the cars parked outside my house on match day and greeting my dad when I was a child in the street when he returned from watching the match (often with the smell of beer on his breath), the boredom I felt when my dad listened to the football on the radio and my trips to my mother-in-law's so my husband can attend Tranmere football club's home matches with his brother, his brother in-law and his nephews, all meant that I also understood the nuances of football culture and its role in working-class life. In this way, the changes that have occurred within the social and economic field of football are a microcosm of changes that have happened in wider society, in

that despite the changes brought about by the neo-liberalisation of the economy and institutions– how big money and high ticket prices mean that many working class people can only afford to watch football on television and some can't even afford that, there are still working-class people who attend football matches and for whom football is an important part of their lives.

### **Format**

Through the way that I sequenced photographs in *Homebaked* my main intention was to communicate a sense of the experience of working in the bakery on a typical match day. It was also to communicate a sense of the experience of working-class football supporters who visit Homebaked and places like that as part of the routine of “going to the match”.

The name of the bakery was used for the title but split into two parts – Home and Baked, in order to emphasise the Home aspect of the name, as the word home has many connotations. For most people home is a place of comfort and security but for many people living in Anfield their homes have been a constant source of anxiety, not only because of the threat of demolition because of the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder Programme but also because their homes have been surrounded by streets of boarded up houses. Although home for Anfield residents' is a source of anxiety, *Home Baked* also hints that this anxiety may soon come to an end. Not only because of the reopening of the bakery but because of the promise of new houses and a better neighbourhood on a large street sign shown in the first photograph inside the zine. The headline of the sign states, 'A Brighter Anfield is Coming' and shows a photograph of an idealised working-class family – complete with a mum, dad, two children and a grandmother standing in front of a row of new terraced houses. At the bottom a subheading states: 'Building a Better Neighbourhood' and this is accompanied by the names of four organisations who we presume are working together for the 'Anfield Project': Liverpool Football Club, Liverpool

City Council, a company called Your and another called Home & Communities.

As already noted, a single landscape photograph taken a half mile along the road away from the Bakers provides a wrap-around cover for *Home Baked*. The photograph of the old terraced houses with the Anfield stadium in the distance on the front cover sets the scene for the rest of the photographs inside the zine. It acts like an establishing shot in a film or television programme, so although most of the action takes place inside Homebaked, the viewer can get an impression of the area where the bakery is situated. The run-down looking terraced houses convey the idea of Anfield being the economically and socially deprived area that it is.

The first image inside the book is a close-up of the sign so that by the time the viewer reaches the back cover, they will be aware of the full content of the sign and its implications. This sort of collaboration with private investors in deprived areas is something that will undoubtedly be found in areas up and down the country, so represents a way of managing the economy and town planning. It also signifies that despite the run-down state of Anfield it is an area which is "on the up".





Figure 64. A close-up of a sign on the first page of *Home Baked* draws attention to the economic and political background of the area and indirectly towards the history of the failed Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder Programme. Photo: author.

The first nine photographs focus on the staff and the space and objects in Homebaked before the customers start pouring in. Like *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, special attention is paid to one of the bakers through a set of five photographs which show him performing different aspects of his job and then resting to eat a pie. By doing this I not only provide a sense of the lived experience of one member of the staff who works at the bakery but also a sense of what the business does.



Figure 65. A man sliding a tray of pies into an oven in *Home Baked*. One of set of five photographs of a baker who works at Homebaked which provides a sense of different aspects of his job and his lived experience of working there. Photo: author.

The next eight photographs focus on when the bakery is at its busiest. The photographs show the football fans who are the customers of the bakery in the front shop and being served out of a hatch in the side of the bakery's kitchen. The first shows a group of middle-aged men, sitting at tables in the bakery's shop area, eating pies and drinking from paper cups. We then see a couple of men standing waiting to be served in the shop area – one of the men faces the camera, he wears a scarf and his clutching his hands as if cold and trying to warm up. In the photograph that follows we see a view from behind the counter of a woman serving customers wearing Liverpool Football Club scarfs – by this point the viewer is now picking up enough details to realise these are fans of Liverpool Football Club. In the next photograph, two young men unconsciously and comedically echo each other's body language, they both pinch their faces and look up as if reading a menu. The next photograph provides the viewer with more context and a sense of the hustle and bustle of fans outside of the bakery. People stand in the road and flags

and a chip stall can be seen in the background. We see the old 'Mitchells Bakery' sign above the door of the bakery which is a reminder of Homebaked former owners and the history of the bakery.



Figure 66. A woman serving football fans in *Home Baked*. One of a set of photographs which show the bakery when it is at its' busiest on match days. Photo: author.

The last five photographs act as a group because they all focus on the serving hatch in the bakery where football fans buy pies and other kinds of food.





Figure 67. A young man serving customers food out of a hatch in a kitchen in *Home Baked*. One of the last five photographs in *Home Baked* which all focus on the serving hatch where customers are served food on match days. Photo: author.

The first three of the group show the faces of customers who are being served by a young blonde-haired man through the hatch. In two of the three, one of the customers looks directly at the camera and, in turn, at the viewer. The final photograph of the hatch has the appearance of a still life as it focuses on the gingham table cloth, sauces and napkins sitting in the window sill of the empty serving hatch. The red brick wall in the middle distance appears out of focus. This photograph was chosen to end *Home Baked* with as the stillness of the image brings the action to an end and feels like a pause. It also signifies the end of the working day as most of the football fans have all gone in to the match.

### Summary

*Home Baked* demonstrates how several aspects of working-class life can be combined in one photo zine – i.e. work, football (culture) and to a lesser extent home/housing. Using a photograph of a street sign or anything which points towards what is happening or has happened more broadly in an area

is a way of providing context for the subjects and theme/s of a photo zine. Photographs alone are complex enough to provide the viewer with a lot of information even if they are not conscious of it. The scruffy terraced housing on the front cover of *Home Baked* is enough to communicate to the viewer that the area is run down and everything that is associated with that, and this sets the tone for how the rest of the photographs in the sequence will be read.

I will now move on to *Lavina's Christmas Party*, another of the photo zines that focuses on an aspect of working-class community and culture as well as childhood.

## Lavinia's Christmas Party (July 2017)



Figure 68. The front and back cover of *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. Photos: author.

*Lavinia's Christmas Party* is an A4, forty-page, black and white photo zine about a children's Christmas party held in a sports centre in Walton park, in the north of Liverpool where I grew up.

### Context

As noted previously, my daughter and I were invited to a Christmas party in a sports centre by a woman called Lavinia who lives next door to my close friend Sue's mother, Dolly. Lavinia, a working-class woman, organised and hosted the party with her husband for their friends and neighbours. They charged the families a small fee for the party which did not cover its full cost nor the cost of the gifts they gave to the children. When I told Lavinia how kind I thought she was for going to so much trouble and for evidently having spent so much money, she replied: "you only live once". This sense of community and neighbourliness is something that I grew up with, indeed, when I was a child I often spent more time with my neighbour Sue than with my own parents.

In *Imagining Personhood Differently: Person Value and Autonomist Working-Class Value Practices* (2011), Beverley Skeggs proposes that working-class practices and values offer an 'alternative circuit of value/s' (Skeggs, 2011:503) to possessive individualism which has become 'the dominant symbolic model for proper personhood' in western society (Skeggs, 2011:501). This idea of an 'alternative circuit of value' operating amongst the working-classes emerged from the hundreds of interviews she conducted with working-class individuals over many years, for several research projects since the 1980s (Skeggs, 2011:506). Her observations are vital for understanding the value of working-class practices and how they undermine or resist the individualism encouraged by the neo-liberalisation of Britain since the 1980s. The dominant European value system which has in subtle and not so subtle ways, characterised and/or represented the working-classes as victims and/or lacking in value, includes Bourdieu's habitus, which as Skeggs points out, does not explain the value of those with the 'wrong capitals, those who *cannot* access the fields of exchange to convert, accrue or generate value for themselves' (Skeggs, 2011:501-502). Those with the 'wrong capitals' – i.e. working-class subjects, stand in opposition to '[t]he middle-class 'subject of value', the subject of entitlement, acquisition and appropriation who moves across social space with ease constantly entering fields for the conversion and accrual of value to their selves' (Skeggs, 2011:504).

Skeggs proposes three models for understanding how 'personhood is shaped through different spatial and temporal configurations of value' as follows: 'a model of *extraction from* (surplus value extraction from labour power – time and energy) [Marx], a model of *accruing to* (time and energy on self-development) [Bourdieu] whilst the other is based on *relationality* (time and energy with and for others) [Skeggs]' (Skeggs, 2011:509). The model based on *relationality* (time and energy with and for others) is a theme that has emerged from her research (Skeggs, 2011:53) since the 1980s (Skeggs, 2011:506).

She notes the many ways that the working-class women who were the subject of her research for *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (1997) supported each other, which is worth citing at length:

Through the habits of precarity these young women learnt to support each other in the best ways they could, the giving of time, energy and attention was crucial to a supportive sociality. They learnt to 'duck and dive' (surviving on little through various means, passing on useful knowledge and things) and tried to protect each other against the financial, physical and psychic depressions that regularly threatened their already precarious lives. They 'looked out' for each other and developed localised spaces of protection but also fun. They learned how to have a good time in bleak conditions and cramped spaces in which increased state interference and middle-class spectral judgement repeatedly threatened to intervene. They made the best of their limited circumstances in the present where the future seemed bleak and their best chance of value was moral and affective not financial – love. Love for children (not often men) and family and friends. Theirs was a revalorisation of relationships made from local, familial sociality where other people were supportive connectives, not sources for self-accumulation.

(Skeggs, 2011:504)

Skeggs notes that the attitudes towards work of all the working-class participants she has interviewed since the 1980s was shaped by the constant presence of precarity 'an awareness of exploitation rather than the ethic of aspiration, endurance rather than entitlement' (Skeggs, 2011:506).

The existence of 'other alternative value formations' (Skeggs, 2011:504) were also discovered by Skeggs in her research for *Contingencies of Value* (2006), in the form of 'the non-utilitarian affects of care, loyalty and affection' (ibid, 2011:504) and in her research for *Making Class and Self Through Televised Ethical Scenarios* (2006-8) (Skeggs, 2011:505). Instead of using all of their free time to 'generate cultural and social capital' like their middle class counterparts, working-class participants 'spent most of their time with friends and family in home and local spaces, not involved in improving activities but just 'being', 'with mates', 'chit chatting', and 'hanging out' (Skeggs, 2011:505).



*Lavinia's Christmas Party* represents one of the ways in which working class individuals and communities find 'other routes to valuing each other outside the circuits of exchange that demand a value-return' (Skeggs, 2011:504). Lavinia organised and hosted the party out of the goodness of her heart - because it gave her pleasure to show generosity towards friends and her local community – not because it would create social or cultural capital that could be converted in the future, like for example, helping her child to get into a better school.

Parties organised by local communities is something I mistakenly believed was a thing of the past. Growing up in the 1980s I attended many street parties and summer fairs but as an adult I have seen less evidence of them. And so, *Lavinia's Party* feels like a representation of the past in the present, in the same way that *Phil Manion's North End Bakers* and *If They Don't Want to Get Behind Them Well They Know Where They Can Go...* and *Funland* are. This can be thought about in terms of nostalgia.

In their paper *Nostalgia and Autobiography: The Past in the Present* (2006), Hilary Dickenson and Michael Erben observe that nostalgia is both a painful and pleasurable, 'culturally derived' emotion. The pain arises from the sense of loss that occurs when remembering 'a valued experience in the past' that 'one does not expect to have again'. 'Nostalgic thoughts mourn a loss, but they also include acceptance of the loss, and it is that acceptance that makes possible a pleasurable feeling along with an out-rush of regret' (Dickenson, Erben, 2006:223).

Dickenson and Erben conducted a small-scale study using a questionnaire which asked participants to write about their nostalgic experiences. Six out of the seven participants chose to write about experiences from their childhood. Although the study is small in empirical terms, it is credible to deduce from the results of their research that many individuals are nostalgic about childhood experiences because childhood is a stage in life when individuals have the greatest sense of freedom (at least in Britain) and

security (if they are fortunate enough to live in households with loving parents). Childhood is also a time which can never be returned to.

It is therefore unsurprising that out of the collection of eight photo zines, it is those containing children and those which focus on common British childhood experiences that are the ones most likely to provoke feelings of nostalgia. Yet because nostalgia is culturally derived, the photographs will not arouse feelings of nostalgia in all viewers and are less likely to arouse feelings of nostalgia in those whose childhood experiences may have been completely different – for example, individuals from completely different cultures or classes.

The syntax of the photographs which were taken on film also contributes to the triggering of nostalgic memories (at least for people like me - in their 40s and upwards) in that they are a reminder of the materials of the past. The lack of sharpness of the photographs caused by the photographic grain also mimics the fuzziness of memories as opposed to the harder edges of the reality of the present.

In the introduction to the thesis I cited John Roberts who observes that photographs are 'not simply descriptive-historical, but affective and empathic', or in other words, they provide 'an emotional "hold"' (Roberts, 2014:4). I also noted Roberts' recognition of the 'profound contribution of the defence of the social ontology of photography' that Roland Barthes makes, through his recognition of the way that photographs psychologically wound us (ibid, 2014:4) in *Camera Lucida* (1980). Therefore, to build upon this, I propose that the pain and pleasure of nostalgia which can be triggered by photographs that remind viewers of past experiences which they cannot return to, are yet another dimension to the way in which photographs provide an emotional hold and can psychologically wound us.

It is serendipitous that the photobooks for my practice whose themes and content represent the most a sense of the past in the present, are black and white. Black and white photography reinforces this sense of the past both in

terms of actual history and the history of documentary photography. Indeed, I remember as a child thinking that in the past people lived in a black and white world because of the way that history was documented with black and white photographs. As previously noted, the rise of colour documentary photography coincided with the abandonment of the representation of working-class people as dignified producers, to be replaced by a representation of the working-classes as consumers.

*Lavinia's Christmas Party*, is profoundly related to my own lived experience of childhood, in that as I child I attended many parties held in the local community (mainly street parties, jumble sales and summer fayres) and spent a lot of time with Sue and her mother Dolly, her aunty Olive and Sue's younger sister Andrea, who all attended the party and appear in the photo zine. The sports hall where the party was held is also directly related to my childhood in that, when I would visit Dolly's house with Sue, I would sometimes attend a roller disco in the same sports hall with Sue's sisters and daughter. When I got older, my secondary school (just up the road) would take us there by coach for some of our PE lessons. This lived experience and intimate knowledge of the sports hall and the people at the party may not be obvious in the *Lavina's Christmas party* but perhaps came out in what I chose to photograph, how I related to the adults and children I photographed and how the photographs were edited. Once again, I was an "insider" not only because I was a guest at the party with my daughter but also, and most importantly, because of my relationship to those photographed and of a having a deep understanding of the place, the community and the practices I was photographing.

*Lavinia's Christmas Party* is also related my childhood memories of Christmas parties and of attending Christmas parties at my father place of work - a council office in Kirby, Liverpool and of being sent on my own by my grandparents with hundreds of other children to the annual Christmas party held by the Liverpool Football Supporters Club. All of this fed in to the way I took the photographs and of how I edited them together. Many of the

photographs for *Lavinia's Christmas Party* were taken by kneeling or sitting on the floor to give a sense of the party from the perspective of the children we see in the book. This was done to come a little bit closer to the lived experience of the children.

### **Format**

Through the way that I sequenced photographs in *Lavinia's Christmas Party* my main intention was to communicate a sense of the lived experience of the children at the party and a general sense of the experience of children visiting Father Christmas in his grotto.

On the front cover of *Lavinia's Christmas Party*, a boy expectantly enters a makeshift grotto, whose door is being opened via a zip, by an adult dressed as an elf, as people queuing behind, peep in. This mimics a sense of the viewer entering the book and the experience and narrative contained within its pages. This photograph is ambiguous but with the title it makes a little more sense, yet it is only once the viewer turns the page and sees the inside of the makeshift grotto that it becomes clear the zipped curtain is the entrance to a grotto and the lady opening the curtain is wearing a hat because she is dressed as an elf.

On the back page a toddler wearing a Liverpool Football Club top appears to have just come out of the grotto whilst the grotto doors are held open by an unseen lady's arms. The action of holding open the makeshift grotto's door is repeated on the front and the back cover. The boy standing outside the grotto has a finality about it and represents the end of the narrative and the end of the viewer's experience, just as leaving the grotto represents the end of the child's experience of visiting Father Christmas.

Through the first four double page spreads of Father Christmas and children in the makeshift grotto which was set up in the sports hall, a sense of childhood trips to grottos in department stores at Christmas time is captured. The snapshot aesthetic of the photographs also contributes to a sense of immediacy and of photographs taken for family albums.



Figure 69. A photograph taken inside a makeshift grotto in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. Photo: author.

The next three portrait orientated photographs in the sequence resemble more formal portraits of people at the party. These were intended to break up the sequence and mark the end of the grotto section. The first, a father sitting with a child on his knee, then the second and third, a boy then a girl holding candy floss. The focus on children communicates that the book is mainly about the children in the way that many Christmas parties are.

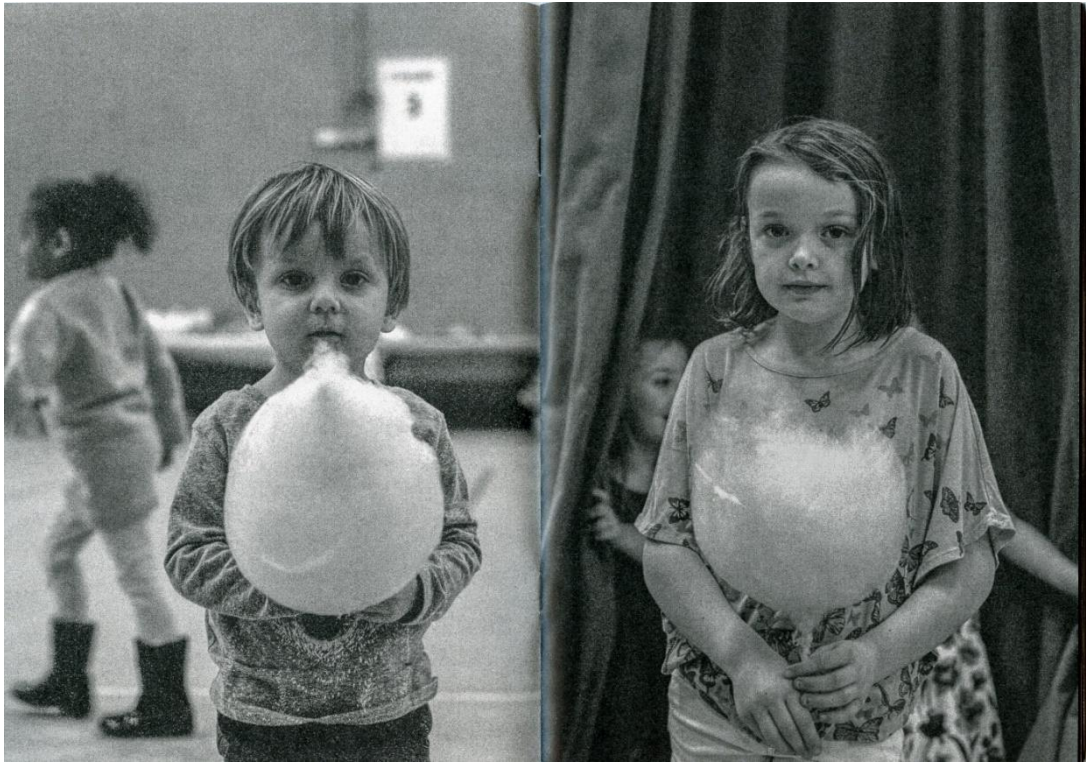


Figure 70. Two photographs of children holding candy floss in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. Two of three portrait orientated photographs which interrupt the sequence and mark a change from the grotto photographs. Photo: author.

The next two photographs that were paired together are intended to show the buffet part of the party. In the first, adults and children serve themselves from a long table of food and drinks and in the second, a young girl (my daughter) lounges on the floor eating a sandwich from a plastic plate of party food. Through the photograph of a young girl eating and through the photographs of parents and children filling their plates with party food, a sense of traditional working-class parties is captured – the summer street parties of the 1980s, the Birthday parties in people's homes which I remember from my own childhood, and the party's in social clubs to celebrate twenty-firsts, eighteenth and christenings.





Figure 71. People serving themselves food from a buffet in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. This photograph shows a typical experience of parties. Photo: author.

The two photographs that follow were also paired together – both show rows of families sitting on fold up chairs at the side of the sports hall next to an austere looking concrete wall. In the first, a woman reaches to take a baby from the lap of its mother or grandmother, in the second, three children sit in a row, surrounded on both ends by adults. These photographs are intended to give a sense of the families at the party and the fact that many of the adults sat around the sides of the hall while the children played in the centre.



Figure 72. A woman taking a baby from its grandmother in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. One of a pair of photographs which show parents and families sitting around the edge of the sports hall. Photo: author.

The next three photographs in the sequence resemble more formal portraits of children at the party. In the first, two girls instinctively stand posed for the camera as a gawky looking girl stands behind them and a boy in the distance walks across the hall, in the second, a brother and sister stand posed for the camera and in the third, a young girl stands with her hands by her side, pouting for the camera. These portraits also provide a sense of the children at the party and that the book is about their experiences.





Figure 73. A pair of photographs of children in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. Two of three photographs of children at the party that resemble more formal looking portraits. Photo: author.

The next four photographs are more like action shots – a little girl pulling candy floss apart is followed by a boy holding candy floss and a girl dressed as an elf playing football together, they are followed by a group of girls playing and sitting eating by a large curtain in the centre of the sports hall, then we see a couple of the girls sitting almost wrapped up in the curtain eating hot dogs.

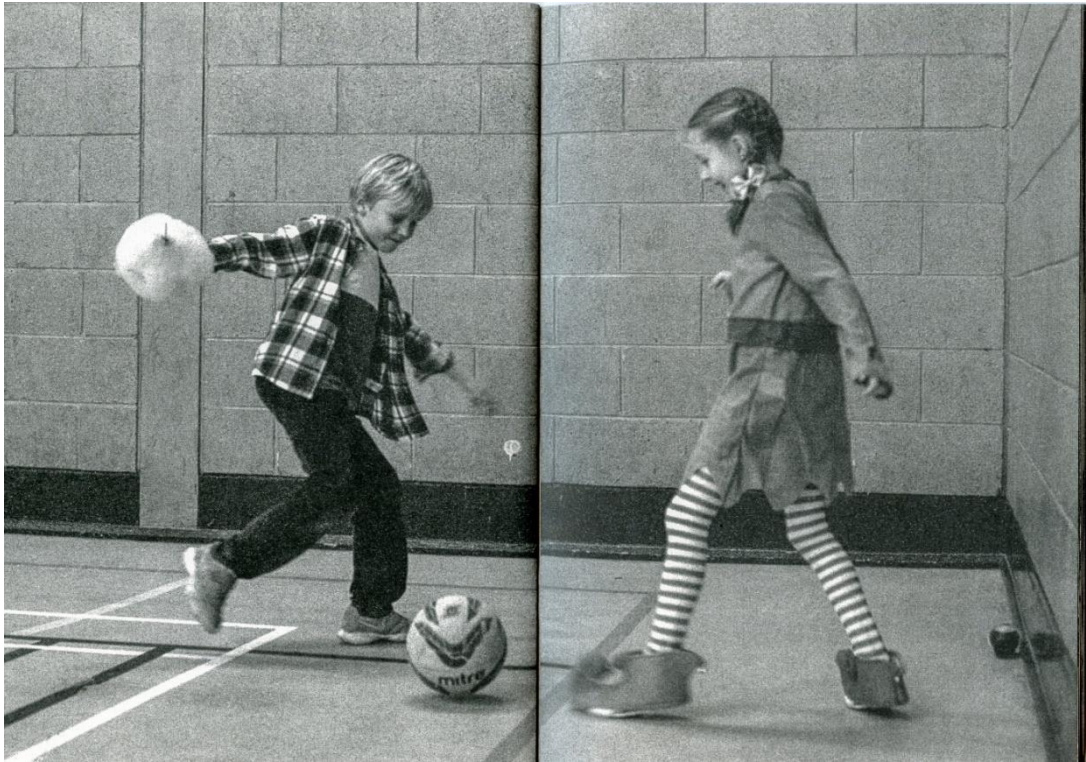


Figure 74. A girl and boy playing football in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. One of a sequence of four photographs of children playing in which a lot of action is going on. Photo: author.

The pair of photographs that follow are of an elderly woman and then a middle-aged woman holding the same baby, dressed in white with a dummy in its mouth. The elderly woman looks with love at the baby who looks back into her eyes and the middle-aged woman smiles affectionately at the baby as it looks off into the distance. The viewer is unaware that these photographs perfectly capture the character of the two women who happen to be mother and daughter. The elderly woman and mother Dolly who I was close to as a child is someone whom I know adores children, as does her daughter Sue. This pair of photographs were used to signify the love and affection between adults and children at the party.



Figure 75. An old woman holding a baby in *Lavinia's Christmas Party*. One of two photographs which shows the love and affection between children and adults at the party. Photo: author.

The final photograph shows what appears to be a woman smiling at her teenage son, sitting next to the wall of the sports hall which is made of ugly grey breeze blocks. A pram to the left of the woman suggests she has more than one child. This photograph was chosen to bring *Lavinia's Christmas Party* to a close because the boy is wearing his coat and so they appear as if they are getting ready to go home as if it is the end of the party. There is also not much action in the photograph and so it feels like more of a pause.

## Summary

*Lavinia's Christmas Party* demonstrates how using black and white film photography can increase feelings of nostalgia in the viewer if the subject matter of the work is already of a nostalgic nature.

By kneeling or crouching when taking photographs of the children I was able to give a sense of their point of view and in turn, provide a better sense of their lived experience of the party.

By creating a mock-up of the photo zine using both white borders and full bleeds I was able to understand how white borders create a feeling of distance in the viewer while full bleed makes the viewer feel psychologically closer to the subjects of the photographs and to the events happening.

Doors/zips opening and closing can be used on front and back covers to echo the opening and closing of the photo zine/photobook and to signify the beginning and end of the narrative.

I will now move on to *Funland* which, like *Lavina's Christmas Party*, is black and white and provokes feelings of nostalgia because of the childhood subject matter which is reinforced by the use black and white photographs.



## Funland (September 2017)



Figure 76. The front and back cover of *Funland*. Photos: author.

*Funland* is an A4, forty-page, black and white photo zine about a family's weekend in Southport.

### Context

Southport is a town and a seaside resort to the north of Liverpool which like New Brighton - the subject of Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* (1986), is popular with day trippers from Liverpool. Because of this, it is a place which in photographs is likely to arouse feelings of nostalgia for many working class individuals from Liverpool who like myself, were taken there as children.

*Funland* has an element of fiction because unbeknownst to the viewer, it is made up of photographs taken during a week away in Llandudno in Wales, a day out to Knowsley Safari Park and a weekend in Southport. *Funland* is an attempt to capture a sense of working-class leisure and holidays, its fictional element does not take anything away from that. As previously noted, this element of fiction is not something unusual in the editing together of

photobooks. Many photobooks are made up of photographs that were taken months or even years apart. Indeed, photobooks that feature sequences of photographs taken on the same day are more unusual than those made up of photographs taken over months or years. As already noted, Brassai's *Paris du nuit* (1933) - Paris by Night, features a sequence of photographs of people and places in Paris which appear as if they were all taken on a single night, Billingham's *Ray's a Laugh* (1996) gives the impression that all of the photographs were taken in one flat but were taken in two (his mother's and his father's). It is also worth noting that Nick Waplington's *Livingroom* (1991) features the living rooms of several families and at times it is unclear which livingroom belongs to which family. As I have also highlighted - no matter how factual the subject matter of photobooks is, they are a sort of fiction in the way that photobook editors, like the producers of montage, construct a sense of reality from photographs often taken days, months or years apart. Photographs in themselves cut off parts of reality from outside of the frame and so even the most truthful documentary photography is always a kind of fiction. Most documentary photographs and documentary photobooks (particularly those made by artists) are best understood 'as an aesthetic mode predicated on the vernacular form of the document' (Edwards, 2012:81) rather than 'the direct or objective record of objects or events before the lens' (ibid, 2012:81) and this is certainly true of my work.

## **Format**

Through the way that I sequenced photographs in *Funland* my main intention was to communicate a sense of the experience of being on the holiday and through this, a sense of the lived experience of working-class day trips and holidays at seaside resorts. I also wanted to create a sense of a day out or weekend away specifically in Southport and to communicate the sense of the lived experience of mainly the child, a young blonde-haired girl (my daughter), but also her father (my husband), a blonde-haired man in his late thirties who wears a scruffy looking parker coat. Like the photographic sequences in *Skeggy*, I communicate a sense of the experience of the

passage of time, which is an important part of lived experience, by showing different parts of a day, culminating in bed time – signified by the photograph of the blonde-haired girl lying in bed. I also show aspects of daily routines such as eating, which we all tend to do at roughly the same times of the day, so when people are seen eating in photographs, without thinking we automatically presume it must be a time of day when meals are eaten.



Figure 77. A father and daughter eating in a café in *Funland*. Photographs of people eating give an indication of what time of day it must be within the narrative created by sequences of photographs as meals tend to be eaten around the same time of day by most people. Photo: author.

The photographs focus on a father and daughter and so although it is about a family holiday, because the photographer is unseen, the impression created is that the father and his daughter are the only ones on the holiday. It is only when the viewer reaches the back cover at the end of the photo zine that a reflection of a female photographer is seen, and the viewer then becomes aware that the photographs in *Funland* were most likely taken by the mother of the child and partner/wife of the father. There is also a chance

that if the viewer does not closely inspect the final photograph, they may not spot the female photographer/mother in the reflection.

The front cover of *Funland* sets the scene for the rest of the photo zine, as not only does the writing on the side of the arcade create the title of the book and refer to a place where some of the action takes place, but it also gives the viewer an indication that the book is going to be about a holiday or day trip to a seaside town.

The sense of the child's experience of the holiday is communicated throughout most of the photographs. In the first spread the child stands with her father next to a 'grabber' machine in an arcade – she looks directly at the viewer in a way that suggests she knows them, and in doing so gives a sense of her agency and awareness of being photographed and looked at. Unbeknownst to the viewer it is also a clue that the photograph is being taken by her mother.



Figure 78. A father and daughter playing on a "grabber" machine in an arcade in *Funland*. The girl looks at the mother the photographer and in doing so, the viewer.



This creates a sense of her agency and gives the impression that she is aware of being looked at. Photo: author.

This photograph is followed by a close-up of her smiling on a 'Crazy Glider' ride in the arcade, then by a window full of dolls which suggests the things that the child is interested in and focusing on, this is then followed by a photograph of the girl on another ride in an arcade and then by a photograph of her running along the pier (alongside her father a meter or so to her side) with her head slightly turned, looking back at the viewer. We then see her sitting in her push chair eating chips – her dad who is seen only from the waist down is stood behind her with his hands on the push chair. The photograph that then follows provides the strongest sense of the experience of the father (and of being a parent in general) by showing a close-up of the girl having a tantrum in her push chair. She has a pained expression on her face as if she is being forced in or out of it against her will – the father leans over with a dummy in his hand as if he is about to put it in her mouth to pacify her. From this photograph we get a real sense of the physical and emotional labour involved with parenting which doesn't stop when on day trips or holidays.



Figure 79. A young girl with her father, having a tantrum in her push chair in *Funland*. This photograph makes visible the physical and emotional labour of parenting. Photo: author.

In the image that follows the girl stands next to a wall, she is looking towards the floor and appears relaxed – it is a reminder of how quickly the moods of children change throughout the day. Like *Skeggy* I thought it was important to show different times of the day so in the photograph that comes after, we see the child lying in bed with two teddies and a dummy in her mouth an empty bottle of milk in her hand – she looks over, out of the frame to what we presume is her father in the next bed. For children bedtime is a significant time of day, it is a time when children are afraid of the dark and a time when away from all the distractions, like adults, they might worry. Most children do not like going to bed in strange places but mind less if their parents are sleeping in the same room, and so all of this is suggested by the image. As already noted, like in *Skeggy* the photographic sequences showing the cyclical pattern of days are used to represent the experience of the passage of time and so bed time marks the end of a day.

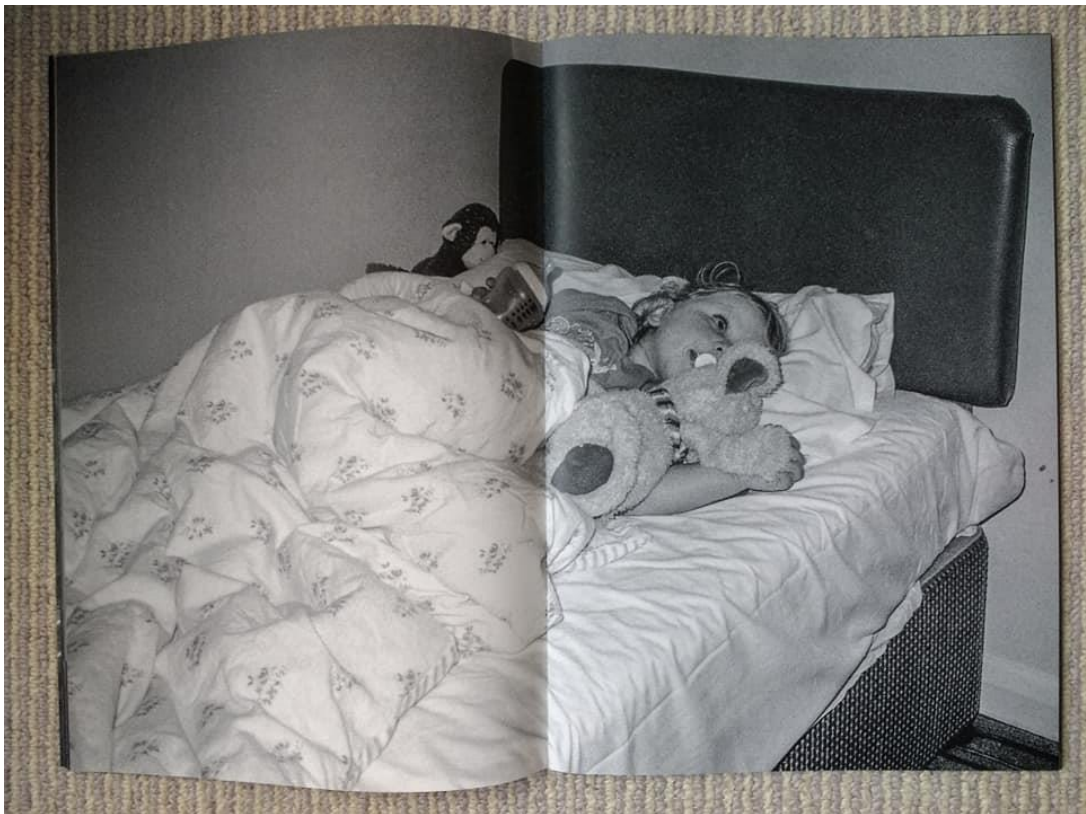


Figure 80. A young girl lying in bed with her teddies in a hotel room in *Funland*. A photograph of bed time shows an aspect of everyday life, lived experience and a sense of the passage of time in the sequence of photographs. Photo: author.

In the next photograph we see another photograph of the hotel room – this time of the father and child with a net curtain draped over their heads, looking out of the window. This photograph was a way of contextualising the photograph of the child in bed – it is another clue that they are staying in a hotel. It also suggests another day – perhaps a morning in the hotel room before going out. The photographs that follow all suggest they are part of another day which includes two photographs of the father and child eating in a café, a fairground, and photographs taken in two play grounds. The sequence comes to an end with a sequence of three photographs of the girl looking delighted on three different rides in a playground. The first a swing in which she has been pushed high by her unseen father, the second coming out of the end of a slide, head first and the third, sitting in something that resembles a metal bowl. These photographs are perhaps the most

sentimental and most likely to evoke feelings of nostalgia in the viewer as playgrounds are a place where children go all year round, not just on holidays and day trips.

The final image we see on the back page is of the child asleep in a booster seat in the back seat of a car. The child sleeping suggests the end of another day and an end to the holiday and the drive home. It is part of the experience of being a child in that young children tend to fall asleep on long journeys. It also provides an experiential, intimate sense of the banality of the travel involved in getting to and from all holidays. As already noted, the presence of the photographer is felt through the reflection of the photographer taking the photograph on the shiny paintwork of the car door next to the child sleeping in the back of the car. This photograph was chosen to end *Funland* as it feels like a good way to conclude the viewer's experience of the holiday/day trip because the car journey home is part of the end of most holidays.

## **Summary**

*Funland* demonstrates how black and white photography makes it is possible to combine photographs taken on three different trips/holidays and create a single, convincing narrative without the viewer being aware. It also demonstrates that an increased element of fiction in the production of photo zines in the documentary mode does not undermine the theme of the work or the aim of creating a sense of lived experience in the photobook.

Photographs taken over a longer period mean that the photographer can select their very best photographs rather than having to select from a limited range of photographs taken in one period. This was certainly the case for the British photobooks analysed in the thesis.

I will now move on to *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must Be Done*, for which I returned to using colour film because I knew the bright lighting conditions of a holiday abroad would allow for it. I also knew that the

compact film cameras I had been experimenting with would be more portable to use on a holiday, that the way of taking the photographs would come closer to the informal experience of taking photographs on holiday, and that I could use a waterproof compact camera to take photographs on beaches and in swimming pools.



## At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must Be Done (September 2017)



Figure 81. The front and back cover of *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. Photos: author.

*At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is an A4, forty-page, colour photo zine about a two-week family holiday in a static caravan, in a holiday park, in the south of France.

### Context

The intention of *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is to create a sense of the experience of being on the holiday and through the title, a sense of the economic aspect of the holiday, which played a dominant role.

As previously noted, the title *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must Be Done* is an extract from a document that was emailed to me by the owner of the static caravan before the holiday. On the last day, my husband and I spent the entire morning cleaning the caravan before it was inspected by the owner's representative, in the same critical way that a landlord would inspect a property that was being vacated. Had it not been cleaned to a high enough standard then our large deposit would have been lost. Using this extract as

the title was a way of attempting to communicate to the viewer a sense of the economic aspect of the holiday that underpinned nearly every decision made.

As John Clarke and Chas Critcher observe, 'inequalities of leisure are often invisible and intangible [and] difficult to measure' (Clarke, Critcher, 1985:178). Although 'leisure inequality is less recognised and recognisable than other kinds of inequality does not make it any the less real [...] muted and modified though it often is, leisure does ultimately express those social divisions and systematic inequalities inherent in the organisation of contemporary capitalism' (ibid, 1985:178).

I propose that one of the strengths of photography and the photobook is that it can be used to make all types of inequality, including inequalities of leisure, visible and tangible such as in Bill Brandt's *The English at Home* (1936) and in Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* (1986). Although photography can make inequality visible, how that inequality is judged is open to interpretation such as the possibility of viewers morally judging those who sit amongst overflowing bins in *The Last Resort*. As already noted, Parr photographed New Brighton at its busiest and therefore dirtiest times, when bins could not cope with the amount of waste being produced by day trippers and so the signs of inequality were very visible. Yet, as I found with the photographing of my own family holiday, the signs of inequality and financial hardship can be difficult to signify through photographs alone if they are not glaringly obvious, and so the economic aspect of the holiday which I wanted to communicate to the viewer through *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is much more subtle. Hence why the title is required to perform more of the conceptual work to compensate for the subtleties of the photographs.

On the front cover of *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*, a father and daughter on a beach are bending over, absorbed in the making of an unseen sandcastle. They appear like they are labouring, and this was a way of reinforcing the idea of the economy dominating every aspect of

people's lives (including holidays), particularly the working-classes, who are more anxious about spending money, because they live closer to the bread line.

Clark and Critcher observe how holidays 'reverse, or at least modify, those influences which structure our everyday existence' (Clarke, Critcher, 1985:171). Their description of the replacement of the self-restraint of everyday life with self-indulgence on holidays is worth citing at length:

The pay-off for the saving of innumerable yesterdays is to spend as if there were no tomorrow. Food and drink are consumed to excess, known trivia purchased and treasured for their worthlessness. For a couple of weeks life is a funfair; being taken for a ride and not caring an essential part of the pleasure. Not only money can be wasted; so can time. Lying about, that primaeval Protestant sin, becomes on holiday a virtue. Time and money have been carefully hoarded to be carelessly squandered.

(Clarke, Critcher, 1985:171)

Except in the case of the holiday represented in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*, the unfortunate loss of my husband's wallet at the beginning of the holiday (which could not be represented) meant that more self-restraint had to be shown than otherwise would be on holiday. It is also important to highlight that the squandering that may take place on working-class holidays may lead to guilt or regret whilst doing so or at least once the holiday is over and the reality of everyday life and economic hardship is returned to. A good example of this is the regret my husband and I still feel about an all-inclusive family holiday to Spain we had a few years ago that we could barely afford at the time. The holiday ate up the little savings we did have and has had a knock-on effect on our finances ever since. As someone who has had a lifetime of "going without" – I understand how feeling "fed up" with the daily grind of practicing self-restraint can lead to occasionally spending money on things you know you can't really afford.



## Format

Through the way that I sequenced photographs in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* my main intention was to communicate a sense of the lived experience of my family's holiday in a static caravan in France. I also wanted to capture a sense of the economic but as I have noted, this was not easy to achieve with photographs.

The photographs in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* focus mainly on a blonde-haired father in his late thirties and his young blonde-haired daughter (my husband and daughter) but also on the child's elderly grandparents and the father's parents.

The front cover features the father and daughter on a beach. They are bent over, digging up sand next to a bucket and spade. We see they are on the edge of the water which is starting to lap towards them. As noted, this photograph was chosen for the front cover as it appears as if the father and child are almost at work (particularly in contrast to the people sunbathing in the distance behind them) to underline the sense of labouring done on the holiday and the economic aspect of the holiday which is communicated by the title printed across it: *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. To stretch the metaphor further, we could say the water heading towards them, threatening to dissolve any sandcastles that are made, creates a subtle sense of urgency - of working hard under pressure. This relates to the need for capitalists to pressurise workers into working faster in order to create more surplus value or to keep up with the competition of faster workers working in factories in other countries.

The first three photographs inside *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* show the father and child on the beach, they are followed by a pair of photographs of the grandparents sitting with the father and daughter outside a café. This is then interrupted, so to speak, by the photograph of the grandfather sitting slumped over, on the end of a sofa in a static caravan. He appears as if he is asleep or could even be dead. The yellow balloon on the

floor by his feet says 'Happy 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday' – a poignant reminder of age and mortality. At this point the viewer is likely to presume it is his seventieth Birthday.



Figure 82. An old man sleeping upright on the end of a sofa in a static caravan in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. The photograph of the grandfather sleeping acts as a kind of interruption in the sequence of photographs as it is unexpected. The yellow balloon on the floor by his feet says 'Happy 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday' – a poignant reminder of age and mortality. Photo: author.

The next photographs are a pair in which we move back to being outdoors, both feature a playground with a gravel floor. In the first the young girl sits on a see-saw – the angle of the see-saw and the shape of her body echoes the shape of the slumped over grandfather in the previous photograph, in the second, her grandparents sit on a bench, smiling for the camera in a way that resembles a stereotypical family snapshot.



Figure 83. An old couple smiling on a bench in a playground. The photograph is taken in the style of a family snapshot in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. Photo: author.

The next pair of photographs take the viewer back inside the static caravan where the grandfather was previously seen slumped over. The first is a poignant image of the grandmother opening a Birthday present with the help of the young child. It appears to be morning as the child is wearing a tee-shirt and nappy and is standing next to a half-drunk bottle of milk. Behind the grandmother we can see four balloons and to the side of her, attached to the window are two '70<sup>th</sup> Birthday' banners. In the second photograph we see the young girl sitting at a table in the foreground eating beans, scrambled egg and toast with her hands while in the background her father and grandmother are finishing off making plates of food for the adults.

The two photographs that follow are a pair in which we see the father and daughter standing in swimming pools with picturesque surroundings. These stand in stark contrast to the cramped and ordinary looking static caravan in which they are staying. The first is one of the most beautiful and exotic photographs in the book. The father and daughter stand in a shallow pool a



few meters apart – in the centre of the page, between them is a small, pink, inflatable ball. In the background we see dark green trees and sun loungers. In the second photograph, the father and daughter in are in another pool with the pink ball – behind them we see long winding water slides and a family walking past.



Figure 84. A father and daughter in a swimming pool in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. This is one of the most exotic aspects of the holiday and photographs in the sequence, in contrast to the banality and cramped conditions of the static caravan where the family are staying. Photo: author.

The next two photographs in the sequence are a pair taken during a family meal outside a restaurant. In the first, the father holds a glass for his daughter who is sitting in a high chair to drink out of and in the second we see the rest of the family – the grandmother sits opposite her husband, in a row next to her granddaughter and son. The grandfather sits on a bench covered by a vulgar tiger print material and is cutting something up on his plate. The family all appear absorbed in the meal.

The photograph that follows also serves as a kind of interruption as it stands on its own. The viewer has been taken back to the static caravan and it

looks cramped as both grandparents sit next to their son and grandchild on a corner sofa. The grandfather looks like he is snoozing again, the grandmother appears to be speaking to the child, who is leaning on the end of the sofa while her dad sits reading a book. In front of them we see a table covered in cups, beakers and a nappy and a potty on the floor. This photograph subtly hints at the economic position of the family in that they have chosen to stay somewhere that is quite cramped. It is also one of three photographs in which the grandfather is seen sleeping, which reinforces a sense that he fell asleep during the holiday quite often.



Figure 85. A family sitting on a sofa in the static caravan in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. This photograph shows the cramped conditions of the accommodation the family are staying in on holiday and in doing so points towards their economic status. Photo: author.

The three photographs that follow are a kind of trio as all feature the little girl near sand. In the first two we see the young girl alone on the beach – in the first she stands on the edge of the water with a wave gently lapping onto the beach, in the second she crouches, playing with sand near the edge



of the water. In the third photograph she crouches, playing with sand on the floor of a playground in which we can see a slide and swings in the background – this image echoes the previous one because she is crouching and playing with sand in both.

The final photograph inside *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is a picturesque image of an empty roadside in which we can see a beautiful blue sky at dusk. Lush green bushes can be seen at the side and middle of the road and palm trees stand in a row in the distance. This photograph was chosen to bring the *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* as it is a still image which feels like a pause to the action seen in the rest of the book and because it underlines the beauty of the place where the holiday has taken place. In experiential terms, it is also a reminder of how before traveling home, holiday makers may have one last, long look at what they are leaving behind.



Figure 86. A picturesque road in *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* is the final photograph inside the photo zine. It provides a sense of closure and

mimics the final glance that holiday makers take at their surroundings before traveling home. Photo: author.

On the back cover, the grandfather is snoozing in a garden chair on the wooden porch of the static caravan. Apart from having a sense of finality – a feeling of a pause and winding down of the action, this image captures something of the content of the book in which the grandfather is also seen napping twice. The pink balloon on the floor (which just happened to be there when the photo was taken) also echoes the yellow balloon which is by his feet in the photograph where he is slumped over sleeping the living room area of the static caravan. The use of repetition to reinforce an idea or give a sense of lived experience is something I learned from critically analysing the British photobooks. In Billingham's *Ray's A Laugh* (1996) several photographs of Ray with a drink in his hand reinforce a sense of his alcoholism, and in Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring* (1986), several photographs of hunched over men reinforce the sense of despair felt by those visiting social security offices and job centre.



Figure 87. An old man napping in a chair on the porch of the static caravan in *At*

*the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done*. Repetition of the motif of the grandfather sleeping creates a stronger sense of experience – that the grandfather napped a lot on the holiday. Photo: author.

## **Summary**

*At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* demonstrates how the portability of compact film cameras can be used to capture and help recreate a sense of the lived experience of holidays.

Colour film captures the exotic aspect of holidays abroad in a way that black and white photography would not be able to do.

Repetition of motifs – i.e. my father-in-law seen snoozing in three photographs, can reinforce an idea about a person or a thing in the viewers mind and shape how the rest of the photographic sequence is read.

Photographs of the old with the young are poignant reminders of life spans, ageing and mortality.

I will now move on to *Skeggy*, another colour photo zine about a working-class family holiday.



## **Skeggy (September 2017)**



Figure 88. The front and back cover of *Skeggy*. Photos: author.

*Skeggy* is an A4, forty-page, colour photo zine about a week-long family holiday in a caravan on a Haven holiday park near Skegness.

### **Context**

*Skeggy* is an attempt to communicate a sense of the lived experience of a seaside caravan holiday. The caravan that appears in *Skeggy* was in a Haven holiday park, but it could be a caravan in any British holiday park as most have similar forms of facilities, staff and entertainment. The photographs focus upon the public and the private and most intimate aspects of the holiday - visiting fairgrounds, arcades and the beach, eating in cafes, going to the holiday park's disco in the evenings and sleeping and relaxing in the caravan.

When I was a child in the 1980s, seaside holidays were for those like my family who couldn't afford package foreign holidays, the cost of which 'halved in real terms' between 1969 and the early 1990s (Walton, 2000:66).

In the 1990s a European Union survey revealed that 35 percent of British households could not afford even a week away even in Britain, which as John Walton observes, reflected the impact of Thatcherism on living standards which widened the gap between 'the better-off and the poor' (Walton, 2011:69).

One of my mother's outstanding memories of our family caravan holidays is of "money flowing through her hands like water" and my father having to "constantly get money out of the cashpoint". A generation later and my husband and I experience the same money worries and trips to the cash point that our parents did on our caravan holidays (when we can afford to go on one). Yet, despite this experience, caravan holidays are still something we both feel nostalgic about because of how much we enjoyed them as children.

Becoming parents ourselves means that although we now have the burden of financial worries which we didn't have as children, we now enjoy caravan holidays in a different way – caravans are cosy places in which a young child can wonder around safely and this, in turn, allows parents to be able to relax. As first-time parents in our late thirties who had been used to doing as we pleased, we had to learn to get enjoyment by proxy on holidays - through the enjoyment of our daughter. As any parent knows – relaxation is only possible when children are occupied and happy.

I must point out that I am aware that working class families are not homogenous and there will be different ways that families on caravan holidays choose to spend their time. For example, some may enjoy the night life in the holiday parks more than others, some may drink alcohol more than others or not drink at all etc. During our holidays in caravan parks I have often witnessed parents sitting on picnic benches with 'a pint' in the day time while their children play. Becoming a parent gives me an insight into how tiring and stressful parenting can be and this has made me less judgemental about how other people care for their own children. My mother remembers that when she and my father took me to Butlins with his parents and sister

that my father and his parents drank together every night. Because she wasn't "a drinker", her only pleasure was playing bingo. Indeed, my own few memories of my mother on our family holidays (before my parents divorced when I was eleven) was her playing on fruit machines in the social clubs of the caravan parks.

Photographing my own family holiday offered a way of recording the intimate dimension of working-class holidays and life. My husband and daughter's immunity to me taking photographs was also beneficial for capturing them off guard and at their most natural, and this is a way of also coming closer to the lived experience of the holiday.

It is worth noting that my husband and I both photograph in different ways on holiday. I tend to take photographs on my film camera to try to document the holiday in the most natural way possible, whereas he takes more of the traditional posed photographs which are then shared on social media. In *Photography: A Middle-brow Art* (1990) Pierre Bourdieu observes that within most families, photography is limited to its social function and is used in a stereotypical and ritualized way to 'solemniz[e] and immortaliz[e] high points in family life' (Bourdieu, 1990:19). This has obviously changed somewhat with the advent of digital cameras on mobile phones which has made the sharing of digital photograph on social media and every-day occurrence. Yet the family function of photography still has a dominant role – more photographs of children and family members can be taken and shared than ever before. Many photographs are taken during holidays 'because they are especially high points of family life' (Bourdieu, 1990:25). Bourdieu notes a preference for family photographs 'in which people stand upright, motionless and dignified' rather than those "taken from life" (Bourdieu, 1990:81) and how 'the spontaneous desire for frontality is linked to the most deep-rooted cultural values' (Bourdieu, 1990:82). Frontality 'is a means of effecting one's own objectification: offering a regulated image of oneself is a way of imposing the rules of one's own perception' (Bourdieu, 1990:83).

## Format

My main intention when sequencing photographs in *Skeggy* was to communicate a sense of the lived experience of my family's holiday in a caravan near Skegness and, in turn, a sense of the lived experience of working-class caravan holidays in general. Like I did for all the photo zines, I tried to create a sense of the experience of the passage of time and of place. For example, I create the sense of the typical cycle of a day on the holiday through the first sequence of eleven photographs – beginning with a day out in Skegness which is shown through the first photo on a ride in an arcade, the second, the young girl sitting on a bench in Skegness, the third, the young girl standing next to a giant resin doughnut outside of a café, the fourth, fifth and sixth at the fair, the seventh on the beach, the eighth getting into a car by the fair to return to the caravan park, the ninth and tenth going back to the caravan after an evening at the disco and the eleventh, the blonde haired girl asleep in bed. The photograph of the girl asleep is then followed by a photograph of her lying curled up on the corner sofa in the caravan the next morning – which again gives a sense of time on holiday and the beginning of new day and cycle of events. The girl relaxing on the sofa is then followed by a sequence of seven photographs that show a new day but one that is less structured. The girl sitting on a pebble dashed wall is followed by her and her father sitting on large pebble dashed steps, eating sandwiches from foil and laughing, father and daughter at the beach, father and daughter in a café eating ice cream, girl sitting on a climbing frame, girl in caravan looking out the window at some ducks. In this way *Skeggy* appears to show just two days but because this time is very loose and subtle, the time aspect of the photo zine may not be obvious to the viewer. The use of sequencing day and night photographs in this way was used as a method for creating a sense of experience rather than for creating a sense of actual time for the viewer. The aim is for the viewer to feel a sense of the lived experience of the passage of time and of the holiday through the sequence of photographs but not to have a strong sense of how

many days the zine shows. This all ties in with the lived experience and memories of holidays in which one day blends into the next.

As already noted, the lived experience of the holiday is communicated through making every aspect of the holiday visible - which includes the public, the private and the mundane. The title *Skeggy*, combined with a close-up of a young, blonde haired girl dancing in a social club, sets the tone for the way in which the photographs in the rest of the zine will be read. The title not only tells the viewer that the zine is about Skegness – a seaside town in Lincolnshire known for working class holidays, but also through the use of slang, that it is a working-class family's holiday. The photograph of the young girl dancing is also meant to evoke feelings of nostalgia for those who remember the entertainment provided in holiday parks by employees of the parks. I remember as a child regularly staying with my neighbour Sue in her mother and father's caravan in a holiday park called 'Wink Ups' in North Wales and dancing at the disco, hoping to win a stick of rock.

As noted, the front cover features a young blonde haired girl dancing at a disco in the holiday park where the family are staying – this is the public aspect of the holiday while the back cover which features the young girl kneeling on a sofa in a caravan, looking out the window with a dummy in her mouth is the private.

The first photograph in *Skeggy* is a close-up of the young blonde-haired girl sitting having her photograph taken by an indoor ride with the text 'Have a Ride and a Photo'. This was chosen as the first image as not only is the girl looking directly at the viewer, making them more self-conscious about the act of looking at her but it is also a commentary on the act of photography itself and the everyday use of photography for recording family holidays. The viewers can be said to be getting taken on a ride – a short entertaining journey/experience of someone else's holiday and snapshot of their lives by reading the book. On the back cover, the same girl is in her night dress looking out of a caravan window.



Figure 89. Photograph of the young girl on an arcade ride in *Skeggy*. The girl looks directly at the view which creates the impression she is aware of being looked at and a sense of her agency. Photo: author.

The next three photographs in the sequence focus on the young girl in places in and around the fair in Skegness. In the first, she sits on a blue bench next to a couple of small toys, in the background we can see parts of Skegness town centre. In the second, she stands next to a large resin doughnut sign and a large café menu near the beach which we can see behind her in the distance and in the third, she sits in her push chair with an expression that looks like she is either bored or relaxed. Behind her we can see her father from the chest down, counting some change in his hand – perhaps in preparation for a ride. The plastic bag on the handle and the way that he is counting the change subtly points to the economic aspect of the holiday and even suggests the family is poor.





Figure 90. Photograph of the father counting his money with his daughter at the fair in *Skeggy*. The photo of the father counting money is a reminder of the economic aspect of day trips and holidays. Photo: author.

The photograph that follows acts as a sort of interruption, as we move from a relaxed image to one which is quite violent, in that we see the father about to punch a boxing machine with all his force. His mouth is clenched, and he is turned to the side with his arms up. His eyes focus on the rubber ball he is about to hit. A comedic element enters the image from the juxtaposition of an innocent looking elderly couple in the background – one sitting in a wheel chair being pushed by the other, a family group and the man about to perform a violent act. In the background through the glass of a grabber machine we also see the young girl is oblivious to what her father is doing, as she looks at something outside the arcade.



Figure 91. Photograph of the father getting ready to punch a boxing machine in *Skeggy*. This representation of violence (although harmless fun and a photograph that is comical) acts as an interruption in the sequence as it contrasts with the previous relaxed image. Photo: author.

The next three photographs in the sequence are a continuation of the day out in Skegness. In the first we see the father inserting a coin into a water machine. The young girl stands holding a cannon that we presume will skirt out water once the money drops into the machine. In the background we can see the sea so know they are near the beach and we can also see a teenager on a bungee machine and an Iceland plastic bag hanging off the young girl's pushchair. The Iceland bag (Iceland is a well-known cut-price frozen food supermarket) is also a reminder of the economic position of the family and of the general sense of what it is like to be the parent of a young child who requires a push chair. In the second, we see the father and daughter crouching on the beach – the father holds a small spade while the child is bending to take off her sandals. In the third of the trio we see the father and daughter about to get into a car in a car park near the fair which we can see in the background, to go back to their caravan.





Figure 92. Photograph of the father and daughter getting ready to play on a watcher machine in *Skeggy*. The plastic 'Iceland' bag in the photo is a reminder of the economic position of the family and the push chair is a reminder of the labour of parenting. Photo: author.

The three photographs that follow focus on the evening at the holiday park where they are staying. In the first, we see the girl standing on the edge of a grassy curb with a caravan behind her, in the second, we see the father and daughter about to open the door of their caravan – this photograph of a banal aspect of the holiday was about the lived experience of going in and out of caravans which is an experience specific to caravan holidays. The third photograph shows the little girl asleep in bed with a dummy in her mouth and her arms folded across her chest. Bed time on holiday is a significant time for children and parents – not only because children must sleep in a strange bed but also for parents to get a few hours to themselves.



Figure 93. Photograph of the father and daughter opening their caravan door in *Skeggy*. The photo shows the banal act of opening the caravan door but the clunky way that a caravan door is opened is something very specific to caravan holidays and so is part of the lived experience of those kinds of holidays. Photo: author.

We then begin a new day with the young girl relaxing in the morning on the corner sofa in the caravan, followed by a photograph of her sitting on a pebble dashed wall and then sitting eating some sandwiches with her father on some pebble dashed steps. The sandwiches in tin foil provide a subtle signifier of the economic status of the family – the people behind them sit at tables, presumably eating food from the café. My own childhood memories and that of my husband are of mostly eating sandwiches from foil rather food from cafes on day trips or holidays and this is one of the reasons the photograph was chosen to appear in the sequence.





Figure 94. Photograph of the father and daughter eating sandwiches from tin foil in *Skeggy*. Eating “butties” from tin foil is another reminder of the economic status of the family. Eating sandwiches wrapped in tin foil is something that many working-class viewers will identify with. Photo: author.

In the photograph that comes next, we see the father near the beach with the young girl in her push chair – the repetition of this motif throughout the *Skeggy* serves as a reminder of the lived experience of being a parent and of being a young child. We then see the pair eating ice creams in a café. Eating ice creams is something that all classes associate with day summer holidays and day trips.



Figure 95. A photograph of the father and daughter next to the beach in *Skeggy*. The push chair is a recurring motif in *Skeggy*, which reinforces a sense of childhood and parenting. Photo: author.

The final three photographs in *Skeggy* are quiet images where nothing much is happening, and this is a way of winding down the action and bringing the book to a close. In the first of the three we see the father and daughter relaxing on the corner sofa in the caravan. The father looks “shattered” as he holds his hands to his face and presses his fingers into his eyes. This image was included to not only give a sense of the private aspect of the holiday when people are relaxing in their caravans but also, and more importantly, to provide a sense of how tiring being the parent of a young child is. In the second photograph the young girl is sitting and smiling through a round hole at the top of some sort of red climbing frame, in what we presume is a playground. In the third and final photographs in *Skeggy* we see the young girl kneeling on the sofa in the caravan looking out of the window at some ducks. She has her back to the camera so we cannot see her face. The photograph has a quietness and peacefulness about it so is a good way to bring the book to a close.





Figure 96. A photograph of the tired looking father and his daughter relaxing in their caravan in *Skeggy*. A private and relaxed aspect of the holiday which again draws attention to the labour and lived experience of parenting. Photo: author.

## Summary

*Skeggy* demonstrates how photographs taken with compact film cameras can not only imitate the syntax of photography of the past, and in doing so, create and added sense of nostalgia but also capture the most intimate dimensions of working-class life in a spontaneous way.

By showing the private, the public and the banal aspects of holidays we get a more rounded sense of the lived experience of holidays.

Photographs of tired looking parents are a reminder of the labour involved with and the lived experience of parenting.

I will now move on to the last photo zine in the series *He Served His Time in Cammell Lairds*, a zine which I focus on objects rather than subjects to communicate a sense of a working-class life.

## He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds (July 2018)



Figure 97. The front and back cover of *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. Photos: author.

*He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is an A5, forty-page, colour photo zine about the material conditions of my deceased father-in-law's bedroom.

### Context

*He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is metonymically about many things. It is about the living standards of working-class families who have lived through Thatcherism, the standard of living provided by working-class jobs in general, and the demise of those types of apprenticeships and skilled jobs for working-class men which was accelerated by Thatcherism.

The photographing of my father-in-law's material possessions within his private living space, was an intrusion and an invasion of not only his, but also my mother-in-law's intimate lives, and as such, is an act of violation (despite the consent of my mother-in-law). But this violation is productive, in that the photographs and photobook allow through their capacity to bear

witness and tell the truth (at least aspects of the truth), the revelation of his (and my mother-in-law's) position within the totality of social and economic relations in Britain within this historical period. Conterminously, it also allows me to communicate something about the 'hidden injuries' of class'.

The title *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is a reference to the actual time served by my father-in-law as an apprentice French Polisher at Cammell Laird's when he was fifteen. My father-in-law went on to spend more of his working life at the Vauxhall Motor plant in Elsmere Port, but it was his apprenticeship at Laird's that provided him with a "trade" and craft skills he could be proud of, that he was able to use again in the final job he did before retirement - working as a French polisher for a family owned furniture restoration company.

Cammell Laird's has existed as a shipbuilding company in Birkenhead since 1824. As Brian Marren notes, 'it has had a long history as a major employer in the region, and it was one of the few durable goods manufacturing companies indigenous to Merseyside' (Marren, 2016:181). Like the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984-1985, the defeat of the Cammell Laird's workers sit-in strike of 1984, for which a small percentage of the workforce occupied two ships in response to the announcement of 3,300 compulsory redundancies (Marren, 2016:182), 'signalled the close of an era' (Marren, 2016:198). This followed a bill in 1983 that allowed the Thatcher government to privatise the shipping industry and sell off its assets (Marren, 2016:181). Although my father-in-law did not work there at that time (following his apprenticeship he was "let go" and in what must have been the 1980s (he was vague about employment dates), he was forced to come out on strike while working for Vauxhall Motors). It is worth noting from Marren's account that, unlike the workplace solidarity of dockers, in the shipbuilding industry there existed an 'occupational elitism' (Marren, 2016:186), 'where the skilled trades had to play off the unskilled trades' (Lol Duffy in Marren, 2016:186). As Lol Duffy, a plater at Cammell Laird states in an interview:

'You got to understand, shipyards are different. There's never been a history of solidarity in those places. [...] If ever there was an event where one union thought they were losing out to another one, there'd be a dispute ... Plus, most people are skilled, so you have this old-fashioned thing where everybody thought they were special. You know, 'My craft is special. How could you ever do without my trade?'

(Duffy in Marren, 2016:187)

During the first two years of the Thatcher government, according to Frank Field, the Labour MP for Birkenhead at that time, Cammell Laird's lost '1,800 jobs' (Field in Marren, 2016:181) and in Birkenhead between 1979 and 1983 there were 'more than 20,000 job losses in the Birkenhead area' (Field in Marren, 2016:182).

All of these details - the significance of Cammell Laird's as a large employer in Birkenhead and on Merseyside, the politics of its work place, the notoriety of the sit-in strike that took place at the same time as the miners' strike and the Labour/Militant council's battle with the Thatcher government, all play a role in the kind of associations evoked by the name Cammell Lairds in the photo zine's title for people of a certain age living in the Merseyside region.

The reason I specified working-class men when referring to apprenticeships is that most working-class women have not had access to apprenticeships or skilled and/or relatively well-paid employment. Women from my father-in-law's generation (born in the 1940s and 1950s), quite often either stayed at home looking after children, as did my mother-in-law, or were employed in part time and/or low skilled, low paid jobs. In *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (2005), Gerry Holloway observes that 'the history of women's work in the last thirty years of the twentieth century has yet to be written' (Holloway, 2005:209), which in and of itself says a lot about the status of working-class women, given how much has been written about working-class men. According to George Joseph, by the 1970s, 'the typical female worker, aged 40 years, is married, has returned to work after some years of economic inactivity, and works part-time in a clerical job' (Joseph in



Holloway, 2005:208) - this was the case with my own mother in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and as already noted, my mother-in-law. For women who were single parents, 'participation varied locally and for the very poor, paid work was not viable, except through the unrecorded black economy, e.g. homework, cleaning and other forms of casual labour, as state benefits were a stable substitute for an uncertain and irregular income' (Holloway, 2005:209). This was the situation of my grandmother, a single parent of four, living in the Scotland Road area of Liverpool in the 1950s and 1960s and then following the inner city slum clearances in the 1960s, moved to Cantril Farm (now known as Stockbridge Village) and Kirby in the 1970s, scraping a living from part time cleaning jobs and black-market activities whilst living in abject poverty. Indeed, her standard of living was so low for most of her life that she now feels "well off" living off a state pension.

*He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* is the closest I come to representing the working-classes struggle for the necessities of life, and I only manage to achieve this through the photographing objects rather than subjects. In this way, the work is not unlike 'late photography'.

### **Late photography**

In *Safety in Numbness: Some remarks on the problems of 'Late Photography'* (2003), David Campany identified the emergence of what he termed 'late photography' - the photographing of locations where dramatic events have taken place, such as the aftermath of war or terrorism. An example of this is Joel Meyerowitz's large format photographs of the ruins of the world trade centre after the 9/11 attack, which Campany's essay focuses on. In the words of Campany, the photograph has 'inherited a major role as an undertaker [...] It turns up late, wanders through the places where things have happened totting up the effects of the world's activity' (Campany, 2003:4). The political of 'late photography', according to John Roberts, in *Photography and its Violations* (2014), 'is identifiable with those incidents and details that emerge as a result of the *atemporal* recovery of the event' (Roberts, 2014:109).

*He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* can be described as a 'late' photobook, despite the obvious differences between the photographs it contains and photographic genre the term is usually applied to, as it involved me turning up late, so to speak, to document the traces of my father-in-law's life, only once he had died and his struggle was over. The photograph of his stained mattress within the book, literally represents the aftermath of the incontinence brought on by the later stages of his dementia. But more importantly, through photographing what my father-in-law left behind, what he 'had to show' for his life, his shabby bedroom, which doubled up as a storage room for tools and paint, metonymically represents his struggles for the necessities of life, which permeated every aspect of his life, and this communicates much more about his life than any photograph of him ever could.

When I recently exhibited *He Served His Time at Cammell Laird's*, the man invigilating the work said it reminded him of Philip Larkin's poem *Mr Bleaney* (1955), which is also about the bedroom of a deceased working-class man.

*Mr Bleaney* is written from the point of view of the new tenant of a shabby rented room, who pieces together and imagines the life of Mr Bleaney, the former occupant, through details about the room and what is said about Mr Bleaney and his habits by his landlady. Like *He Served His Time at Cammell Laird's*, it is unclear if Mr Bleaney has moved out or passed away but the phrased 'hired box' in the poem seems to refer to not only to the room but to a coffin. The poem can be said to embody Bourdieu's theory of 'the taste of necessity' which as previously noted is 'a form of adaption to and consequently acceptance of the necessary [and] a resignation to the inevitable' (Bourdieu, 1984:373) which leads working-class people to accept their lot in life and to limit their tastes and ambitions accordingly and perceive these choices as natural (Bourdieu, 1984:373). As we discover in the first verse, Mr Bleaney, like my father-in-law, who spent more years working at Vauxhall Motors than he did at Cammell Lairds, also worked at a car factory: 'He stayed The whole time he was at the Bodies, till, They

moved him' – the bodies being slang for the section of a car factory working on the bodies of cars.

The final verse of the *Mr Bleaney* suggests Larkin wanted to communicate with his poem something akin to what I wanted to communicate with *He Served His Time at Cammell Laird's*, as a kind of assessment of what Mr Bleaney "had to show for his life". It suggests that Mr Bleaney didn't expect any better – which embodies what Bourdieu ideas about why people are adjusted to their social position:

That how we live measures our own nature,  
And at his age having no more to show  
Than one hired box should make him pretty sure  
He warranted no better, I don't know.  
(Philip Larkin 1955)

### **Mr Bleaney**

'This was Mr Bleaney's room. He stayed  
The whole time he was at the Bodies, till,  
They moved him.' Flowered curtains, thin and frayed,  
Fall to within five inches of the sill,

Whose window shows a strip of building land,  
Tussocky, littered. 'Mr Bleaney took  
My bit of garden properly in hand.'  
Bed, upright chair, sixty-watt bulb, no hook

Behind the door, no room for books or bags —  
'I'll take it.' So it happens that I lie  
Where Mr Bleaney lay, and stub my fags  
On the same saucer-souvenir, and try

Stuffing my ears with cotton-wool, to drown  
The jabbering set he egged her on to buy.  
I know his habits — what time he came down,  
His preference for sauce to gravy, why

He kept on plugging at the four aways  
Likewise their yearly frame: the Frinton folk  
Who put him up for summer holidays,  
And Christmas at his sister's house in Stoke.

But if he stood and watched the frigid wind  
Tousling the clouds, lay on the fusty bed  
Telling himself that this was home, and grinned,  
And shivered, without shaking off the dread

That how we live measures our own nature,  
And at his age having no more to show  
Than one hired box should make him pretty sure  
He warranted no better, I don't know.

(Philip Larkin 1955)

<https://interestingliterature.com/2017/04/12/a-short-analysis-of-philip-larkins-mr-bleaney/>

## **Format**

Through the way that I sequenced photographs in *Cammell Lairds* my main intention was to communicate an experiential sense of being in the space of my father-in-law's bedroom and in turn, to communicate a sense of the lived experience of my father-in-law in that space. By doing this I also wanted to build up a picture in the viewer's mind of the shabbiness of the room and of

the hint at the type of person my father-in-law was – a man who was good with his hands and laboured for other people (including neighbours, his adult children and as a French polisher working for a family business before he retired – visiting wealthy people living in big houses furnished with expensive furniture) but neglected his own home and living space.

The front cover features a pair of Clarks brown sandals which my father-in-law wore like slippers around the house, they are out of focus and seen from above. The blurriness of the image creates a sense of someone whose eyesight is deteriorating and this way, combined with the title, creates a sense the bedroom seen throughout the book belongs to an elderly person.

A photograph of the solid pine headboard next to a wall with marked wall paper that is coming away from the wall just slightly was used as the first photograph in the zine because it signifies to the viewer that the room is a bedroom and that it has not been decorated for many years. This is followed by another photograph of the bed from a different angle. This photograph focuses on a pillow without a pillow slip which laid diagonally across two other pillows. This is intended to communicate to the reader that the person whose bedroom it is may no longer be alive.



Figure 98. Some pillows on a bed in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. The focus on a pile of pillows, the pillow without a pillow slip suggests that the room is no longer occupied, and its previous occupant may be deceased. Photo: author.

We then see the messy view across from the bed where clothes, a box and a duvet are piled up on a chest of drawers. The two photographs that follow show views out of the window, giving a sense of the type of house the room is situated in and what my father-in-law would have seen when he looked out of the window. The first, shows the backs of a row of terraced houses and the second, the view out of the window obscured by an old black, box television. The old television gives a sense of the habitus of my father-in-law, he and my mother-in-law are from a generation of people who “make do and mend” and so are reluctant to replace things unless absolutely necessary. Next in the sequence is a view looking up at the ceiling where a dingy green pendant surrounds an ‘energy saving lightbulb’ – the type that emits very little light. We can also see the dour looking green and burgundy border that has been pasted around the top of the room. Following this is another photograph showing the top half of the room – this time of a home-made cupboard, built into the alcove created by the chimney breast in the

centre of the room, surrounded by the green and burgundy wall paper border. Next, a pile of Farmfoods bags (Farmfoods is a frozen food shop synonymous with poverty) suggest that the person who sleeps or slept in this room had a low income and lived off cheap food – whether or not he actually ate much food from Farmfoods doesn't matter (I know that he didn't) – the Farmfoods bags, like the Iceland bag in *Skeggy*, reinforce the idea that *He Served His Time At Cammell Lairds* is about someone who has or had a low standard of living.

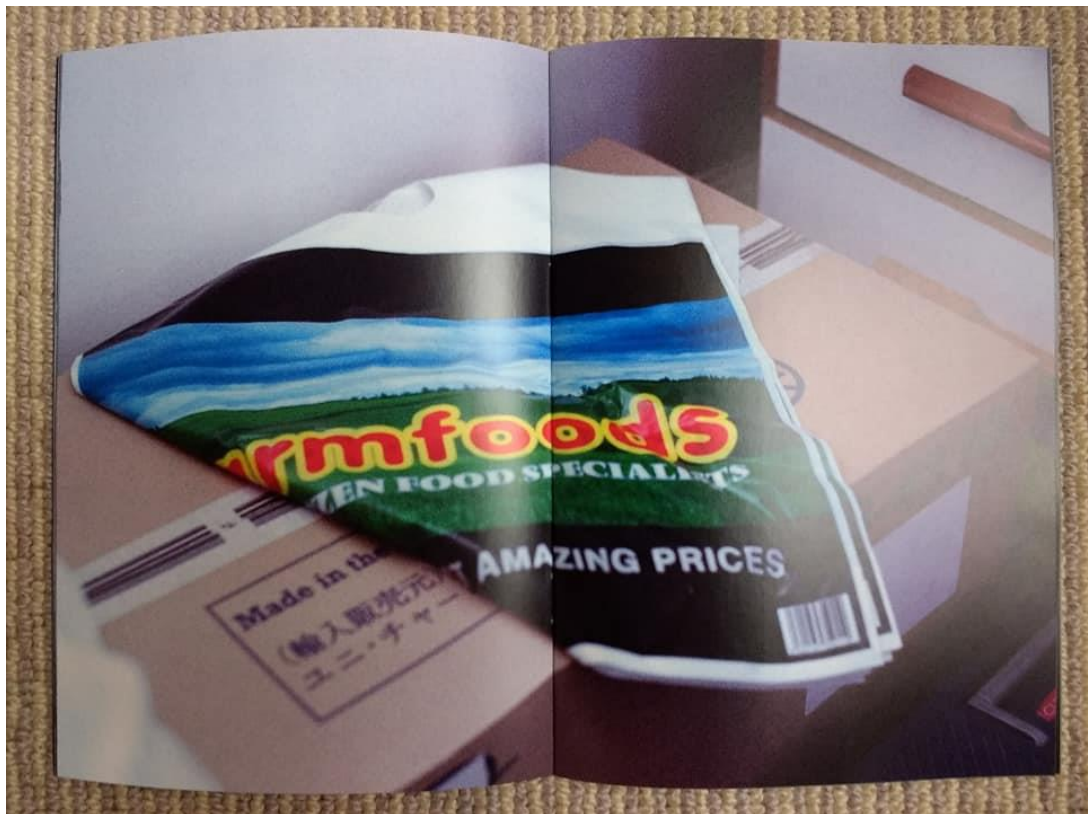


Figure 99. Some Farmfoods bags on a box in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. The Farmfoods, cut-price, supermarket bags are a signifier of a low economic status. Photo: author.

Next, the pile of clothes and bedding also suggest the presence of my father-in-law and create further ambiguity about whether he is dead or alive. This is followed by a photograph of his thin looking summer coat whose label reads F&F – which is the supermarket Tesco's clothing brand. Buying clothes from a supermarket is another sign of his low standard of living. The coat

hangs from the handle of a cheap looking wardrobe with faux ornamental handles and beading on the doors. This is bitterly ironic in that my father-in-law who was a French Polisher by trade, was a craftsman who worked with solid wood and beautiful furniture so had an appreciation of it yet couldn't afford to own the furniture he worked on.



Figure 100. A coat bought from a supermarket, hanging from the door of a wardrobe in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. The cheapness of the faux ornamental wardrobe is another signifier of low economic status. It demonstrates how poverty influences aesthetic choices. Photo: author.

This is then followed by a photograph of the corner of his room which shows a large boiler, home-made cupboard and the edge of a mattress that is leaning against some unseen furniture. Including this image not only shows the space and what my father-in-law saw but also the fact his bedroom was not only shabby but also noisy because of the boiler.





Figure 101. A boiler in the corner of a bedroom in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. The large boiler which when hot water is used or the heating is on, emits a lot of noise. This will have affected my father-in-law's ability to sleep - it signifies another dimension to the discomfort of the bedroom. Photo: author.

This is followed by another photograph of his sandals on the floor but this time in focus and taken further away so that we can see they are next to the bed as if left there by him before or after he goes to bed – providing the viewer with another suggestion of his presence. The photograph also shows the chipped paint and dirt on the bedroom door which along with the marked wall paper suggests the bedroom has not been decorated for a very long time. This is followed by the close-up of the stained mattress which is seen in other photographs, leant against the furniture in his room. The mattress is beautiful despite the pale brown stains on it, because of the pale blue, floral design. This also signals his poverty as the viewer will be unaware that the stains are the result of his incontinence in the last stage of his dementia.



Figure 102. A stained mattress in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. The stained floral mattress was caused by my father-in-law's incontinence which was brought on by the late stages of dementia. Photo: author.

In the rest of the photographic sequence his bed is shown twice again – one of which is the final photograph in the book. In this photograph we see his bed with the pillows laid on top, this repetition is a way of underlining the fact he is no longer there. In rest of the photographs we see a pile of paint cans on top of Wirral Globe newspapers, a corner of the room with a pile of stuff in it – an old lamp without a shade, a wallpaper stripper, the box of a glue gun and a six ugly pipes that run down the wall from the boiler and then a close-up of a shelf full of plug heads, string, wall paper strippers and wires. All of which helps to slowly build up a picture in the mind of the viewer that my father-in-law worked with his hands.





Figure 103. Objects associated with DIY in bedside table in *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*. The bits and bobs associated with DIY communicate to the viewer that my father-in-law was someone who worked with his hands. Photo: author.

## Summary

*He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* demonstrates how photographing objects rather than subjects provides another way of making visible lived experience. In the case of *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds*, photographing my father-in-law's bedroom and the spaces and objects in it has allowed me to say something more profound about his life and his class position than photographs of him would allow me to do. As I discovered from producing the other photo zines, it is not easy to make visible the economic aspect of working-class life. Photographing my father-in-law's bedroom was my most successful attempt to do so. Through *He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds* I have been able to make visible the economic aspect of working-classes life and some of the hidden injuries of class.

The title of the photo zine also demonstrates how it is possible to not only say something literal about the theme of a photobook – i.e. my father-in-law did an apprenticeship at Cammell Lairds but also to point towards other meanings reflected in the photographs – i.e. working at Cammell Laird has led to a life of poverty, and also to a wider set of circumstances – i.e. the history of Cammell Laird which is strongly associated with traditional working class manual labour, with de-industrialisation, strikes and the history of the working-classes.

## Conclusion

One of the main aims of this research has been to investigate the lived experience of class through the photobook. By experimenting with a range of film cameras with and without flash and with films of higher and lower ISOs, I discovered that using compact film cameras with high quality lenses which are capable of taking photographs close-up to subjects and objects without blurring are the best way of capturing everyday experiences as they happen and communicating a sense of intimacy and lived experience. By experimenting with white borders and full bleed images when producing mock-ups, I discovered that full bleed is the best way of creating psychological closeness between the viewer and the subjects of the photo zines.

Two key methods of sequencing photographs emerged from the research process, both relating to the passage of time. One of the easiest ways of thinking about sequencing photographs is sequencing events roughly as they had happened. Yet, film photography is unreliable in that photographs do not always turn out well, and less photographs of a high enough standard to choose from means that there are less of events in the order that they happened. As I discovered from producing *If They don't Want to Get Behind Him They Know Where They Can Go*, attempting to include as many photographs as possible to show the order of events as they happened does not always make for the best narrative and the limitations of forty pages in a zine also makes it difficult. The other method of sequencing that emerged was the creation of a subtle sense of the rhythms of a day via the inclusion of photographs of meal times and bed times. The cyclical rhythm of a day and the experience of the passage of time is a key part of everyday life and lived experience. But, this sense of the rhythms of the day was something I was only able to capture because of being away on family holidays and so it is a narrative device that is not suitable for all photo zines and photobooks. As I discovered from producing *Phil Manion North End Bakers*, the inclusion

of a photograph of a clock in a sequence of photographs is another strategy for signifying the passage of time, but the photographing of clocks does not happen very often.

The slow process of learning how to sequence photographs and edit together photo zines led me to developing a systematic way of producing photobooks that not only speeds up the production process but can serve as a model for other visual researchers.

Through using the hand-written statements produced by the subjects of one of the zines and a transcription from a speech for another has demonstrated that text can bring another dimension to the work and provide additional information about the subjects and themes of the work, yet photographs organised into sequences to create a loose narrative work successfully on their own with just a title to narrow down the range of interpretations of the work.

Through the research process I have discovered the many uses and audiences for my photo zines – ranging from the private to the public. They function as holiday snaps, family albums, memorials to the dead, documents of social events and history, bought by trustees to give to their employees, they have been given away to the subjects of the work and they have been displayed as works of art for strangers.

## Conclusion

The aim of this research has been to investigate the role of photobooks in the representation of the British working-classes since 1975 and how a contemporary photo zine practice can also contribute to the representation of this subject. Each section of this thesis has contributed to building up a picture of who the British working classes are at this particular historical juncture, how the lived experience of class has been represented by the photobook, and what strategies can be used by photobook/photo zine practitioners to represent the lived experience of class. Part one of the thesis examines Thatcherism and its impact on working-class lives and the history of British class analysis and its influence on working-class identity. Part two conducts a visual and textual analysis of seven British photobooks which each document different aspects of the impact of Thatcherism on working-class lives. While part three critically analyses the photo zine practice developed by this research in relation to the analysis of Thatcherism and how it has been represented by the photobook in parts one and two. The aim of this concluding section is to summarise the main ideas within the thesis, to make claims for my contribution to knowledge, to reflect on how being a woman has influenced my research and to make recommendations for how the research can be taken forward by myself and other researchers.

The model of photo zine practice that has been developed through this research can be used to investigate not only the lived experience of class, but also any kind of lived experience, or indeed, potentially any other observable phenomenon. Like sociological analysis of class in Britain, the method of photo zine practice that has been developed, in Mike Savage's words, 'rests in [an] ambivalent location betwixt and between academic, political and public fields' (Savage, 2016:58), and so can be used and adapted by a wide range of individuals and groups both inside and outside of academia, for a wide variety of purposes. Furthermore, this research also contributes to a growing body of newly emergent scholarship about the

photobook that was established by Patricia Di Bello, Collette Wilson and Shamoon Zamir (2012:1), and by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger (2004, 2006 pp 5,4)). The research will be of practical use to students of photography and photobook practitioners for thinking about their own projects and theoretically - for understanding the recent history of the photobook in Britain.

Through the development of the photo zine practice, I have discovered the importance of, to put it in autoethnographic terms, visual researchers taking photographs of and producing photobooks about 'their "own people"' (David Hayno in Adams, Holman Jones, Ellis, 2015:16), and choosing a "field location[s]" tied to one of their identities or group memberships' (ibid, 2015:16). This not only provides the researcher with a network of people and potential environments to produce work about but is also the best way of understanding and representing lived experience. "Outsiders" do not have the same knowledge and understanding of the lived experiences or empathy towards their subjects as "insiders", and this is evident in Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* (1986) for which he approached his project and the subjects of his work like a tourist. This does not mean that visual researchers need to spend years within in an environment to understand it. Chris Killip was a stranger to the Pirelli Tyres factory when he began his *Pirelli Work* project, but he became embedded in the environment because of the months he spent trying to take photographs in low lighting conditions. The time spent was not wasted – it allowed him to get to know the work force and understand how the factory worked.

Through the development of the photo zine practice I also discovered that spontaneity is important for capturing the everyday and lived experience. After experimenting with several SLR and compact film cameras, I realised that compact film cameras with wide angled lenses allow for spontaneously taken, close-up photographs which mimic the physical and psychological closeness we have with others in our day to day lives, without the loss of



quality that an SLR provides. The banality of aspects of everyday life and lived experience can be represented through photographs of every day routines and behaviours that are usually deemed unworthy of photography (e.g. visiting a shoe shop to buy school shoes, going to the doctors for a check-up, opening a caravan door). Using full bleed photographs (as opposed to photographs with white borders) in photo zines and photobooks also makes the viewer feel more physically and psychologically connected to the subjects of the work. Sequencing photographs to loosely represent the cycle of a day which includes the signifiers of times of the day (e.g. meal times and bed times) and the including photographs of clocks, all of which stand-in for the lived experience of the passage of time can be used as narrative devices within photo zines and the photobook and are a good way of mimicking the lived experience of the passage of time.

### **How Gender Has Influenced the Research**

My network of friends and family and the class practices I have grown up with and produced photo zines about reflect the lived experiences of both working- class women and men, but it is worth highlighting that a male researcher from a similar background might well have had access to or chosen to focus upon a different set of class practices and different areas of working-class life. Being a woman has determined the environments I feel comfortable in and have had access to and the environments which I am excluded from.

Despite the decline of traditional manufacturing jobs in Britain, work environments which are made up of predominately male employees can be described as representing the working-class par excellence, in terms of stereotypical ideas about who the working-classes are. As Mike Savage observes, historically coal miners 'above all, came to be seen – however wrongly – as 'archetypal' proletarians (e.g. Harrison 1978)' and below them 'dock workers, ship builders, printers and railway workers', whilst 'the largest occupation in Britain in 1931 – domestic service', was disregarded because

the characteristics of domestic work 'violated the symbolic ideas attaching to working-class independence (see Glucksmann 1990)' (Savage, 2000:128). Yet masculine work environments are also the places where female photographers and researchers are likely to feel less comfortable than their male counterparts. Gender tends to be a marginal issue when it comes to discussing the emotional and physical labour that goes into the production of art and photography. The reflexivity of ethnographers, who place ethics and reflexivity at the centre of what they do, are constantly analysing the way that their social position affects their interactions within their research subjects, but this level of reflexivity is not something that is usually focused upon in art and photography writing. I suspect this is one of the main reasons that I am only now considering how my gender has influenced my research - at the end of the research process. As Carol Warren and Jennifer Hackney point out in *Gender Issues in Ethnography* (2000), 'gender matters in virtually all aspects of social research' (Maanen, Manning, Miller in Warren, Hackney, 2000:viii) and when considering the social nature of documentary photography and the majority of art and art research, it becomes clear that photography and art are no exception. As Warren and Hackney observe:

sex and gender remain dominant organizing categories in most societies. And although gender intersects with other characteristics, women field-workers from the 1920s to the present have found their research – willingly or unwillingly – focused on women's issues and women's settings, mainly in the domestic sphere: child rearing, health, and nutrition.

(Warren, Hackney, 2000:5)

My photo zine practice is not just confined to the domestic sphere and "women's settings", but my focus upon family (and indirectly, parenting) in several of the zines, has been influenced by my gender. Yet, as is evident in the British photobooks analysed in part two of the thesis (Nick Waplington's *Livingroom* (1991) in particular), the documentation of the domestic is not just the preserve of female photographers and researchers. Warren and Hackney also observe that 'gender and its intersections with other field-worker characteristics can provide and limit access to various settings and

topics' (Warren, Hackney, 2000:11). My status and experiences as a working-class woman provided me access to some settings and topics - a children's party, the work place of a female friend and personal discussions with close family and my in laws, but not to others. The environments which I have not photographed are those populated by individuals who are mostly male, such as factories, warehouses, garages, building sites, etc. One of the main reasons for this is that gaining access to work environments is difficult for both male and female photographers. But I am also aware how uncomfortable I would feel as a woman in particular environments and as a consequence did not try harder to gain access to them. Indeed, as a Teaching Assistant on supply in a college, I remember how uncomfortable I felt when I was sent to the Construction and Engineering building to support a teenage boy in the bricklaying department. Every minute I was there felt like a lifetime. It is only now that I now realise that being a woman has discouraged me on both a conscious and unconscious level from seeking out opportunities in some environments that are relevant to the topic of my research. Yet, despite knowing how uncomfortable I would feel in environments where the work force is predominately male, I did send an email requesting to photograph Cammell Laird's shipyard and Vauxhall Motor's car factory, where my father-in-law had worked, but received no reply. I suspect the lack of a response was in part for political reasons as having read Tom Wood's notes about his Documentary Photography Archive (DPA) commission to photograph Cammell Laird's in 1996, even as an established male documentary photographer, he had found it difficult to gain access when he attempted to do so in the 1980s (Wood, 1997: no page number).

As noted within my analysis of *Ray's a Laugh* (1996), I consider the consumption of alcohol and nights out as an important aspect of working-class experience, yet during the course of my research I have not gone to pubs and clubs to take photographs as I know that as a woman, I would feel less safe and might attract unwanted attention. There might be a way of getting around this if I was accompanied by my husband, but by using this

as an example then it becomes clear that it is more difficult for a woman to access certain spaces without feeling unsafe or more uncomfortable than a male photographer in the same situation. This could be one of the reasons why there are so many successful male photographers because of their relative freedom in the world to wander around relatively safely. As I have already noted, Paul Graham progressed from examining life in the UK to investigating life in Europe and Martin Parr also moved from examining life in the UK to investigating life across the world.

### **How being a woman has positively influenced the research**

Despite some of the hidden barriers that impacted on my research (so hidden that I was unconscious of them for the majority of the PhD), being a woman has positively influenced the way that I have been able to conduct my research and the photographs that I have been able to take and over time I have started to realise just how gendered my work is. My close relationship with Sue, who played a significant role in helping me to get access to Phil Manion's where she works and to a friend's Christmas party, is a gendered relationship. Sue's qualities as a maternal and caring woman have influenced how I felt towards her when I was growing up and is one of the reasons that my parents were happy for me to spend so much time with her and her family. This 'relationship made from the local' (Skeggs, 2011:504) forms part of an 'alternative circuit of value/s' (Skeggs, 2011:503) amongst the working classes, which Beverly Skeggs' research (Skeggs, 2011:504) highlights. Particularly that of the working-class women whom Skeggs interviewed, who promoted caring 'as an essential way to live with others' (Skeggs, 2011:504).

The way that the children and families at Lavina's Christmas party responded to me taking photographs may also have been different if I was a male photographer and not one of the mothers of the children at the party. Because of the sensitivity towards photographing children, the request to

take photographs in the first place by a middle-aged male photographer may not have been granted. And it isn't just the photographing of children that has become more fraught for photographers. Whilst the number and types of photographs in circulation has massively increased because of digital technology, the internet and social media, John Roberts observes that 'sensitivity towards photography as intrusive and "objectifying"' (Roberts, 2014:99) has now become part of a popular, common sense attitude towards photography. This sensitivity towards being photographed is something that is always at the back of my mind every time I take a photograph in a public space.

My photo zines focus on the experiences of individuals, families and community groups that are made up predominantly of white working-class people. Working-class individuals of different ethnicities and from different cultural backgrounds will undoubtedly share many of the same experiences. As I noted earlier, 'the taste of necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984:373) and the struggle for the necessities of life is something that working-class individuals from all cultural backgrounds share. But they will also have a different range of experiences and cultural traditions that this research has not made visible. Therefore, this approach could be taken forward by researchers from other cultural backgrounds who are interested in making visible the lived experience of class of their families and communities.

## **Future Research**

In the future, I would like to publish a photobook using photographs from all eight of the photo zines. I would include an essay at the front (or back) which condenses the ideas from this thesis into a form of writing that would be accessible to individuals outside of academia. To this end, I have produced a PDF example of what that photobook might look like and this will accompany the thesis as a separate document.

In a similar way to how John Berger collaborated with the photographer Jean Muir to produce *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor* (1967) and *A Seventh Man* (1975), and James Agee collaborated with Walker Evans to produce *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), I would also like to take this research forward by working in collaboration with researchers from across the social sciences to further investigate the lived experience of class through the photobook and to produce ethnographic photo text books. Using a different form of photographic practice, I would also like to explore how family photographs relate to the lived experience of class and class identity through the production of photo zines and photobooks using collections of my own family's photographs.

### **The presentation of my research**

The eight photo zines and the thesis which constitute this PhD research project are submitted for examination in an A4 black canvas archive box, which has the title of the thesis and my name printed in bold silver lettering on the front. By choosing to present the practice in this way rather than holding an exhibition of the work, I am underlining the close relationship between the thesis and the practice and the utilitarian nature of the photobooks, which are designed to be looked at anywhere. The sequence of photographs for each of the eight photo zines and their titles are also available for people to view on my website:

<http://ruthmadelinewhite.weebly.com/phd-practice.html>

### **The politics of the zine practice and its distribution**

As I have already noted, the multiplicity, accessibility and distribution of my photo zines to the subjects of the work are some of its key values. The photo zine has its own visual syntax, it provides a hypertextual link to more throw away, ephemeral, vernacular, low culture and cheaply produced publications such as the zine, the magazine, the pamphlet and the brochure.

As Stephen Duncombe observes in *Notes from the Underground: Zines & the Politics of Alternative Culture* (2017), the birth of the zine can be traced back to the fanzines produced by science fiction fans in the 1930s. The Punk zines of the mid-1970s (Duncombe, 2017:9) also played a significant role in shaping the nature of zines and the zine community, but they are also part of a lineage 'of media for the misbegotten', that can be traced back to the radical political pamphlets of Thomas Paine and others in the eighteenth century (Duncombe, 2017:18). Despite operating on the fringes of society, the concerns of zines 'are common to all: how to count as an individual; how to build a supportive community; how to have a meaningful life; how to create something that is yours' (Duncombe, 2017:18). This is comparable to the 'alternative circuit of value/s' (Skeggs, 2011:503) found within the values and practices of the working-classes - the 'non-utilitarian affects of care, loyalty and affection' (Skeggs, 2011:504), that have been highlighted by Beverley Skeggs. The way in which zines are distributed is a key part of the ethics of their production and consumption. Zines are made and shared 'for love: love of expression, love of sharing, love of communication. And a protest against a culture and society that offers little reward for such acts of love, zines are also created out of rage' (Duncombe, 2017:17).

And so, in that spirit, and in the spirit of Café Royal Books (which I owe a great debt to), the black canvas box containing the photo zine practice and this thesis will be given to Manchester Metropolitan University's Special Collections, so that it will be available for other students and researchers to look at and learn from in the years ahead.

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## **Workshops/Programmes/Talks/Interviews**

*Killed Negatives: study day.* Whitechapel Gallery (2018).

*Artful Research: Symposium One.* Part one of two symposia about practice as research. Manchester Metropolitan University (2018).

*Thesis Bootcamp.* Over four days. Manchester University (2018).

*Artful Prose: A writing and visual thinking course for postgraduate researchers* (M.Res, MPhil, PhD), nurturing academic writing and making. 4-day workshop. Manchester Metropolitan University (2016).

*Between Instagram and the Photobook.* Talk at The Hepworth Gallery (2016).

*Becoming an Influential Researcher.* 1-day workshop. Liverpool University (2015).

*Contemporary Visual Arts Network North West Critical Writing Programme & Bursary.* Six workshops and writing – I was mentored by Bob Dickenson and produced a feature and two exhibition reviews which were published online (2015-2016).

*The Death of Thatcher on Social Media.* 1-day workshop. Sheffield University (2015).

Open Eye Gallery: *Craig Atkinson: Café Royal Books.* Talk given by Craig Atkinson (2015).

I interviewed Richard Billingham about *Ray's a Laugh* (2015).

I interviewed Adam Murray while we both looked through MMUs collection of his *Preston is my Paris* publications (2015).

*To Hell with Culture? Re-examining the commodification of culture in contemporary capitalism.* Conference. Manchester Metropolitan University (2014).

## **Exhibitions**

*New Brighton Revisited* (2018) The Sailing School, Marine Point New Brighton.

Tom Wood (2018) *The Pier Head.* Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool.

Martin Parr (2016) *The Rhubarb Triangle and Other Stories: Photographs by Martin Parr.* Wakefield Gallery, Wakefield.

*North: Identity, Photography, Fashion* (2017) Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool.

*Liverpool Biennial 2016* (2016) Open eye Gallery, Liverpool.

*Open 1* (2015) Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool.

*Open 2 Pieces of You* (2016) Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool.

*Helen Sear's I Love You Daucus Carota and Fred Shaw: Gypsy Portraits* (2015) The Victoria Gallery & Museum, Liverpool.

## **Output**

Joint exhibition. *Two Photographers Fathoming Time.* (2019) *He Served His Time in Cammell Lairds.* John Hyatt's Dark Side Art Lab, Pacific Road, Birkenhead.

A series of photographs from *At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done* were shortlisted as one of the top 100 entries for *Solo 2018*, at the Brighton Photo Fringe Festival 2018. The top 100 were displayed on a screen at the festival.

*Manchester Hothouse Event.* Ten-minute presentation about my work for Redeye Photography Network. Anthony Burgess Foundation (2018).

White, R (2016) Preston is My Paris: Reflections on Social Class in Art and Photography: <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2016/01/preston-is-my-paris-reflections-on-social-class-in-art-and-photography/>.

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White, R (2015) Open 1 at Liverpool's Open Eye Gallery. <http://www.artinliverpool.com/open-1-at-liverpools-open-eye-gallery/>.

*Provocations.* Ten-minute talk given about my work for research students. MIRIAD (2015).

## Appendix

### Notes from an interview with Richard Billingham at the University of Gloucestershire (March 2015)

The interview was not recorded as although I took a digital recording device, I didn't feel comfortable asking to use it, so I had to make notes on the train after I had spent many hours with Richard. I then emailed my summary of the interview to him to check that I had not misinterpreted what he had told me, but I didn't get a reply. I did get an email from him several months later inviting me to the private view for his latest work. I can only presume he agreed with my summary or had been too busy to reply. Overall I got the impression he was a bit fed up of people focusing on *Ray's a Laugh*, as there have been so many interviews done about it and because he has made a lot of work since.

'Richard this is what I thought you said or meant, is it correct?'

- You worked full time at Kwik Save (for 6 years) whilst you did your foundation course and your degree course
- You didn't consider the inclusion of your triptych of Ray in *Who's Looking at the Family?* to be a big deal as nobody spoke to you about the work at the private view so you didn't think many people took much notice and although Paul Graham sent you a note of appreciation – it was written with crossings out and tip ex so you didn't really take it seriously.
- You don't agree with the category 'working class' to describe your family as they were not working – they were below the working-class and you don't really think of the category 'working-class' as something to identify with or feel empowered by as most people just want to escape from it if they can.
- You think of yourself as a fine art photographer and are very much against the positioning of you work within or next to documentary photography and the work of people like Paul Reas, Martin Parr or Paul Graham.

- You feel that people focus too much on the social and political aspects of your photographs and films about your family (for their own agendas) and you think that it marginalises the other aspects of the work such as the technique, composition, aesthetics of the work?
- The only reason you created the photo book *Ray's a Laugh* was in order to have something that you could use to gain a place on an MA course not because the photo book was the point of taking the photos, and even after you became famous for it you still felt that way.
- You wouldn't make any more photo books for the above reason and don't view photo books as an art form in themselves? (I'm not sure I've got this right so will check with you) What is it you don't like about them?
- Did you want the narrative of *Rays a Laugh* to be mainly about the tragedy of your father's situation, 'getting it from all sides'?
- Where the selection of the photographs for the book chosen only for how they relate to each other aesthetically and compositionally rather than what is happening in them socially? What was the criteria for the photographs that were included or excluded? Were you happy with the final selection? (apart from the one of your mum and dad eating their dinner in front of the TV – as you said in another interview that it looks like 'any hack' could have taken it and could undermine the rest of the photos).
- You think that in the study guide, Charlotte Cotton put too much emphasis on the role of Julian Germaine and Michael Collins as it comes across as if they are more or at least as equally responsible for your work.
- You don't like digital photography as it makes everything look the same and like a product.
- Do you think you became most famous and received the most attention in the art world after the *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy or did it happen earlier? How were the images selected for the exhibition? Where were the most 'sensational' photographs chosen? Can you remember which ones were in the exhibition? (I have looked everywhere online and have the catalogue, but it doesn't tell me).
- When newspapers printed your work, which images did they tend to select – can you describe which ones, so I know which ones to talk about? (As it is important for my thesis to talk about how galleries and the media represent or misrepresent artists).

## **Questionnaire given to Phil Manion workers (2016)**

### **Working at Phil Manion**

I would really appreciate it if you could please tell me about your job and life. Some of what you write may be included in the photobook I am making. You can write as much or as little as you want. I would love the finished photobook to give a real sense of what it's like to work in Phil Manion and of your individual lives (A copy of the finished photobook will be given to you).

Examples of things I would like to hear about: How long have you worked in Phil Manion? How did you end up working there? What is involved in your job? Do you enjoy your job and feel proud of what you make or do? How does the work affect your life outside of the work place? What are your interests outside of work? Anything else about your work or life that you would like to share.

## Email correspondence with Craig Atkinson (2018)

Hi Craig,

I am due to hand in my PhD this coming Monday (it's been a slog!) so am just finishing it off. I will email it to you when it's finished. In it I acknowledge the influence of Cafe Royal Books on my photo book practice and I write how the neutral typeface used for the titles of Cafe Royal Books does not draw attention to itself (unlike a photobook like *Ray's a Laugh* which has a deliberately ugly typeface).

My supervisor says I need to say more about what I mean by 'neutral' and so I was hoping you could tell me the name of the typeface you use for your titles and if you chose it because of its neutrality. It looks like Ariel to me.

By neutral I think I'm trying to say it appears like the kind of typeface that is used for the text in books and magazines.

Hi Ruth,

I'll look forward to it, thanks. It's Helvetica. It has a long history, but it's designed as modernism / Bahaus was — to be fuss free and functional, so kind of mirrors my hopes for the books. I use it because I like it really though.

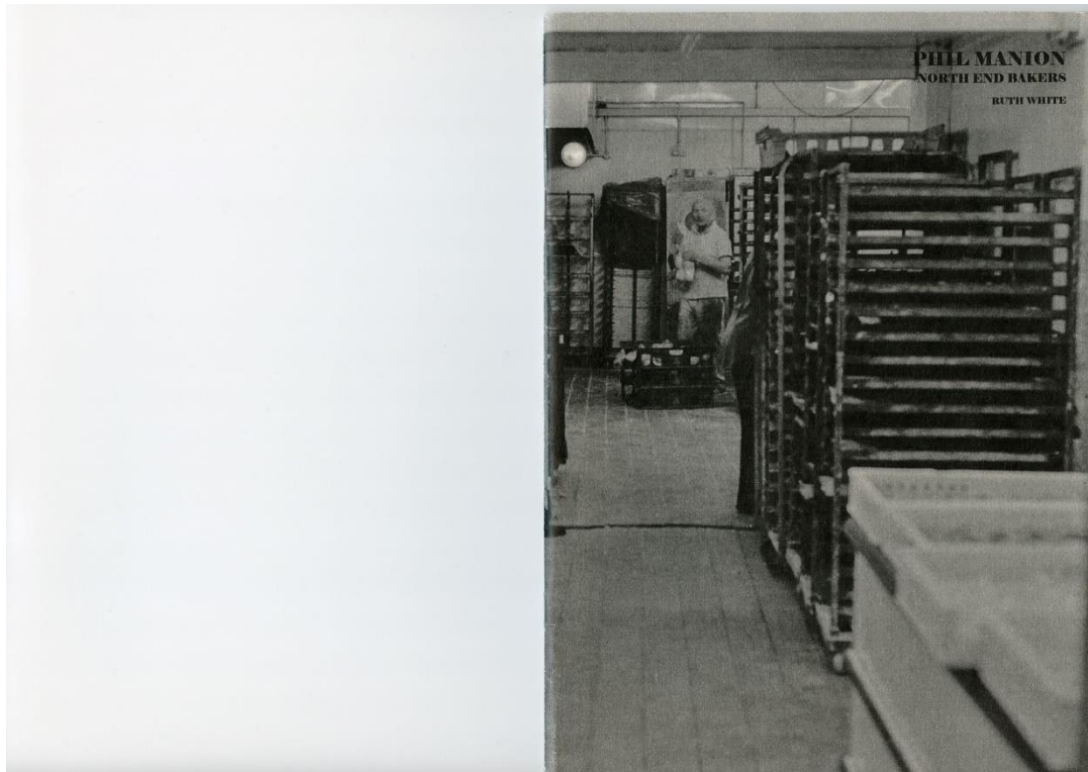
Best

Craig

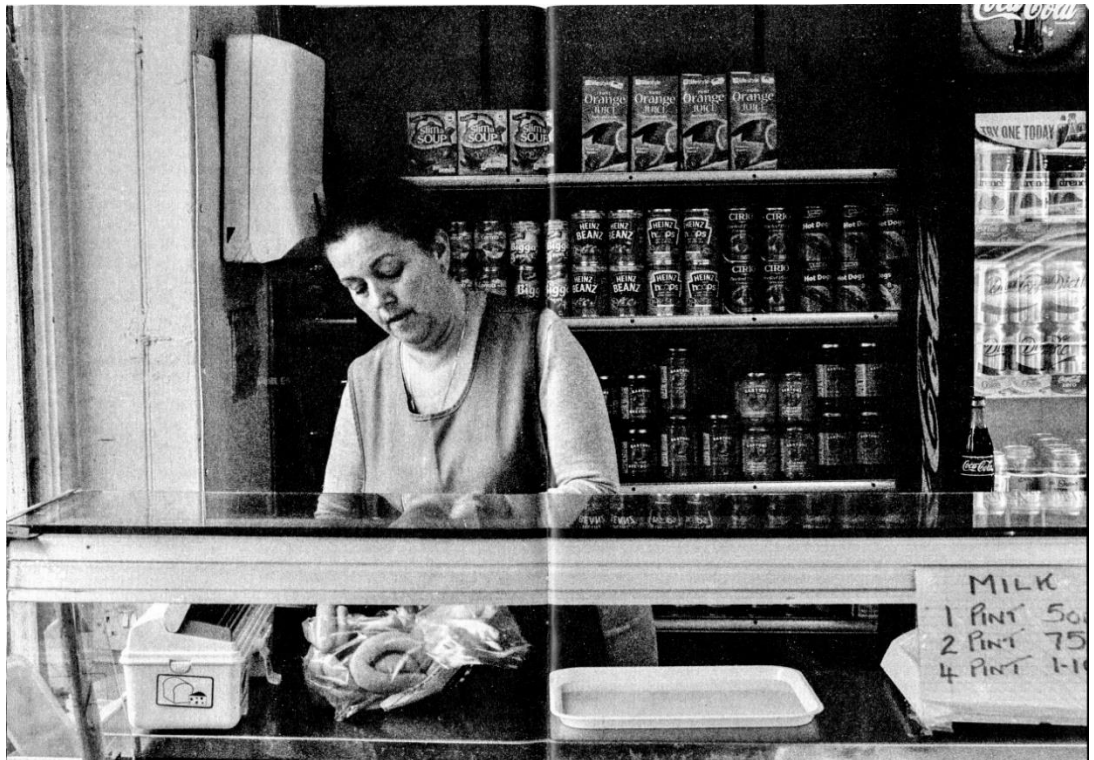


# Photo Zine Practice

## Phil Manion North End Bakers (July 2016)

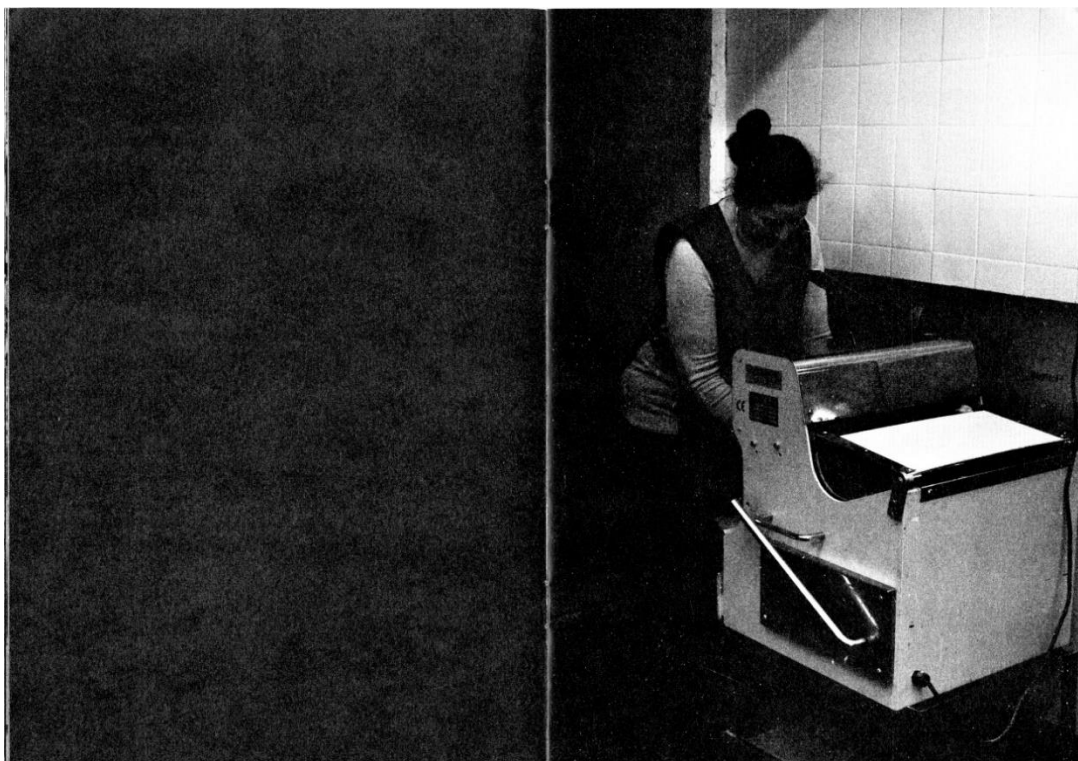


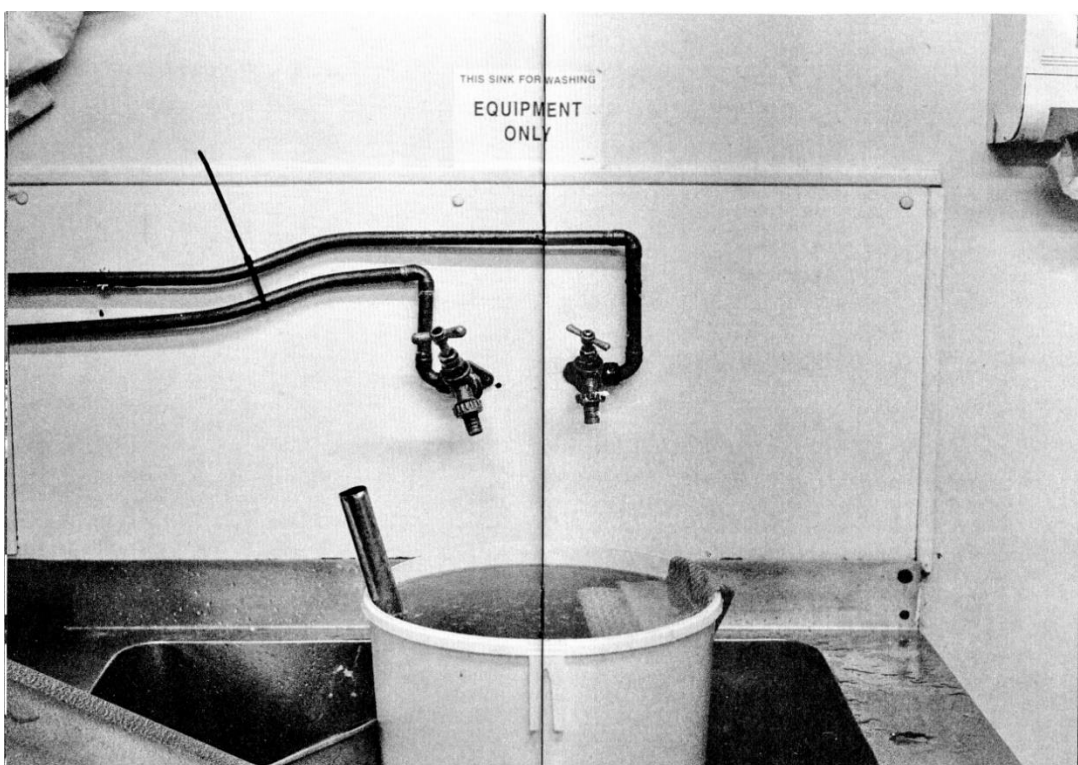


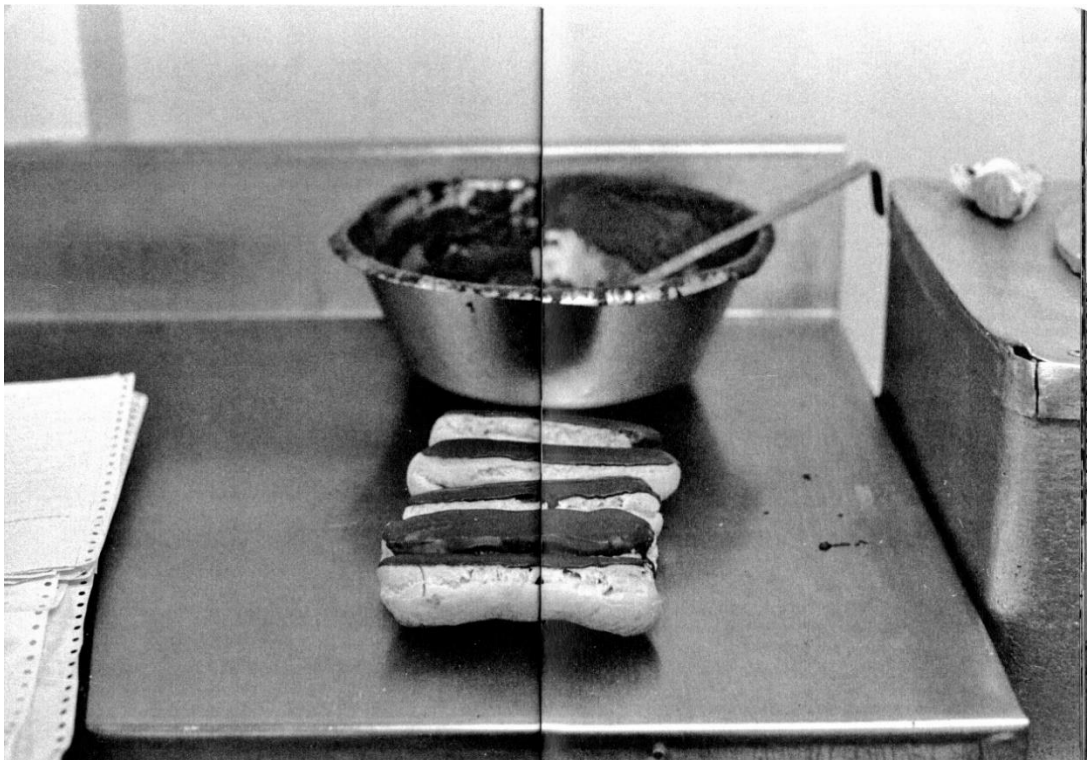
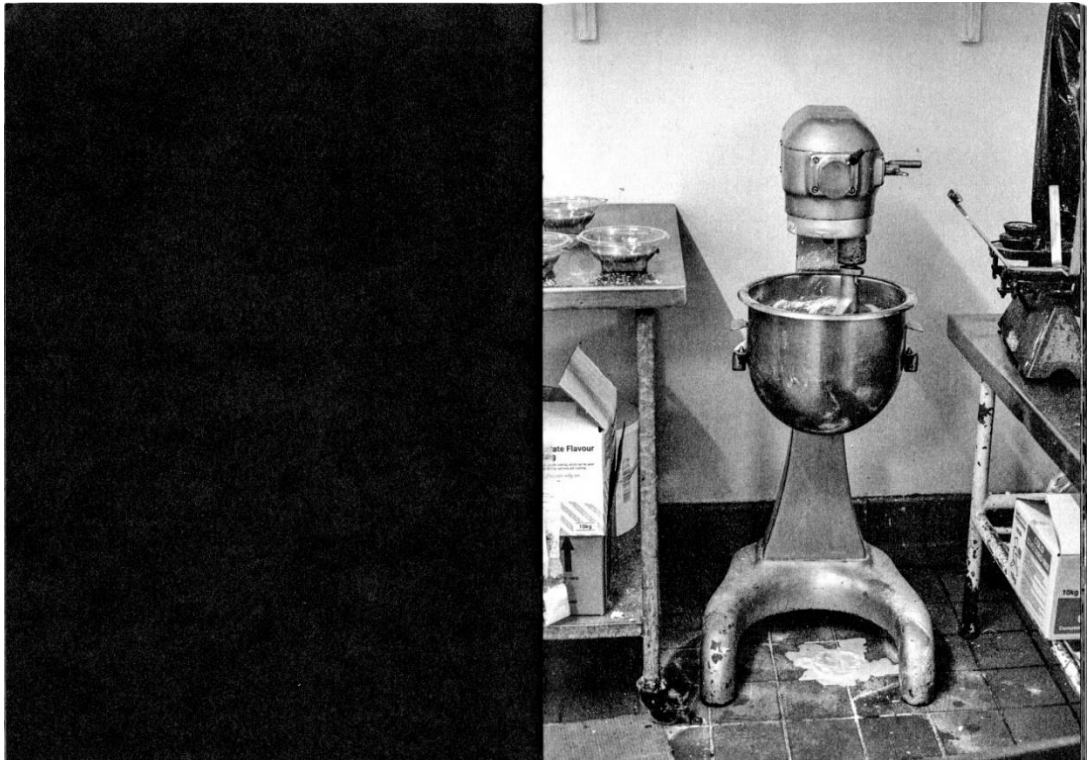




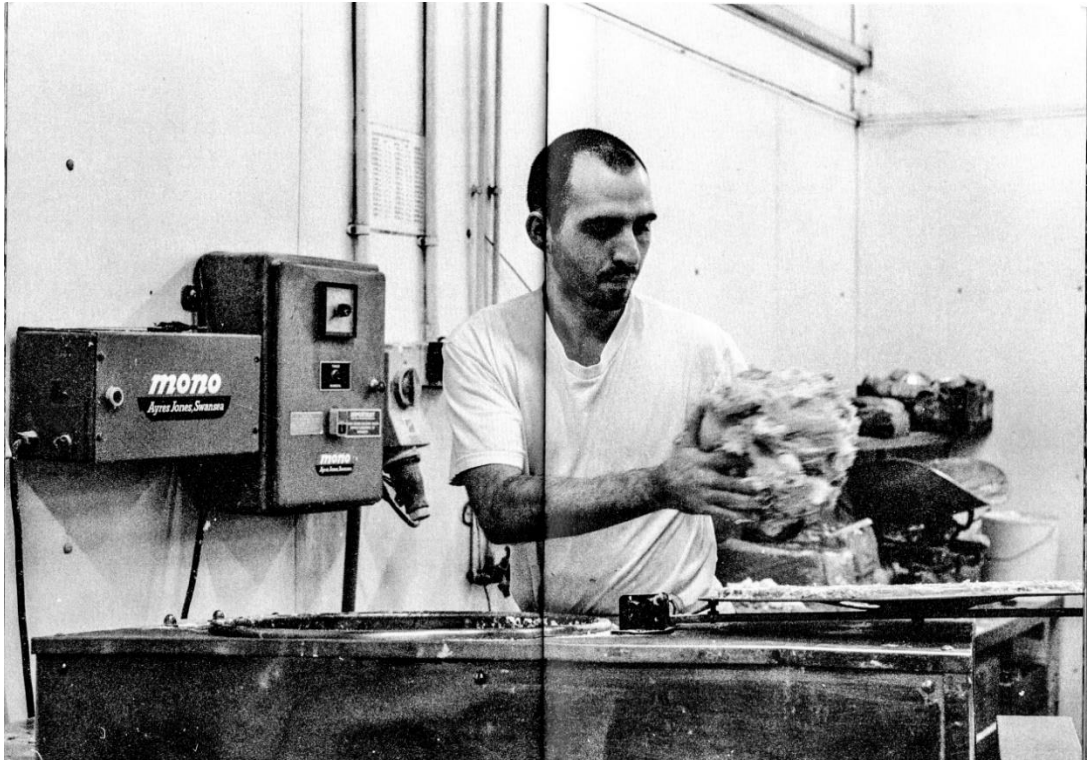




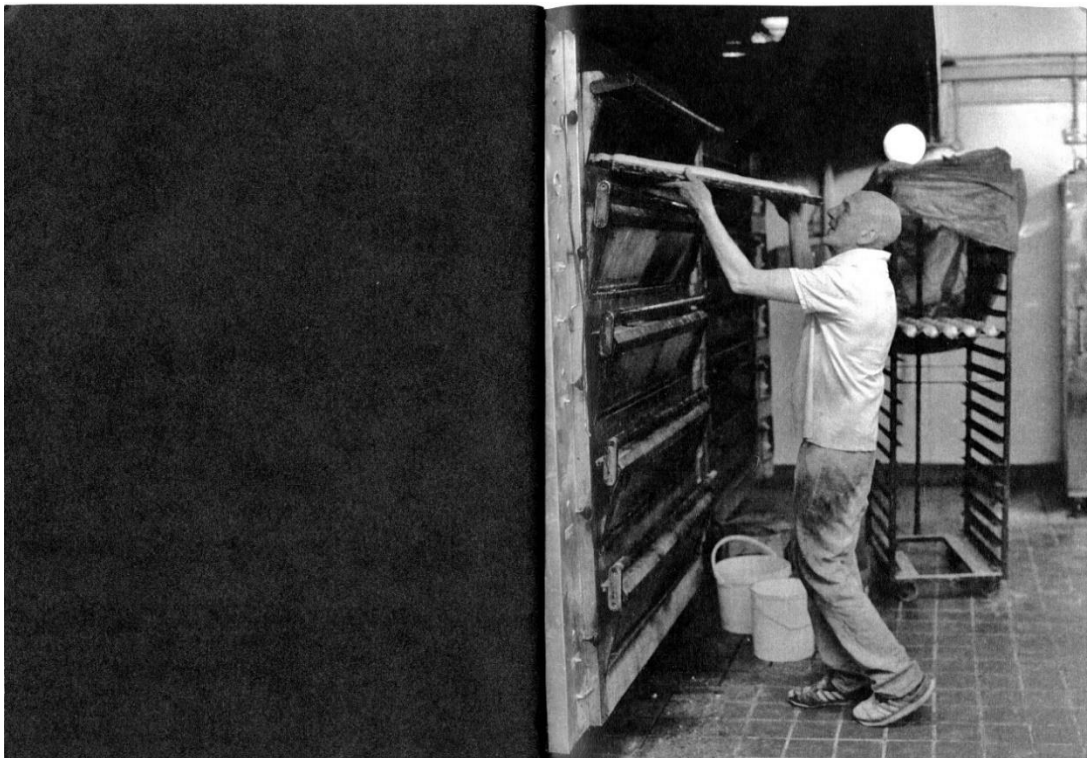






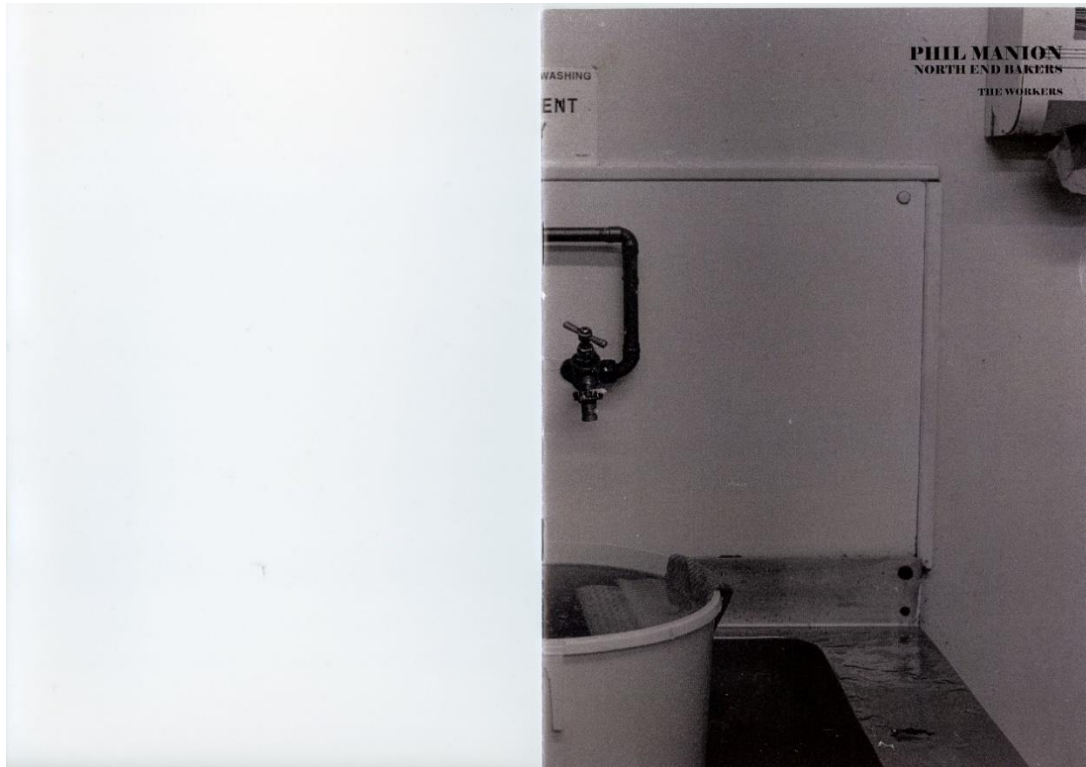








## Phil Manion North End Bakers: The Workers (2016)



①  
 HI MY NAME IS KAY MOSSMAN  
 I STARTED WORK IN MANIONS  
 ABOUT 1969. I WAS ABOUT TO  
 START AN EVENING CLEANING  
 JOB IN OFFICES IN TOWN.  
 I WAS WALKING PAST PHIL'S SHOP  
 WHEN HE ASKED ME TO START  
 WORK FOR HIM THE NEXT DAY  
 I WAS REALLY HAPPY ABOUT  
 THIS BECAUSE I ONLY LIVED  
 DOWN THE ROAD IN SELWYN ST  
 AND I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO  
 DO EVENING WORK. I STARTED  
 WORK THE NEXT DAY. IT WAS  
 ONE OF THE BEST JOBS I'D  
 HAD. WE WERE LIKE ONE BIG  
 HAPPY FAMILY. WE USED TO HAVE  
 MANY LAUGHS WITH STAFF AND  
 CUSTOMERS ALIKE.  
 I WORKED THERE TILL 1971  
 WHEN I GAVE BIRTH TO TWINS A  
 BOY AND GIRL. PHIL AND EILEEN

②  
 WERE GODPARENTS TO OUR DAUGHTER  
 WHEN THEY WERE 18 MONTHS OLD  
 I WENT BACK TO WORK FOR THEM  
~~BEFORE~~ BUT ONLY FOR ABOUT  
 SIX MONTHS. BECAUSE MY MUM  
 WAS CARING FOR THE TWINS AND  
 MY TWO OLDER CHILDREN AND IT  
 BECAME TOO MUCH FOR HER  
 I WAS REALLY SORRY TO LEAVE  
 BECAUSE I LOVED MY JOB. WE  
 WOULD HAVE SO MUCH BANTER  
 WITH A LOT OF STAFF WHO  
 USED TO WORK FOR A COMPANY  
 CALLED OLIVETTI IN BREWSTER  
 STREET.  
 I WORKED WITH A GIRL CALLED  
 MAUREEN MOORE SHE HAD GROWN  
 UP WITH PHIL. THEY EVEN SHARED  
 THE SAME PRAM. (I'LL LEAVE IT  
 TO VAL TO TELL YOU THE STORY  
 ABOUT THAT.) WE ARE STILL  
 FRIENDS TO THIS DAY.



I have worked at phil Manion for over a year now. I got the job through a friend. I studied bakery for two years at college and this is my first job. I love my job at phil Manion and would love to continue to progress here. I am very proud to work at phil Manion. The hours I work here are very sociable, early starts and early finishes. This enables me to still spend time with friends and family. I like to watch football and play video games, I also collect figures and memorabilia.

HMA.

MY NAME IS ROSE.  
I STARTED WORKING IN MANIONS 25 YEARS AGO.  
THE SIMPLE REASON BEING I WANTED A CHANGE  
OF JOBS.  
I APPLIED AND GOT THE JOB, NEVER WORKING WITH  
THE PUBLIC BEFORE, I WAS QUITE NERVOUS.  
I DIDN'T LIKE IT AT FIRST AND GAVE MYSELF 6 MONTHS  
(STILL HERE 25 YEARS LATER)  
EVENTUALLY I STARTED WORKING FULL TIME, OPENING  
5 SHOPS IN AS MANY DAYS (PHIL HAD 5 SHOPS THEN)  
THINGS BECAME MORE INTERESTING, I ENJOYED  
SPEAKING TO CUSTOMERS AND THE DIFFERENT  
THINGS OF DAY TO DAY.  
ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN UPS + DOWNS, IVE  
ENJOYED THE WORK AND MOST OF THE PEOPLE  
IVE WORKED WITH.  
NOW AFTER ALL THIS TIME IM RETIRING AND  
IM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT ADVENTURE  
AND CATCHING UP ON THINGS I COULD NEVER  
MAKE TIME FOR.

I HAVE WORKED IN PHIL MANNION'S  
FOR ABOUT 8 years I WAS OUT  
OF WORK FOR 6 MONTHS AND APPLIED  
FOR A JOB AND I GOT IT I  
LOVE WORKING THERE NOW  
MY JOB INVOLVES SERVING THE CUSTOMERS  
AND CLEANING AS YOU WANT

Hi, My name is Mariusz. I've got 24 years old. I joined to the Phil Mannion in the previous month. My role in the company is to help experienced bakers to the baking cakes, processing and preparation of finished products for shipping. The staff are friendly and have a good humor every day. I like them. I reach to work on a bicycle, which makes me happy. I love cycling. After work especially in day off I overcome the cross-training and cycling as preparing for triathlon, which will be held in August of this year in Liverpool. Nobody me does not believe and does not need. I learn English to better communicate with local people because I'm from Poland. I love reading books. I have also a dream, who was born six months ago to become a champion calisthenic. I believe in themselves and what I do and that I can achieve desired goal. I know that each workout closer to my dreams and much works even before me. I wish them all be dreamers. Restrictions not exist. Sorry for the mistakes.



MY NAME IS SUE BROWN  
I HAVE WORKED AT PHIL MANIONS FOR 16 YRS.  
I APPLIED FOR THE JOB AFTER WORKING FOR ANOTHER  
COMPANY THAT I WASN'T VERY HAPPY AT, I STARTED  
WORKING PART TIME AND AFTER A FEW YEARS MY  
HOURS WERE INCREASED TO FULL TIME I ENJOY  
WORKING HERE AS IT IS A GOOD WORKING ENVIRONMENT  
THE STAFF ARE ALL EASY GOING AND WE HAVE A LOT  
OF CUSTOMERS WHO COME IN ON A DAILY BASIS SOME  
HAVE BEEN COMING IN FOR OVER 30 YRS IF THATS NOT  
LOYAL I DONT KNOW WHAT IS, WHEN I BECAME FULL TIME  
I ~~OPEN~~ <sup>BEGAN TO OPEN</sup> THE SHOP AND ~~AND~~ RUN THE SHOP ON A  
DAILY BASIS. WE STOCK CAKES PIES COOKED MEATS,  
SOME GROCERIES AND WE MAKE A FEW SANDWICHES.  
OUR OPENING HOURS ARE 9AM-5PM MON-SAT 4.30 SAT  
WHICH IS GOOD AS YOU STILL HAVE TIME FOR YOUR  
FAMILY LIFE.

I HAVE WORKED AT MANIONS FOR THE LAST 26 YRS I GOT THE  
JOB AFTER LEAVING A BIG SUPERMARKET WICH WAS NOT  
TRADITIONLY MADE BREAD. I MAKE ALL BREAD & CAKES,  
I ENJOY BEING A BAKER WICH I HAVE DONE FOR  
52 YRS, I AM PROUD OF MY WORK AS I AM A  
PERFECTIONIST THE HRS OF A BAKER IS VERY ANTI  
SOCIAL AS YOU ARE UP SO EARLY AND AS YOU CAN  
IMAGINE BED EARLY. I AM A KEEN GARDENER  
AND GROW MY OWN TOMS & VEG. BEING OUTSIDE  
IS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR AFTER WORKING IN  
A HOT STUFFY BAKERY.

JOHN NEELY.

Gary Raby

I have worked in Phil Manions now for 11 years  
I ended up working here by word of mouth  
from a guy I worked with

I enjoy working here and really feel satisfied  
when a quality product is your finished <sup>fruit</sup> article.  
My job involves making the bread, pies, and tarts.  
the only thing that really affects my  
life out of work is a couple of hours  
sleep in the afternoon to make up for  
the early mornings,

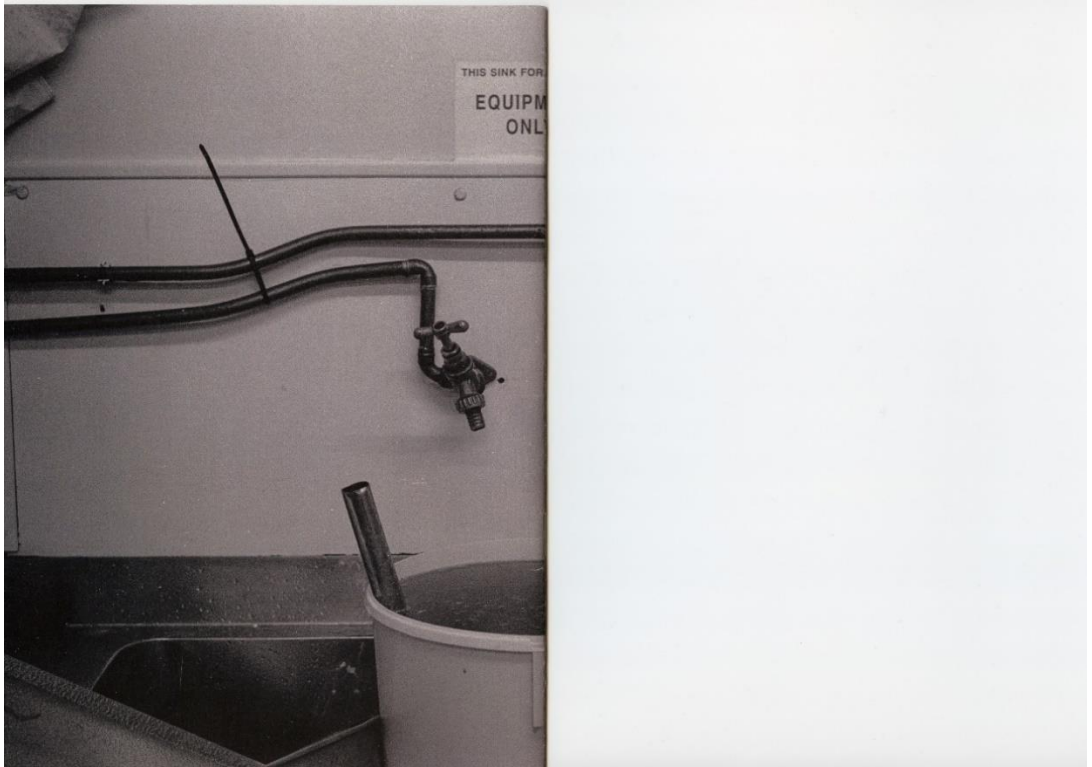
outside of work I enjoy my kids  
I also fish, and play football

Just life in general because you  
never know what's round the corner  
make the most of it.

Michael Mitchell - Baker & Confectioner

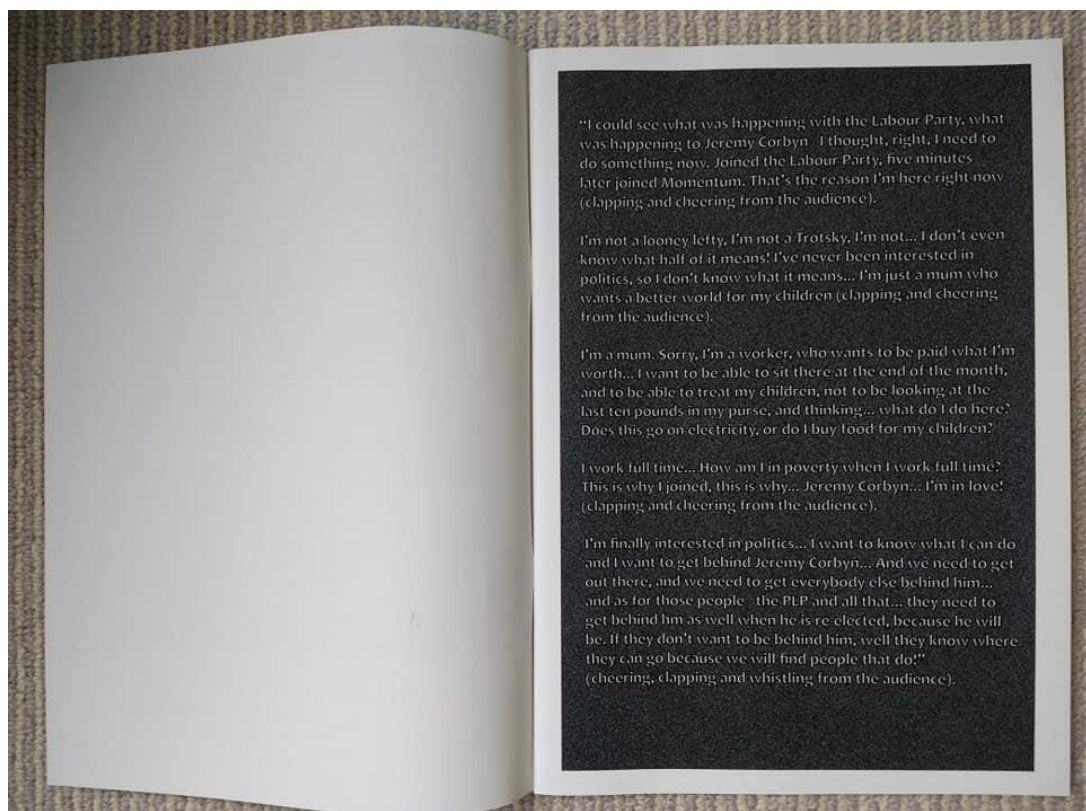
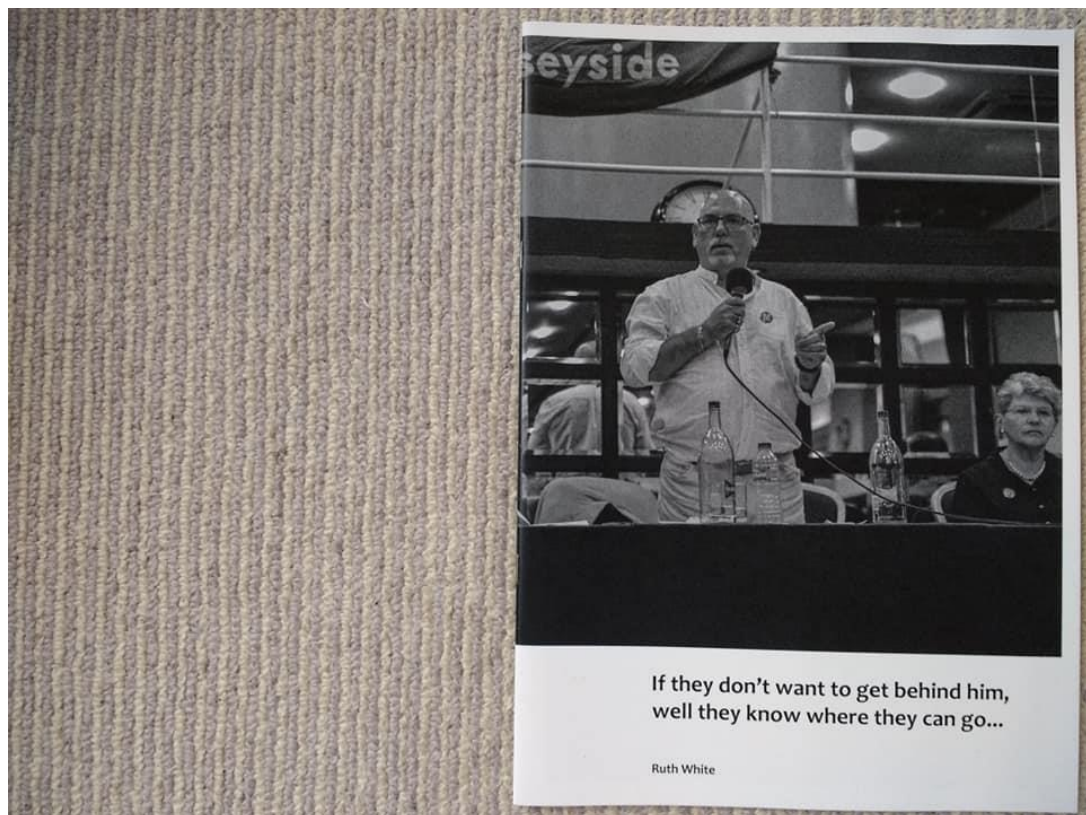
I left school 1975 and served an apprenticeship  
in Sayers. when I was working there were plenty  
of large bakeries Sayers, Cousins, Cubbins, Scotts  
and Reeves all employing hundreds of staff, but  
sadly all gone. The reason they have gone is  
down to the way we shop we do all our shopping  
under one roof which cuts out your baker, butcher,  
and green grocers. Manions is one of only about  
half a dozen bakeries left every day is different  
if some one is off well we might be doing cakes  
bread or pies.







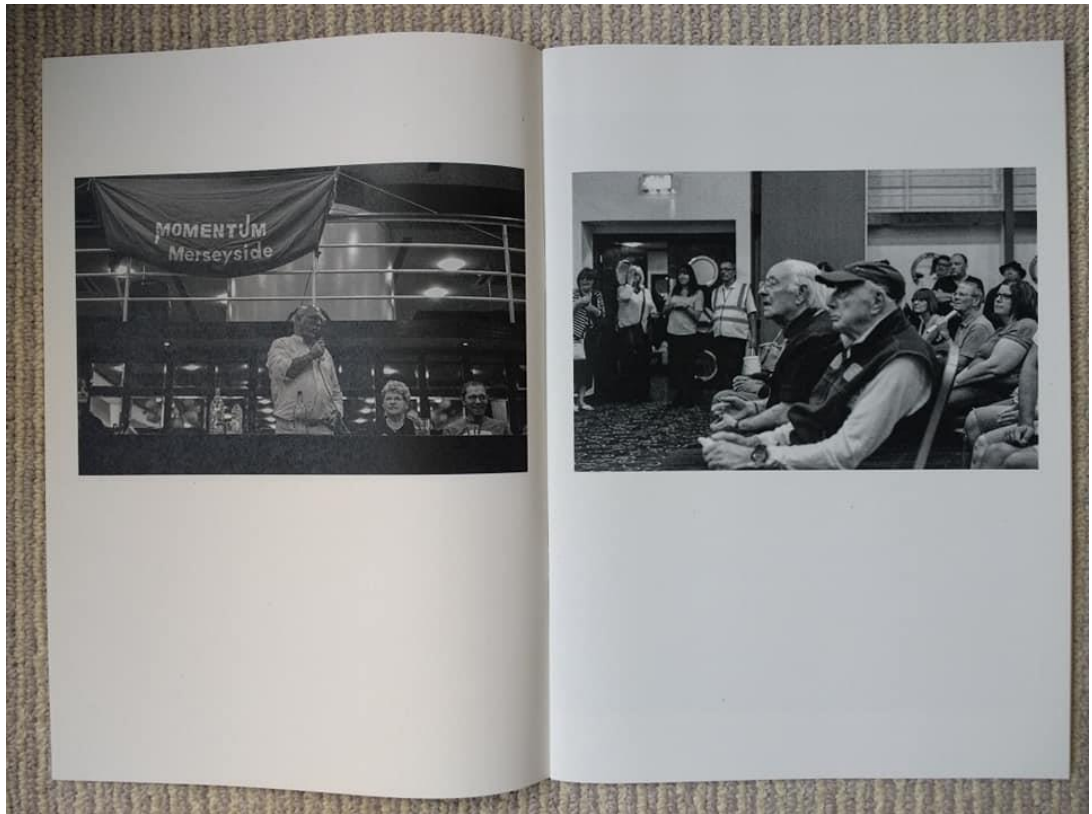
## If They Don't Want to Get Behind Him, Well They Know Where They Can Go... (August 2016)



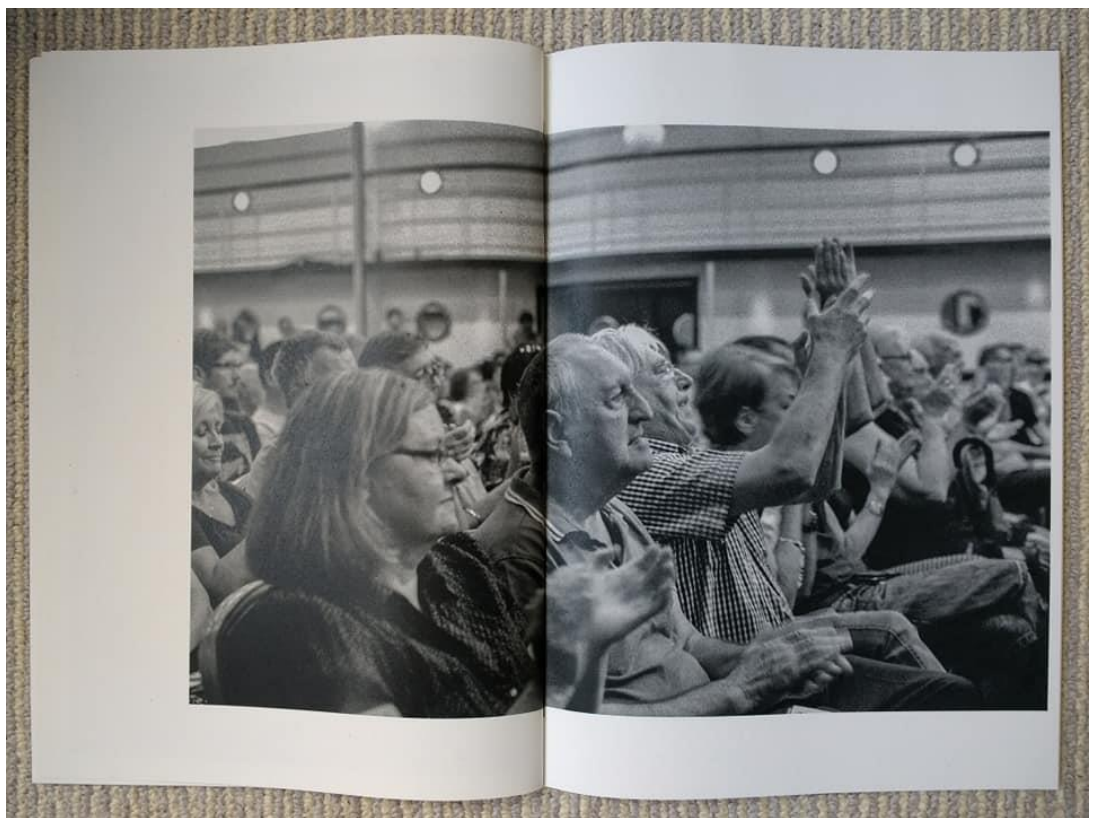




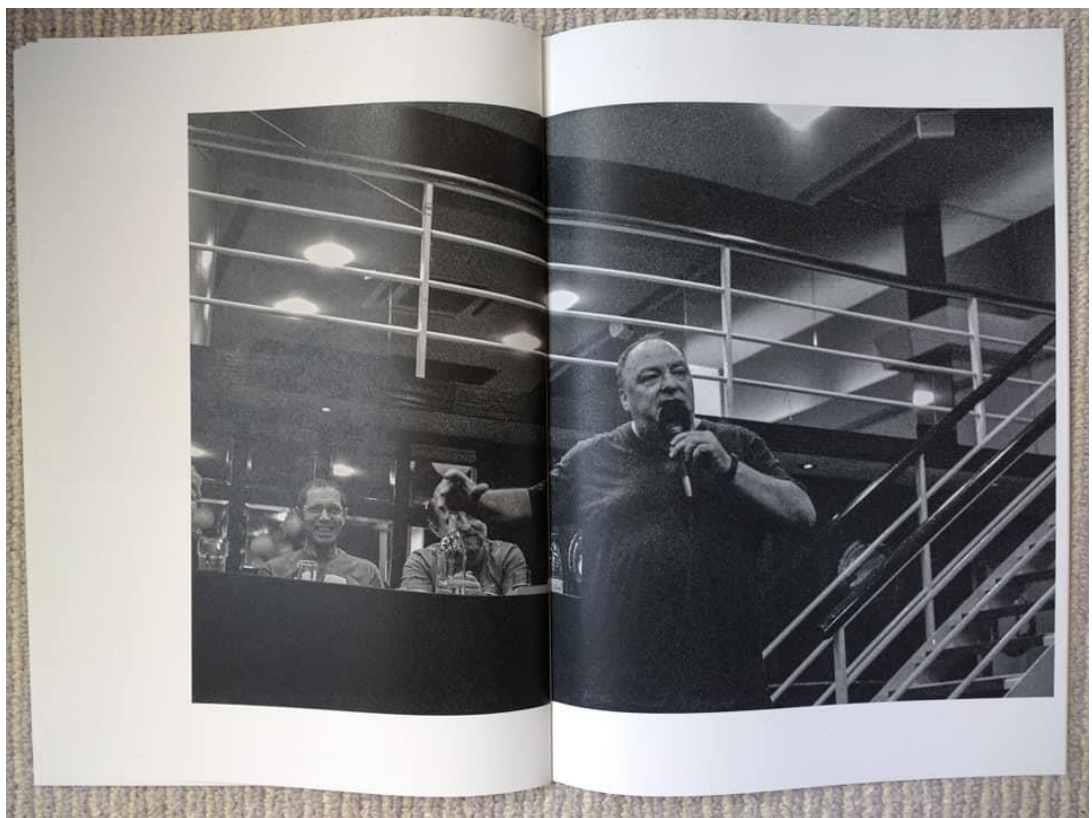
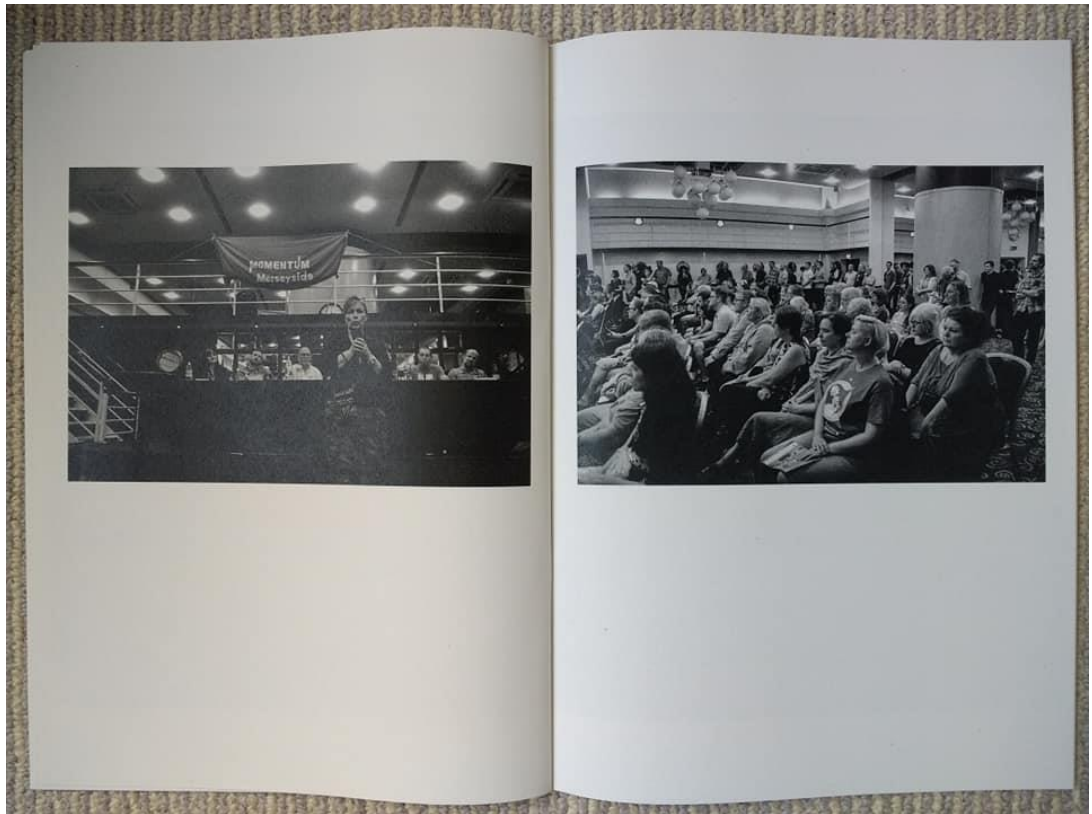








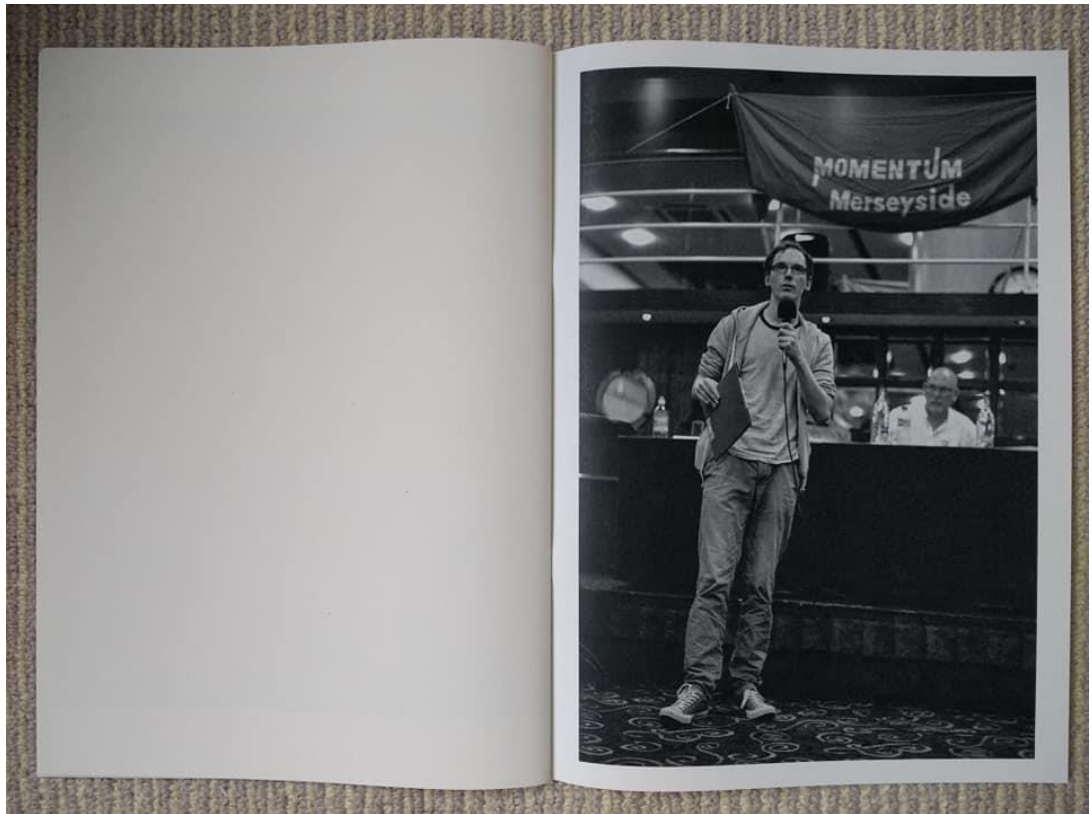






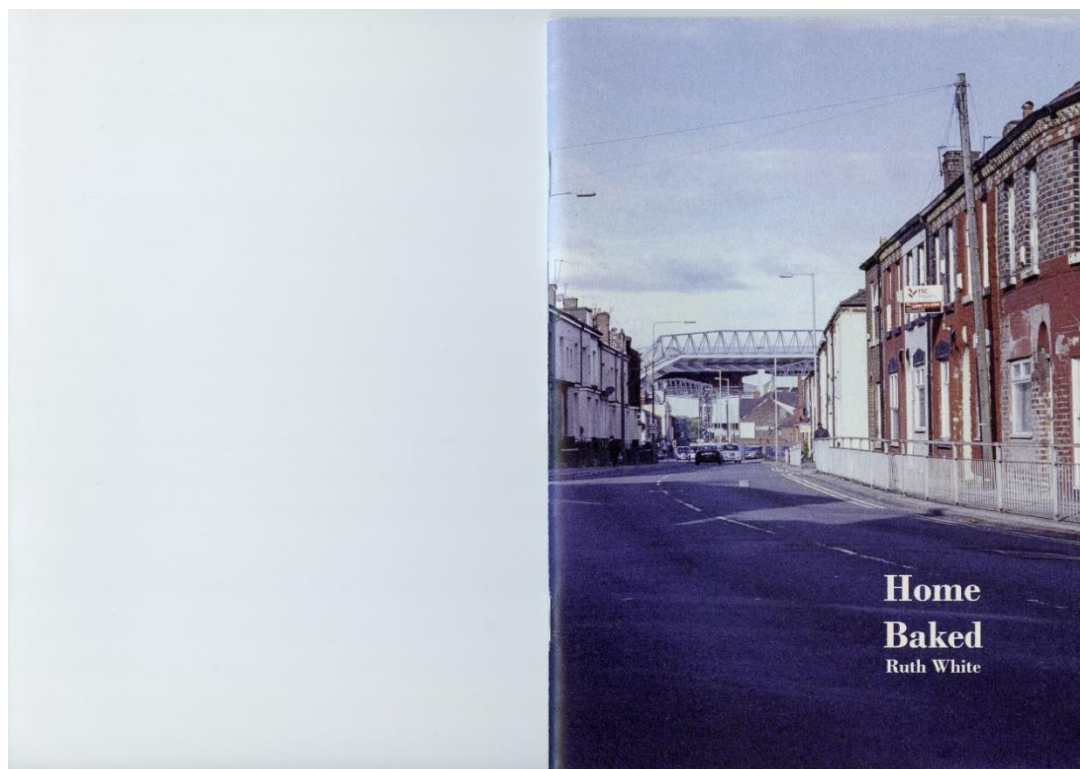


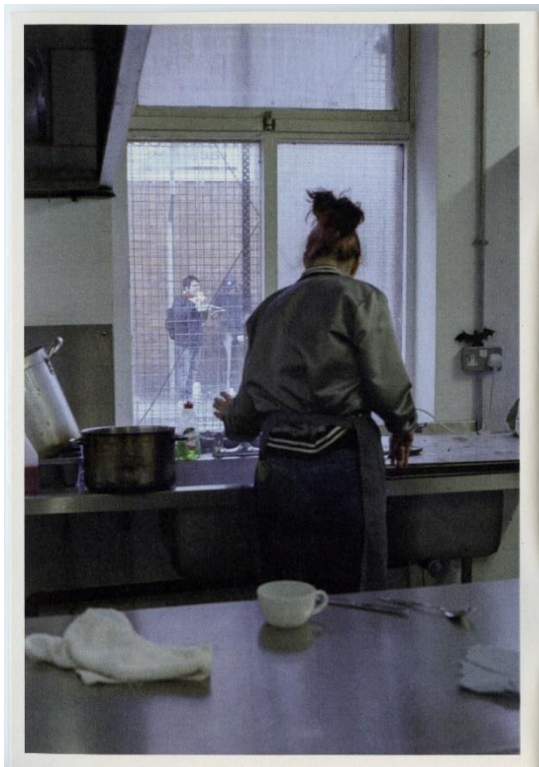






## Home Baked (December 2016)





















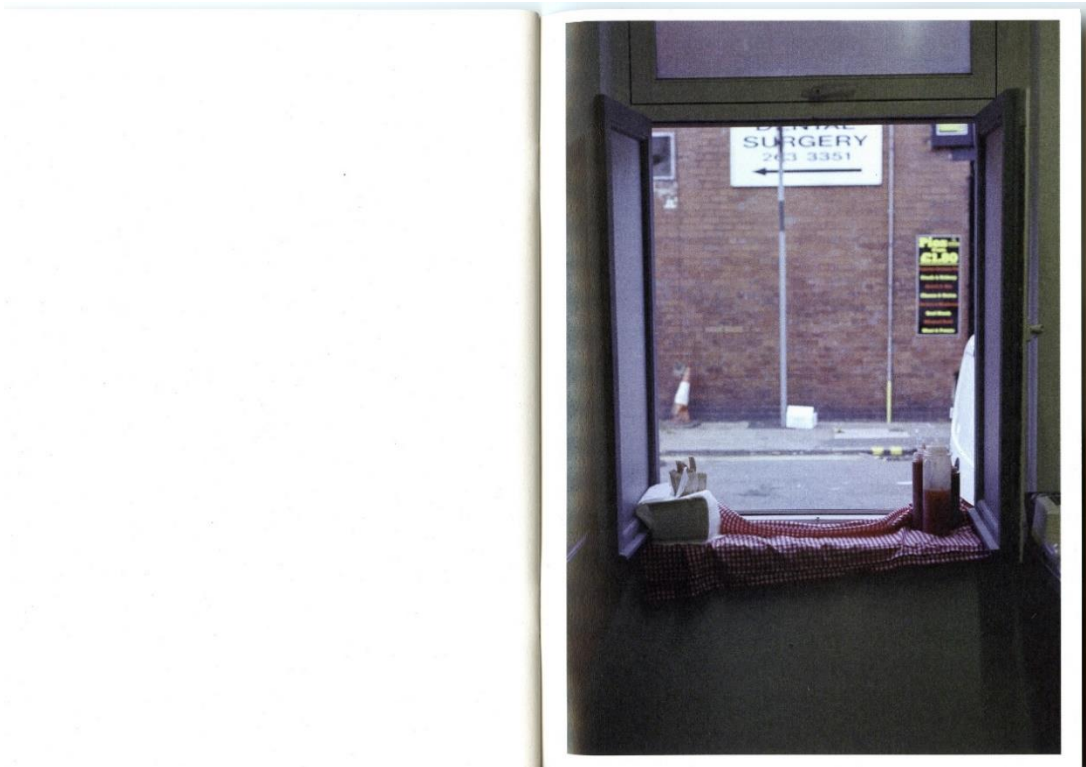








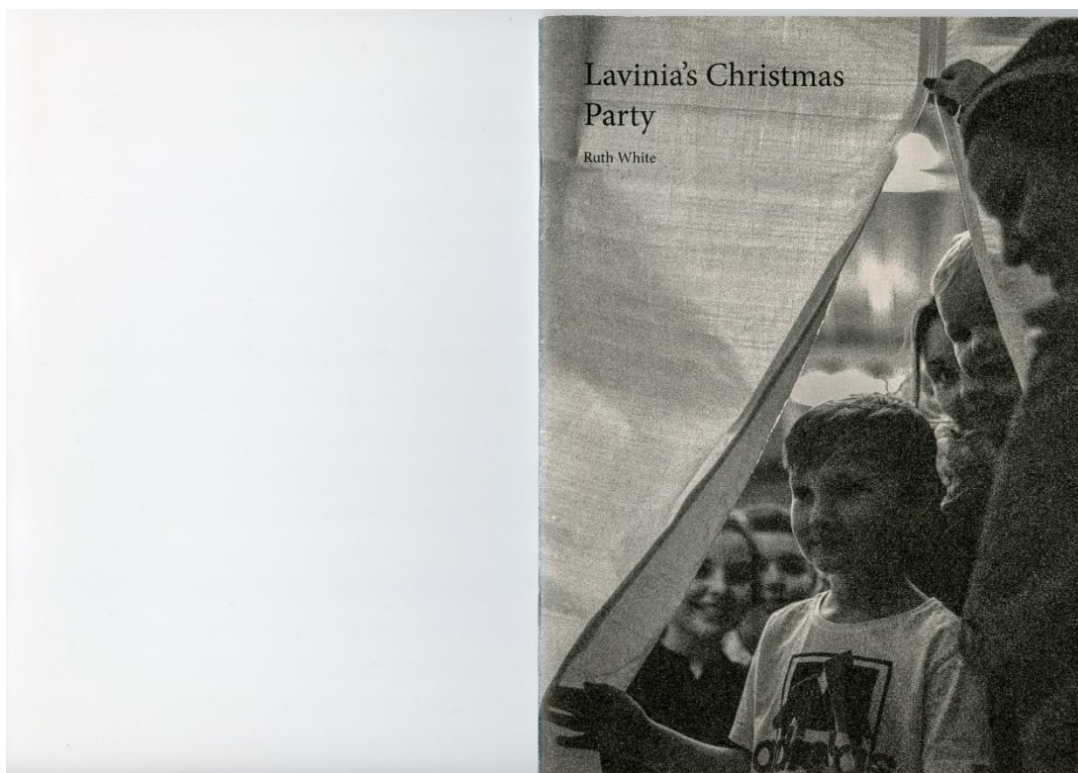








## Lavinia's Christmas party (July 2017)















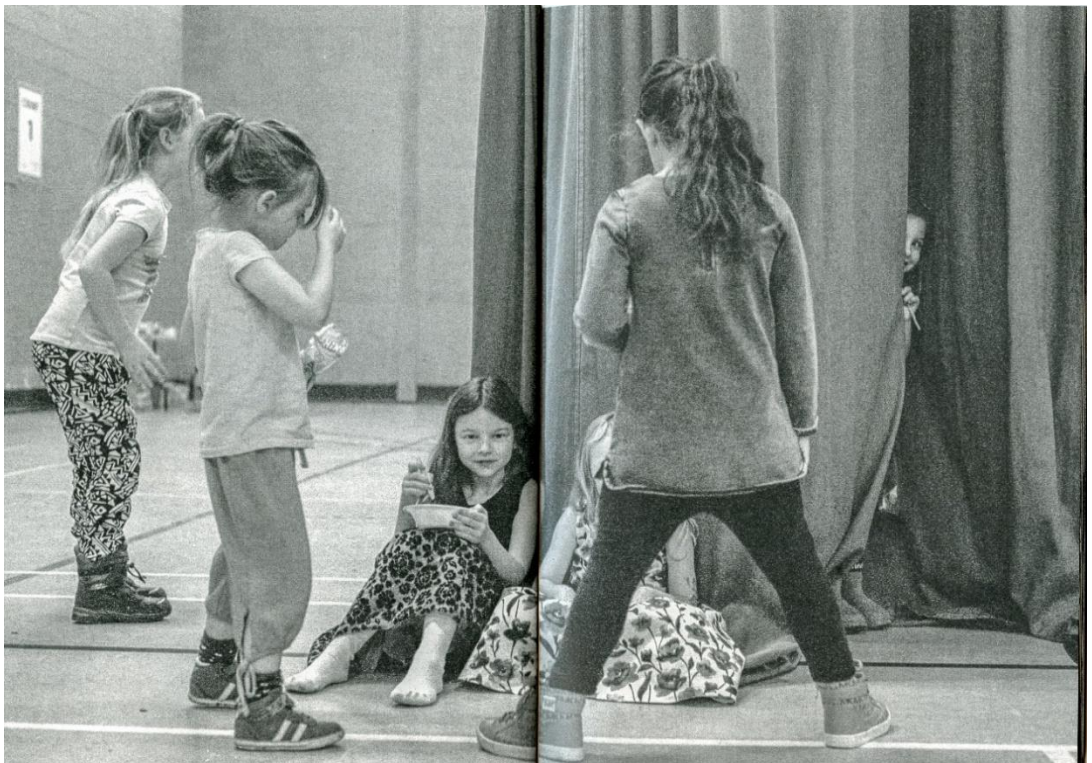
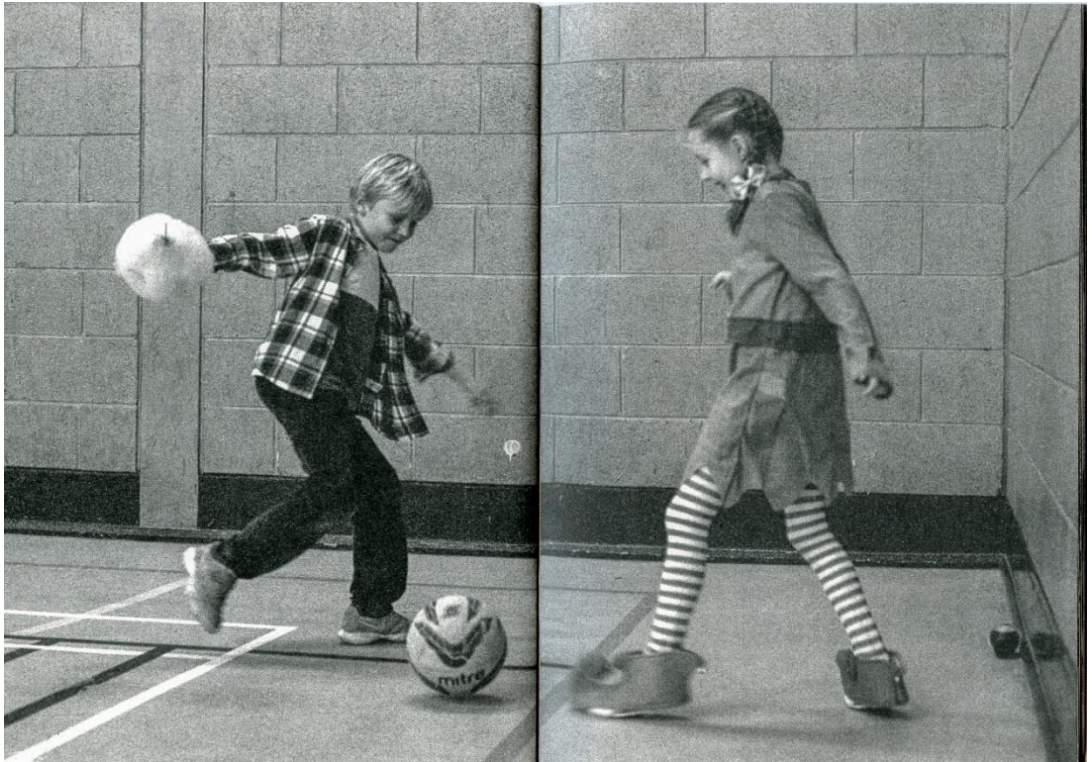










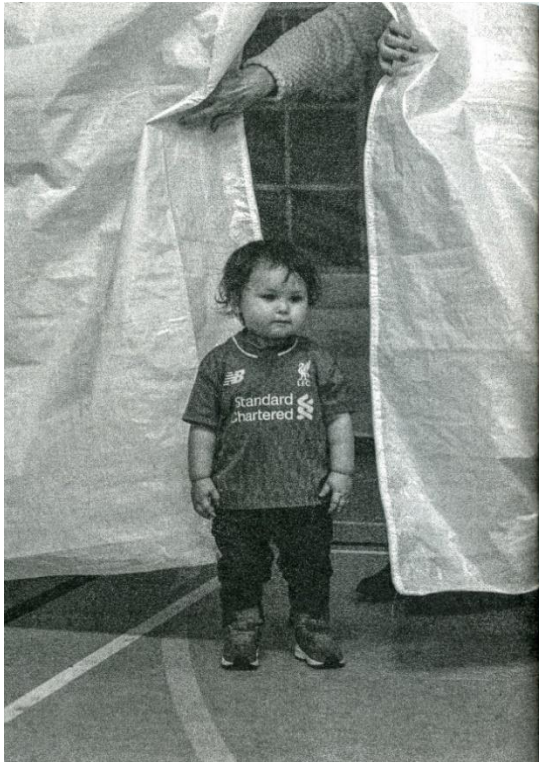






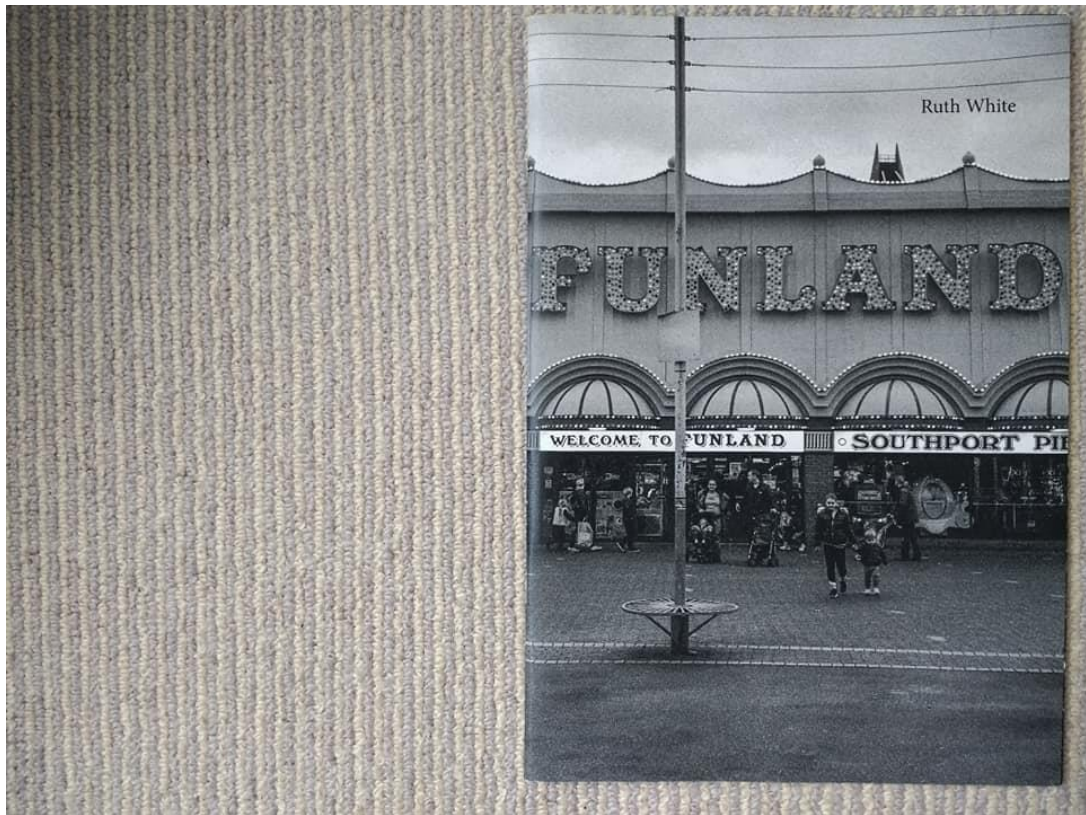




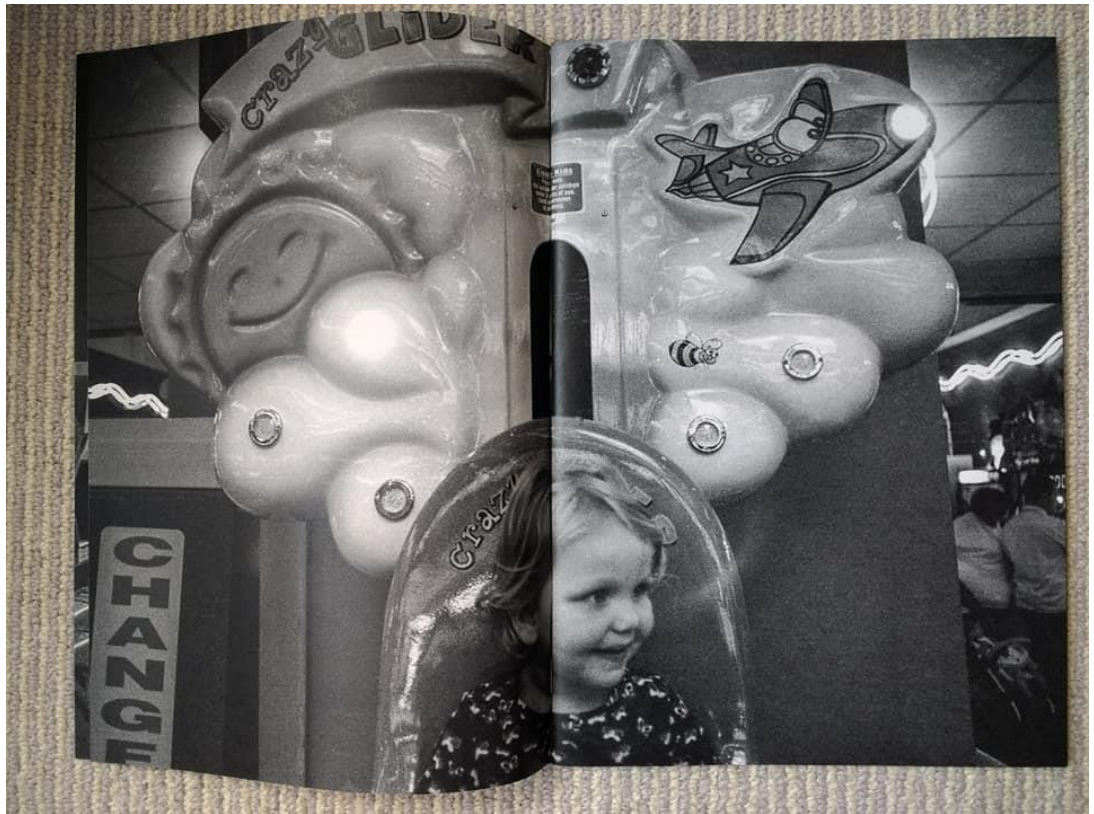




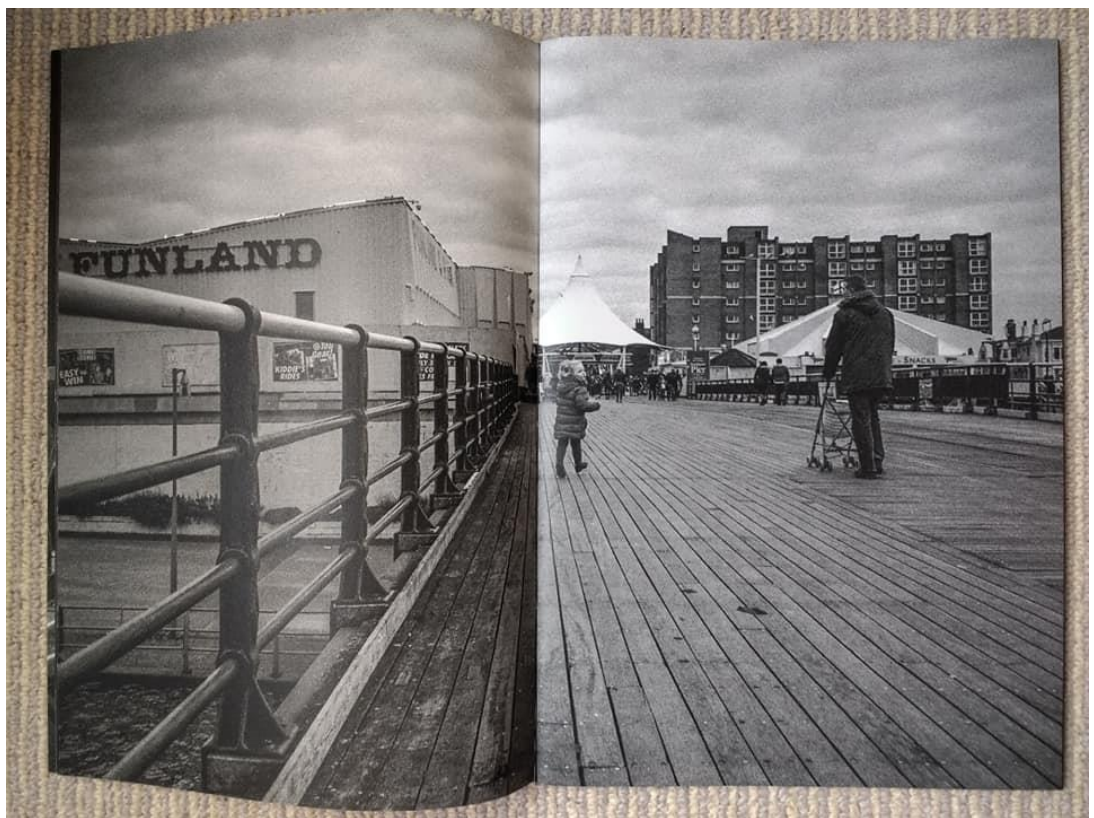
## Funland (September 2017)





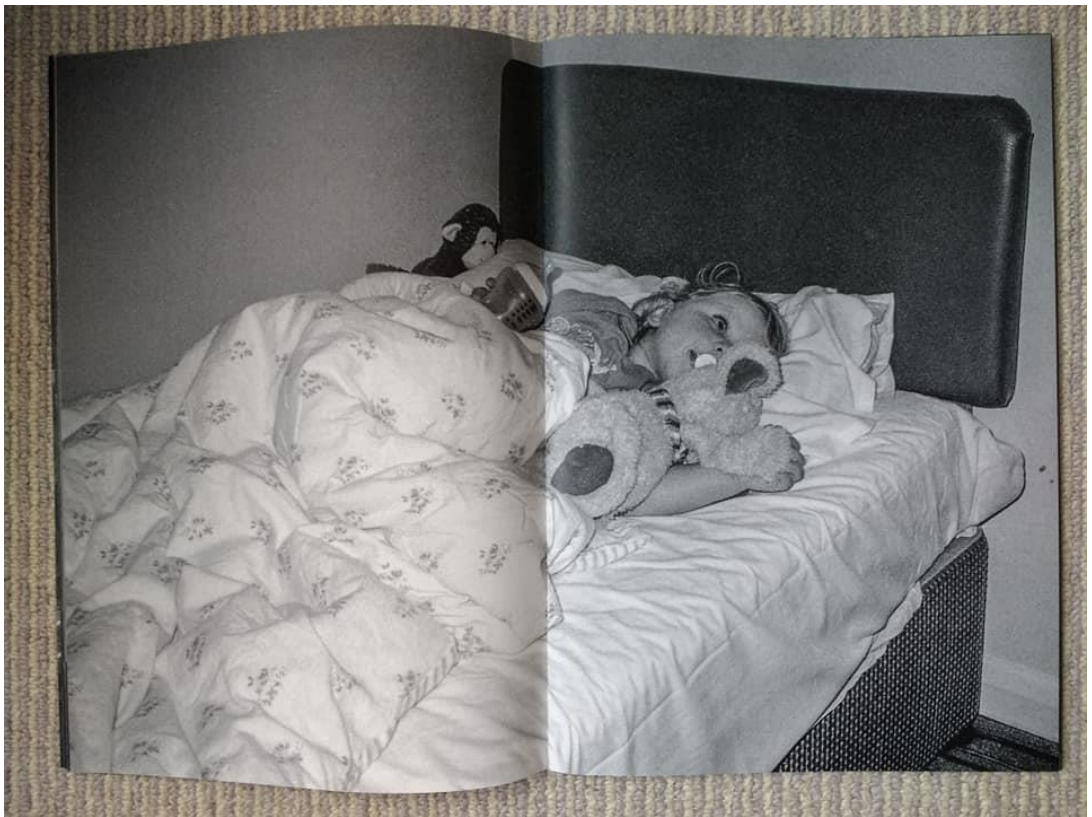










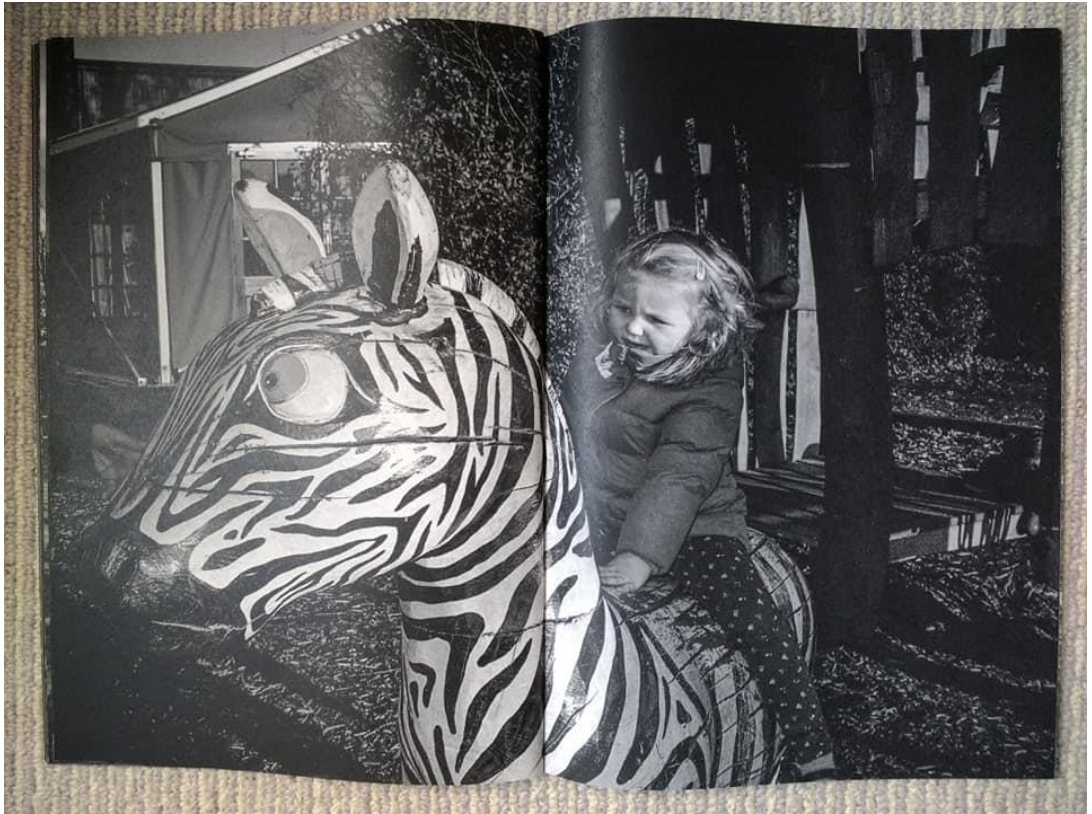






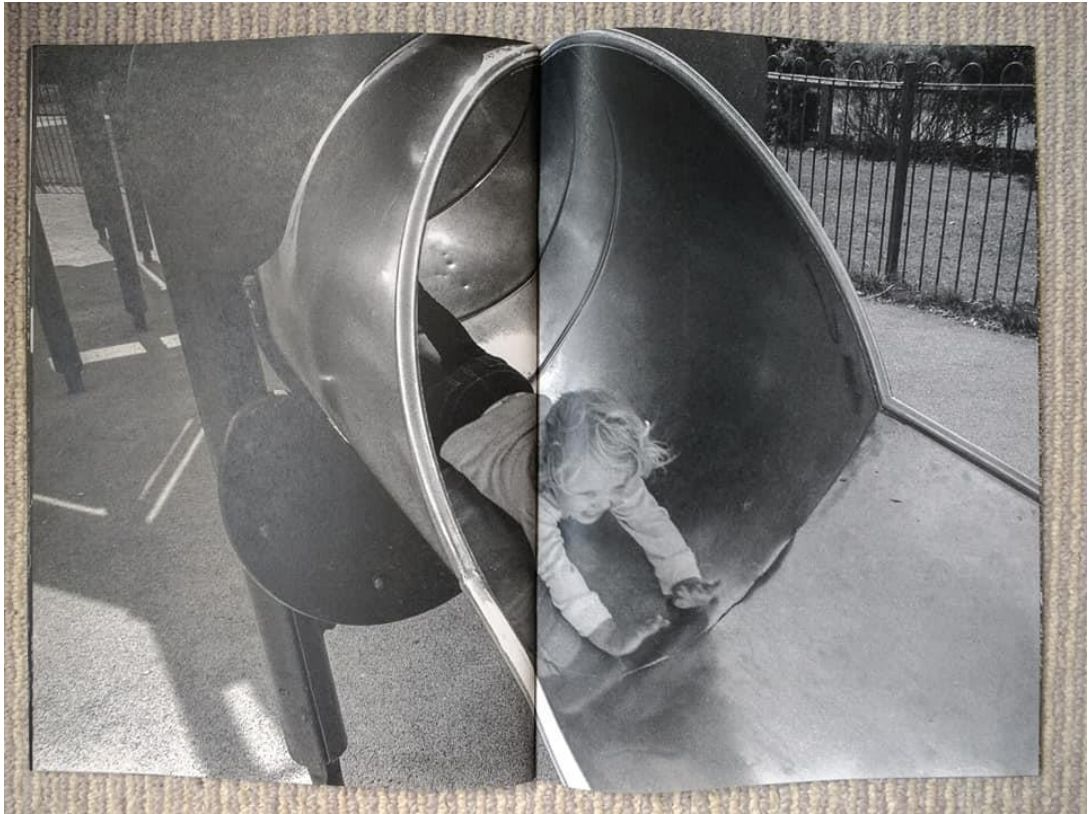








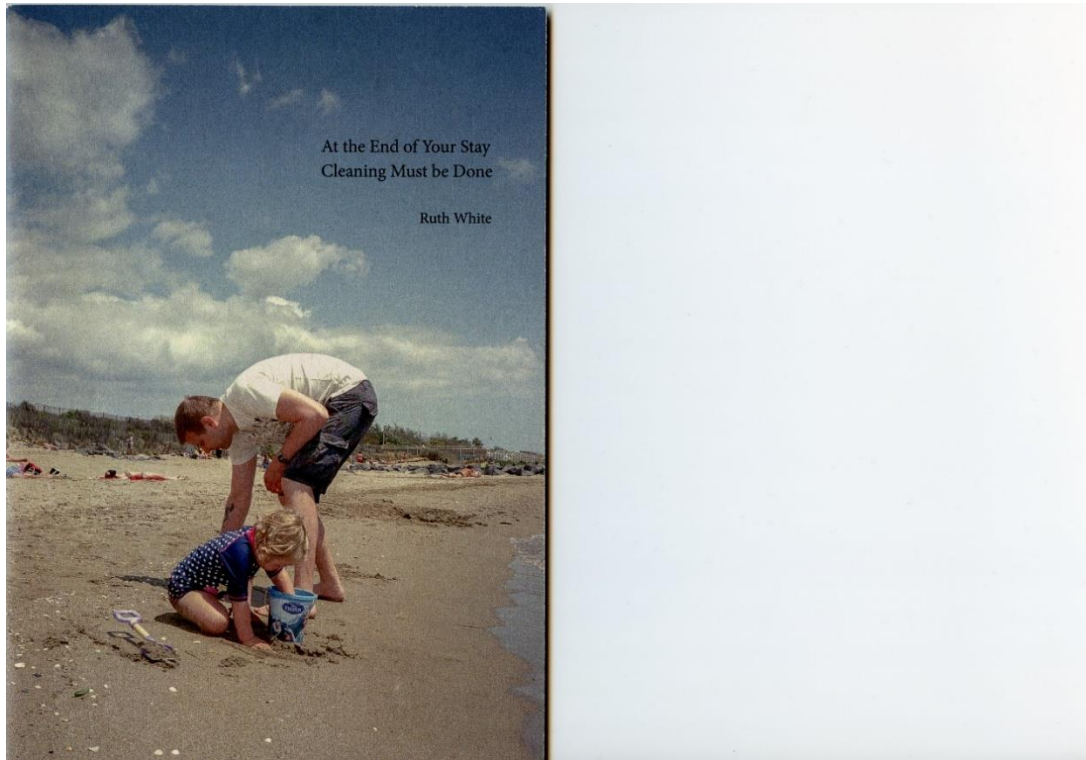


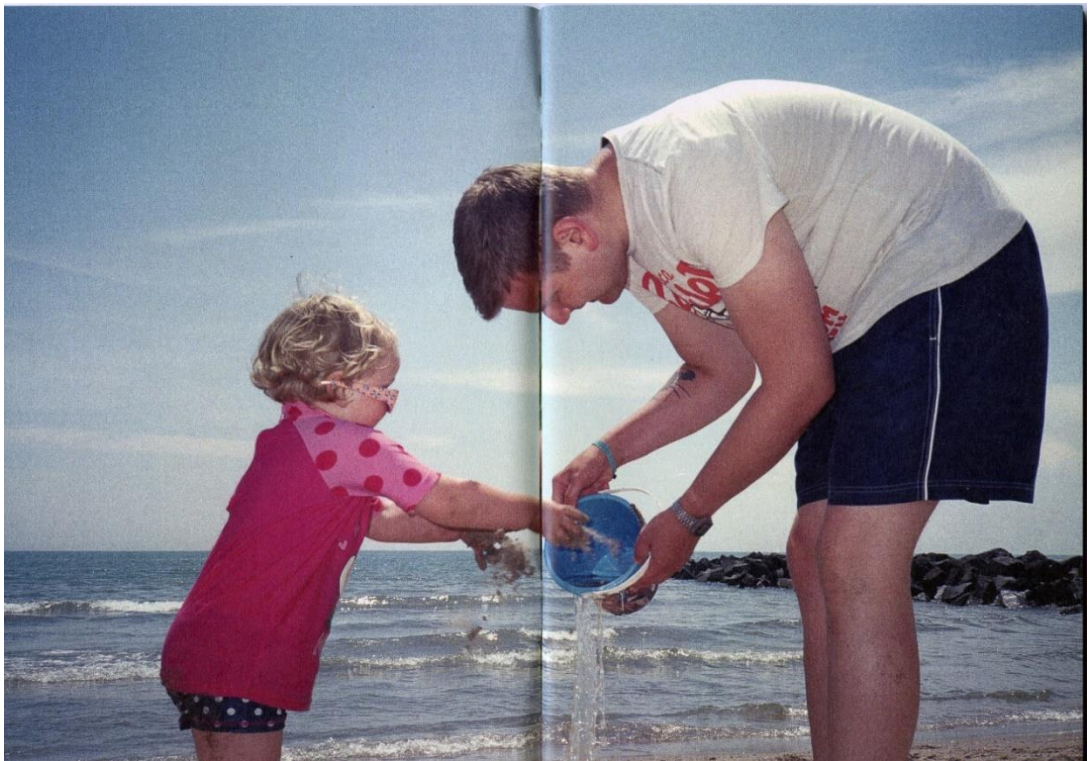






## At the End of Your Stay Cleaning Must be Done (September 2017)









































**Skeggy (September 2017)**

































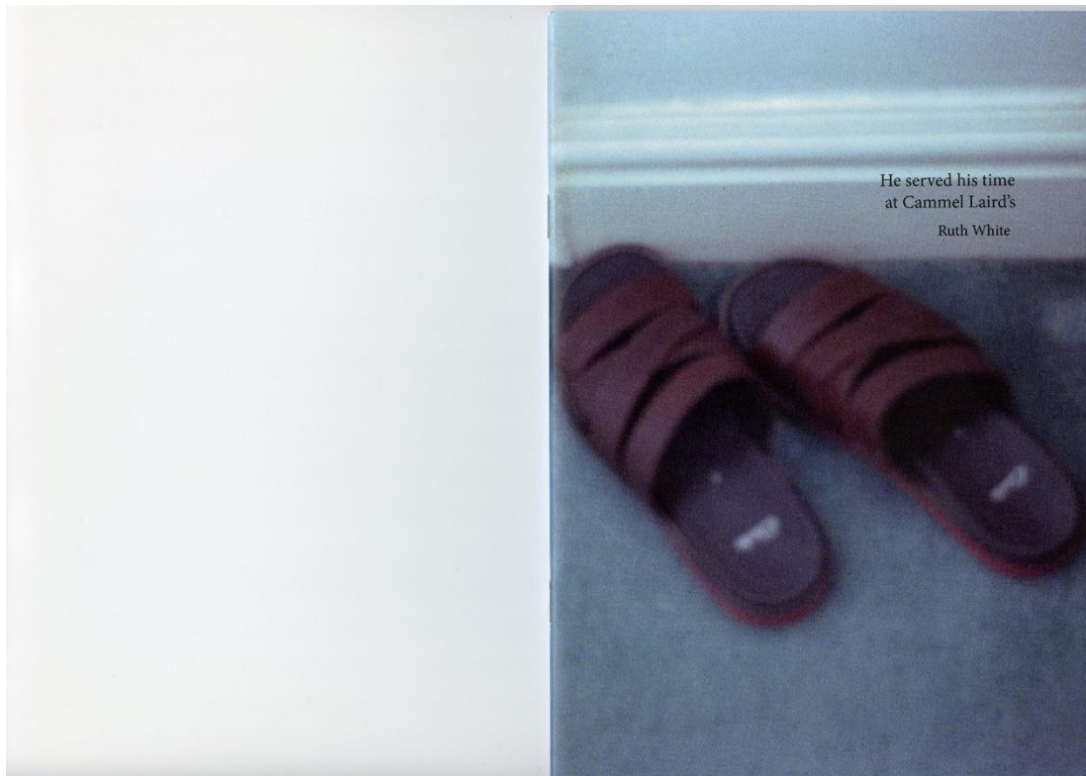








## He Served His Time at Cammell Lairds (July 2018)





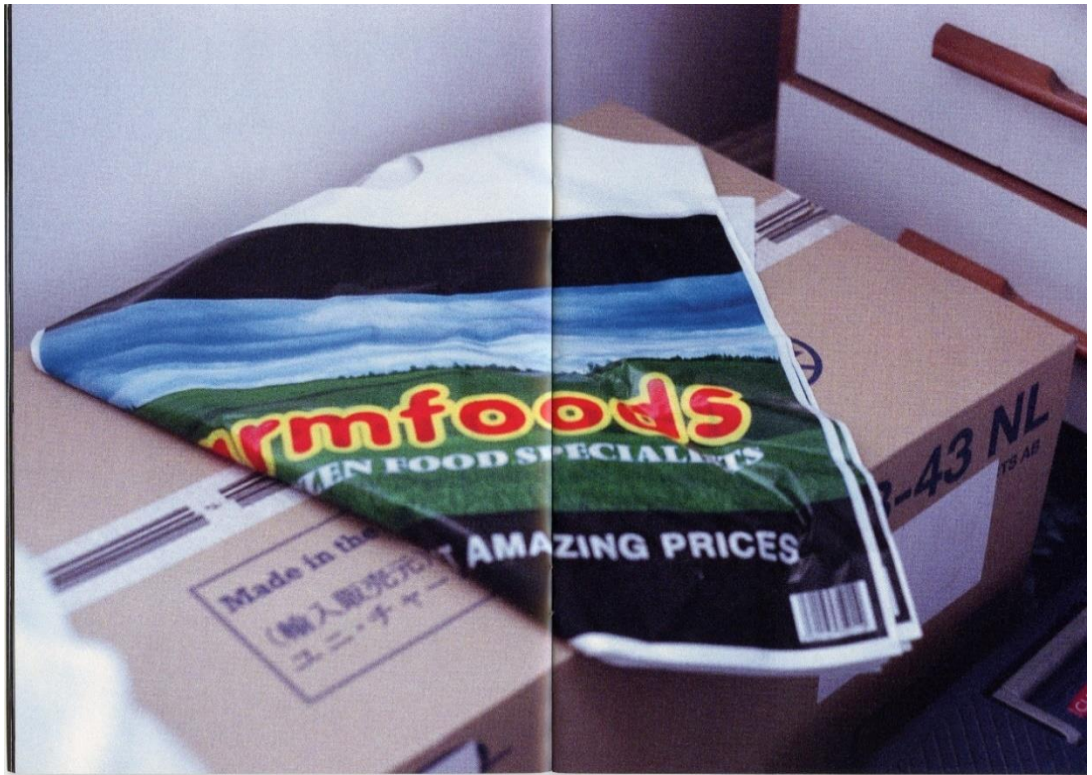












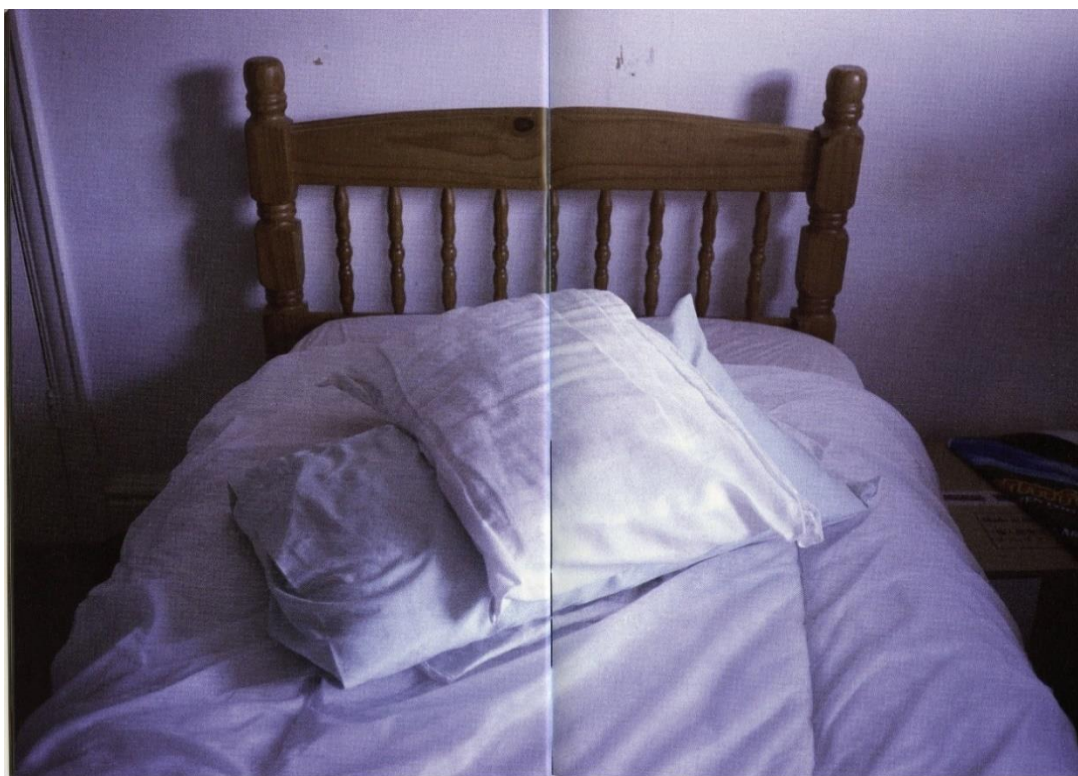




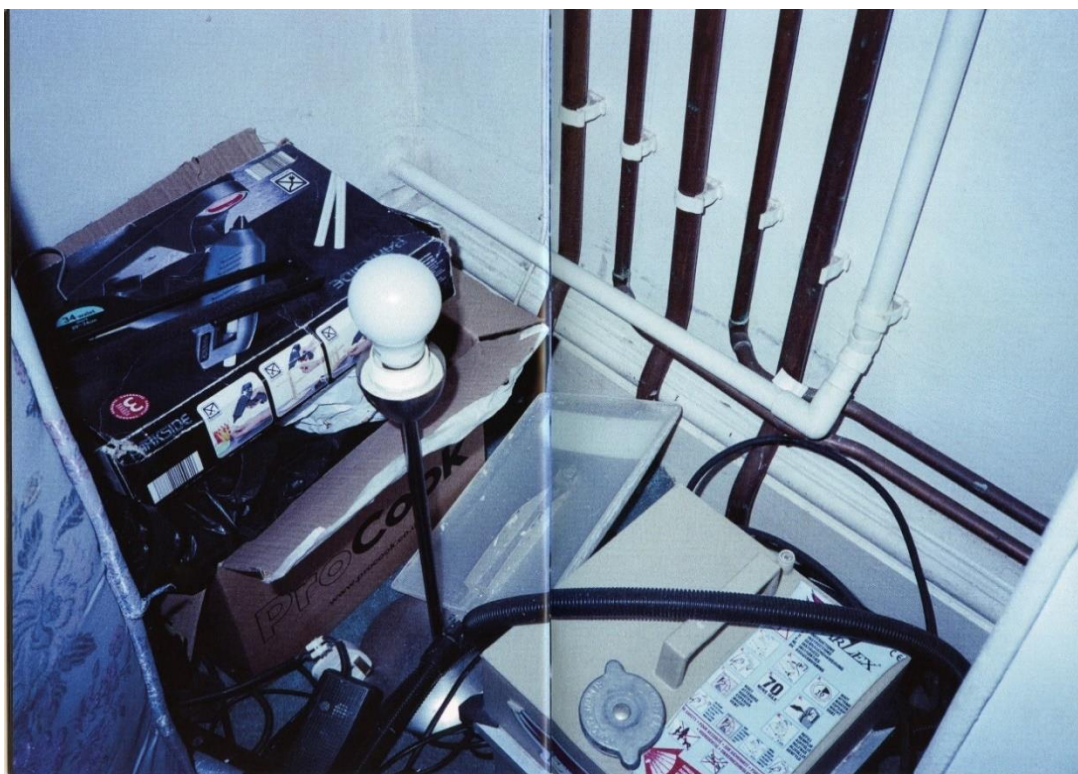


















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