

MEMORY AND PLACE IN THE BRINKSWAY PHOTOGRAPHS OF MICHAEL DANYLIW

Robert Gaunt

Abstract

In this essay, I bring memories of the creative working-class community of the lost neighbourhood of Brinksway, Stockport, England to a new audience. I have done this by way of my own memories and those of others who also lived there, though mainly through the photographs of Brinksway life that were taken by Michael Danyliw in the 1960s. Within the ageing Brinksway diaspora there is a growing desire to preserve the photographic evidence that we were there and this was how we lived. I give particular attention to the work of the Sunday School and the folk-art event of the annual Rose Fete parade, as an example of working-class creativity. I recall the texture of the physical and social environment of Brinksway before its demolition under slum clearance, including the contentious issues of working-class respectability and social mobility. As a young witness to all this, I bring my own account of losing contact with the Brinksway community and finding my way back there sixty years later. Our fond memories of what was lost are sustained by Michael Danyliw's photographs, and this essay is an attempt to help to preserve the photographs and the memories they help to sustain.

Keywords: Brinksway Sunday School, Stockport, Michael Danyliw, working-class creativity, working-class respectability

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Biographical note

Robert Gaunt works in social care and is an independent researcher with an interest in overlooked working-class creativity. His MA thesis 'Arthur Dooley: His Place in Post-War British Art History' (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2014) examined the importance of this overlooked, politically motivated sculptor from Liverpool.

Banner image: Detail from a view of the studio at the Barbara Hepworth gallery in St Ives, Cornwall. (Photo: Ed Clews / Alamy Stock Photo)

MEMORY AND PLACE IN THE BRINKSWAY PHOTOGRAPHS OF MICHAEL DANYLIW

Robert Gaunt

This is the story of the life and death of a northern English working-class community and its resurrection through photography. It is about the people who lived in the Brinksway neighbourhood of Stockport in the 1950s and 1960s, until the whole area was cleared away in the early 1970s to make space for the M60 motorway. I was born there in 1957 and I left when I was 6 years old.

Piecing together this story of Brinksway's past has produced unexpected shifts in my own sense of identity within the Brinksway diaspora, but my main concern here is with promoting the recognition and memorialisation of the working-class community and culture where I spent my infant years. I want to bring the story of Brinksway, and the photographs of amateur photographer Michael Danyliw, to new audiences. In turn, I hope this will preserve these photographs, record aspects of the past and prompt memories of a lost community. The impetus to do so comes from the accounts of Brinksway life by the ageing members of the online Facebook group Brinksway Clan, a network of 1000 former residents, including Danyliw's daughter Marika Anders. Their frequent call is for these photographs to be in a book or museum.

In analysing these photographs, I am using Annette Kuhn's ideas about 'memory work' as a pragmatic and democratic procedure for examining images, such as family photographs, which prompt memories, associations, reflections and interpretations in a radiating web connecting 'historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class' (Kuhn, ([1995] 2002, pp.4–5). My photo analyses engage with the ideas of working-class respectability and social mobility, the social distance people might travel from their original class roots. My own memories link with those of others who used to live in Brinksway. This has been done through posts on the Brinksway Clan Facebook page, as well as my face-to-face meetings with Clan members, and my discussions with the surviving members of the Brinksway Methodist Sunday School who still meet regularly.

I can comfortably belong in the photographs that are contemporaneous with my time there, where I

have some lived memory of the events they picture: but I must tread more carefully at the edges of those photographs that were taken after I left Brinksway, when I stopped belonging. By way of social mobility, I have become an outsider who has acquired some of those middle-class contextual ways of thinking. I have a toe hold in the camp of those who have 'a sense of belonging to the public and national as well as the domestic and local realm' and who can explain themselves without fear of being misunderstood (Hanley, 2009, pp.xxi–xxii). I feel I must maintain some kind of respectful distance from the photographs of the Brinksway Clan members whom I recognise in Carolyn Steedman's description of those who have led 'lives for which the central interpretive devices of the culture don't quite work' (in Kuhn, 2002, p.9).

In the early 1960s, Brinksway had already been a heavily industrialised area for over 150 years. In 1845, Friedrich Engels looked down from his train going over the railway viaduct and described Stockport as 'one of the duskiest, smokiest holes, and looks [...] excessively repellent' (Engels, [1887] 2005, p.84) I remember my infant schoolteacher in 1964 asking us to count how many factory chimneys we could see from the classroom window. We counted thirty two. People who lived there can still list over a hundred different manufacturing companies that were based in Brinksway, including a cotton mill, engineering works, cement works, tarmac works, a tannery, a bleach works, an iron foundry and several textile manufacturers (Gaunt, 2022a). When Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey* was made into a film in 1961, director Tony Richardson made extensive use of Brinksway's gritty darkness, the cobbled streets and the ubiquitous factory chimneys, to convey the grim northern setting. In this smoky valley, squeezed behind the iconic Stockport viaduct, a thriving community lived and worked in back-to-back terraces, with several lively pubs, a public washhouse, my infant school, a synagogue, a cinema and the Brinksway Sunday School, which was right next door to our house.

Sunday Schools were first established in Stockport in 1784 (Wild, 1891, p.3) by a Wesleyan preacher and several philanthropic gentlemen, supposedly concerned about the functional and moral education of workers of all ages (Wild, 1891, p.8). Some of the children they taught in the Sunday School and employed for unusually long hours in their mills, were recruited from workhouses and foundling hospitals in London (p.8) Throughout the 19th century, Stockport's Central Sunday School was remarkably successful. It was, according to Wild, 'the largest Sunday School in the world' with a hall that held 3,000 people, and 5,000 scholars (p.xxvii). It prided itself on fostering self-

improvement, not only for working-class students who had gained their Sunday School Certificates (p. xxviii), but also for middle-class teachers and officers who went on to become town mayors and hold other high civic posts (p. xxiii).

Subsequently, in 1801, a branch school was established in Brinksway (p. xxxi). The enlarged Brinksway Sunday School Hall that I remember attending, was built in 1885 (p. 285). It was a large sooty-black building worthy of a Lowry painting, a thriving temperance alternative to the many rowdy pubs, such as the Egerton Arms, tellingly known as The Crackers, where it was not unusual for men to drink away half their wage packet.

When I look back now on those days before we left, when I was aged 6, Brinksway often seems monotone, influenced no doubt by the black-and-white photographs that connect me to the past there. But there are also occasional splashes of colour, like the day my dad took me with him into The Woolpack pub to buy his cigarettes. I was captivated by the smoke, the heady scent of beer, the electric lights twinkling on the glasses and brasswork behind the altar-like bar, and the exaggerated happiness of the drinkers. I thought I might be looking at heaven. I recognised it from the pictures I had seen on the wall at the Sunday School and now it was right here in the Woolpack. In that miraculous moment, the two community institutions which were poles apart in the adult Brinksway world, were in harmony in my childish imagination.

The now lost streets of Brinksway formed the architectural landscape of my infant years. It was the home of a working-class community, where men made creative use of their job skills. I remember the man who worked at the tannery and brought home patches of leather to make dolls' clothes, or the welder who made his own wrought-iron figures. The women's creativity tended to be channelled into devising and performing in a calendar of sober social events, including concerts, amateur stage shows and parades, at the Sunday School, the most important being Rose Fete, a folk art event rarely seen today.

Michael Danyliw, a Ukrainian World War II refugee, lived a few streets from our house in a typical two-up-two-down terrace with just one tap (in the kitchen). When Danyliw was printing his photographs in the cellar (not on Thursdays, when the coal delivery made the air too gritty), his wife and daughter had to carry the water down to him in buckets (Anders, 2022a). His photographs of family and community captured the texture of our lives and rituals; they are the evidence that we were there, and that this was how we lived. He took hundreds, possibly thousands, of photographs of

many aspects of Brinksway life: family portraits, studio portraits, street photography and local people at work, rest and play. He documented the bitter strike (1966–68) at the Roberts Arundel engineering works, where my granddad worked in the 1950s, and which polarised Brinksway families. His photographs of the strike are held in the TUC archive in Manchester (Anders, 2022a). For this essay, I focus mainly on his photos of the Sunday School Rose Fete, partly because I am in them, so I already have more familiarity with their context, and also because I think they demonstrate the social class make-up of Brinksway, as well as offering clues to aspects of working-class respectability and social mobility which I examine.

The idea of working-class respectability looms large in this Brinksway story and in my memories of the varied ways we lived. Sociologist Mike Savage and colleagues remind us that for most of the 20th century our main pre-occupation with social class has been around the question 'Who was respectable, and who was not?' (2015, p. 31). From the early 20th century, respectability has been attributed to the culture of those working in non-manual jobs (Savage et al., 2015, pp. 33–5). Cultural historian Lynsey Hanley's interest in social class was stirred by reading Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), in which she recognised the shape and texture of her own life 50 years later on. In a similar way, my own reading of Hanley caused me to recognise my own experience of being 'neither rough nor posh, neither rich nor especially poor' and of growing up "respectable" in an area perceived, from the outside and to an extent from within, as "rough" (Hanley, 2016, p. 7). From Hoggart's experience in the 1930s to mine in the 1960s and Hanley's in the 1980s, many of the obstacles to equality remained in place. Quoting Hoggart's introduction to George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Hanley writes: "Each decade we shiftily declare we have buried class," [...] yet "each decade the coffin stays empty" (2016, p. xiv).

Hanley pithily describes rough working-class people's 'not giving a shit' (2016, p. 7) as a strategy to maintain the appearance of autonomy and dignity by refusing to comply with society's pointless demands that you should strive to be respectable in circumstances where you feel defined and defeated by the lack of economic, social and cultural capital. In contrast to this adoptive stance of nihilistic disaffection, she sees the respectable working class as having at least some power to change things for the better, and as keen on self-improvement in order to avoid further exploitation of themselves, their families and their communities. In this way, as Hanley puts it, the respectable working class are those who do 'give a shit' (2016, pp. 3–28).

Other markers of distinction on the 'respectable-rough' spectrum that I recall as a small child were clean faces (no snot) and combed hair (see the Brylcreem liberally applied to my freshly barbered hair in my Rose Fete parade photos) (Fig. 4.1). On the 'sober-topper spectrum', my dad was a regular pub drinker several nights a week, but he was proud to distinguish himself from other drinking fathers by always bringing his wage packet home unopened for my mum to have first take of what was needed for the family budget before he got his spends.

Every child was welcome at the Sunday School, but it was mostly the children like Marika, my sister and me, from those families who had enough to get by, who attended and took part in the annual Rose Fete parades. I remember these kinds of families whom Hanley describes as keen to keep up the appearance of dignity and self-respect in an environment where getting on seemed unlikely and falling seemed all too easy (2016, p.7). The idea that there was a respectable working class is a contentious issue among members of the Brinksway Clan (Gaunt, 2022b), and I agree with Hanley that 'there is nothing inherently good or bad about being respectable' (2016, p.11). Though for some of us, who thought life could be better than being

ground down by the limitations of manual work and minimal education, participating in the Sunday School parades and keeping up appearances with a freshly creamed step and a line of clean washing meant a lot in an environment of restricted opportunities.¹

My engagement with these photographs has given me a tentative route back towards the Brinksway community after an absence of sixty years. There are only a handful of people in the Brinksway Clan group whom I can remember, and there are only two who remember me, although many knew my parents and my grandmother. The photographs which show me in the Sunday School events of the early 1960s serve to situate me, although only a young child, as part of the heart of the Sunday School community. Consider this photograph of me at the tea-and-cakes reception after the Rose Fete parade (Fig. 4.1). It was posted by Marika Anders on the Brinksway Clan Facebook page (6 August 2020), with the assumption that I was Mrs Cooke's son. Recognising myself in this photograph was my opportunity to begin to assert my own Brinksway identity: that's me! I love this photograph for the sense of togetherness that it embodies. Our neighbour Mrs Cooke on the left is leaning in towards me; Mrs Danyliw is leaning in towards her; and Mr Danyliw is taking the photograph. It represents our Sunday School community as a kind of second family, my recovered affiliation with the lost and wider Brinksway community, even though time has distanced us geographically and socially.

The night before the Rose Fete our dads would go into the parks to gather privet branches and decorate the Sunday School Hall with them, along with the hundreds of roses we had made from tissue paper (Fig. 4.2). The real roses for the queen's bouquets came in a wheelbarrow from Beryl Manley's dad's allotment garden.

Before the parade started, there would be the crowning ceremony inside the Sunday School hall, performed by Mrs Gosling, who had been a senior figure there for as long as anyone could remember (Fig. 4.3). Her forebear Joseph Gosling is listed as an officer at the Central Stockport Sunday School in 1804 (Wild, 1891, p.16). A teenage girl was crowned Rose Queen. A girl of about nine was crowned as Rosebud Queen, with the retiring Rose Queen and retiring Rosebud Queen looking on. For the parade, a retinue



Figure 4.1: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

¹ 'Creaming the step' was the phrase we used in Stockport for the practice more widely known as 'donkey stoning' which involved using a block of chalk-like substance to colour the doorstep. The doorstep was scrubbed clean and the donkey stone was rubbed over it to brighten it.



Figure 4.2: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)



Figure 4.3: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

of infant girls threw rose petals before each Queen, a cortege acted as train bearers for each Queen (Fig. 4.4) and at the rear marched an entourage of middle-aged women, the Ladies Circle, who had done all the organising (Fig. 4.5). A regular participant might start

as a petal thrower, graduate through the hierarchy year by year and one day enter the Ladies Circle. The role of Rose Queen brought with it multiple responsibilities in the social life of the Sunday School, which included: hosting stage shows with music and



Figure 4. 4: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)



Figure 4. 5: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

dancing for the entertainment of other Rose Queens from neighbouring Sunday Schools, as well as attending their events (Collins & Anders, 2022). Towards the fag end of the industrial era, amid the grim architecture of 19th-century mills, crumbling back-to-backs and raucous pubs, the Sunday School Rose Fete provided a colourful

annual community spectacle that we were proud of.

Looking at the 1962 photograph of Marika getting ready at home for the Rose Fete parade in her Rosebud Queen outfit, I am immediately reminded of the iconic, anonymous photograph on the cover of W.G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz* (Figs. 4.6 and 4.7).



Figure 4. 6: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c. 1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Both show a child dressed for a Rose Queen pageant (Sebald, [2001] 2011, pp.258–9) and both have a Stockport connection. In James Wood's introduction to *Austerlitz*, he recalls that he discovered this photograph of the boy wearing his cape while researching in Sebald's archive. It is on a postcard with 'Stockport: 30p' written on the reverse side in ink (2011, p.xxi). Sebald was teaching at nearby Manchester University between 1966 and 1969, and may have had reason to revisit in later years, after the introduction of decimal currency in 1971. Not surprisingly, nobody in Brinksway Clan recognises this child, an actual person lost to history, whose photograph Sebald employs to illustrate his novel's central theme (according to Wood) of saving the characters therein from silence and forgetting and, by implication, about the impossible desire to save everyone who ever died from being forgotten, including the boy from Stockport (Wood, 2011, p.xxii). Wood's ideas about contesting the forgetting of what has been erased chime with those of the Brinksway Clan who seek some reassurance that

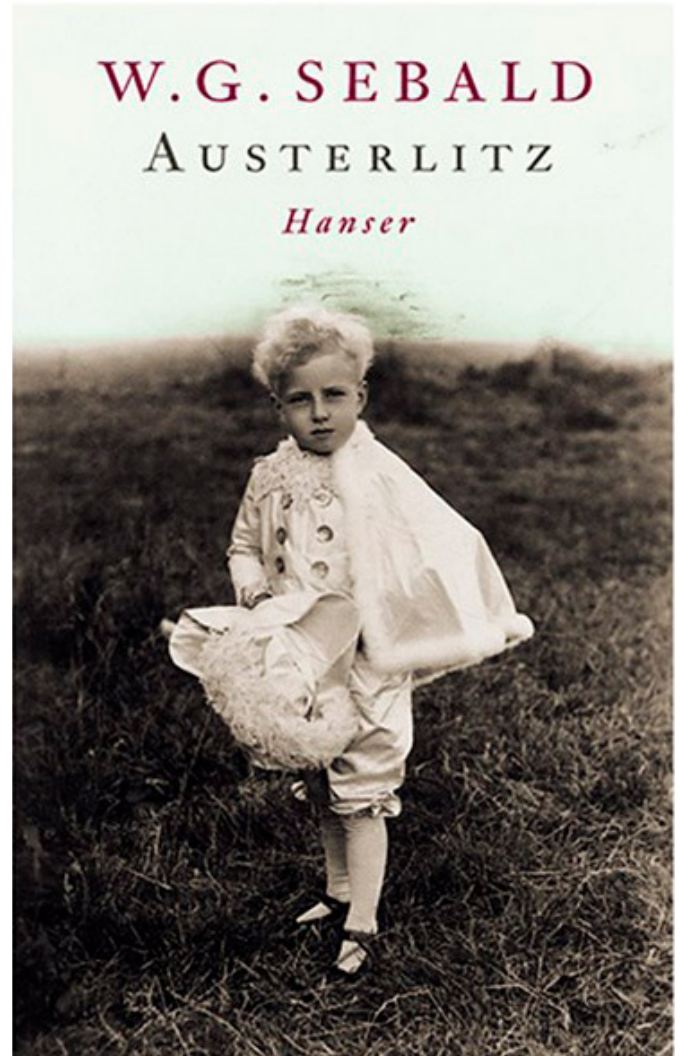


Figure 4. 7: Cover of W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (© 2019 Carl Hanser Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, München)

Brinksway will be remembered, and the significance I accord to the uncanny coincidence of Sebald's and Danyliw's photographs seems to echo this. Sebald's found photo could be anywhere and nowhere, as suits his novel's theme of lost identity, but Danyliw's photo is firmly situated in the back garden of their terraced house, with the outside toilet as back-drop, the caring presence of Marika's mum and the admiring gaze of their neighbour Mrs Chandley leaning over the garden fence, unable to go to the parade as she was looking after her sick husband that day (Anders, 2022a). Marika's parents paid a small fortune for her Rosebud outfit. It was a bespoke child-sized copy of a bridal dress specially made by a high-end Manchester wedding outfitters. The headdress was made with swan's down feathers (Anders, 2022a), as impressive as the heron feathers in the Sebald photo. Sebald's photo speaks of losing one's bearing, of displacement and no man's land; I see in Danyliw's photo the coordinates of working-class respectability: home, family, community, loving care and Marika's progress into the future.

In this 1963 photograph (Fig. 4.8), I am playing the role of crown bearer for Rose Queen Lynn Chapman. We are coming over the Woolpack Bridge, which spans the River Mersey, and looking up the hill behind us you can see the pitched roofs of the Sunday School from where we have just emerged after the crowning ceremony. The crowd on the left are spilling out from The Woolpack pub to watch us. For once, captured in the same frame are the Sunday School and the Sunday drinkers. I like to read this image as a gesture of respect from those in the pub, towards those in the parade: the drinkers toasting the abstemious. I see myself here as taking my first steps on the road to becoming middle class. Lynn would go on to train as a nurse, a vocation which, in 1963, seemed to us like the height of respectability, having moral worth and social importance. Nodding approvingly, neighbours in shops would mention how they had seen Lynn in the Infirmary in her beautiful blue uniform and cape. Healthcare offered a pathway for social mobility that several of us followed, including myself, away from the factories and building sites where our parents worked. It was what the Sunday School founding fathers would have hoped for. My own experience of nurse training was as an alternative to university, where I had quickly

dropped out of a French Studies degree course, partly for want of cultural capital, having spent the school holidays working in a factory in Stockport instead of slumming it in France. Living away from our parents in the nurses' home, working for a qualification, and rubbing shoulders with middle-class doctors was not a million miles from the life of a university student.

In a different picture of the same parade we are coming down Heaward Street where Danyliw lived (Fig. 4.9). The kerb we march beside seems to draw a social fault line between those of us in the parade, and some of the kids who might be from struggling families. Not every child could be in the parade. Not every child had a dad in work: most dads were in the pub, some were in prison, some had disappeared from the scene. I can remember kids in filthy clothes and single mothers with no furniture, who had slipped through the welfare safety net and were beyond the reach of the Methodist social teaching ideal.

However, when I discussed this idea of a social divide between those who had very little and those who had a bit, with other, older members of the Brinsway Clan, several people said there was no such division (Gaunt, 2022b). They remember differences in people's financial circumstances, but they do not



Figure 4.8: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1963. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)



Figure 4.9: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph (detail). Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

feel it amounted to a social division. One member refuted the label of respectability, seeing it as divisive, something imposed by outsiders or retrospectively, by people like me, who had moved on through social mobility. They remember instead, the readiness in the Brinksway community to help each other out. It was different outside the community, where children felt a certain stigma when they made friends in more affluent neighbourhoods. It was only when Marika visited the homes of schoolmates from other neighbourhoods that she realised that a single tap and no bathroom was unusual, that it was 'poor' (Anders, 2022b). There may be a tendency to romanticise working-class mutual aid in hard times, but there was also a darker side to social relations. One Rose Queen's mother was ostracised for transgressing social norms by having a child outside marriage (Anders, 2022b). The threat of male violence was never far away; a wife with a black eye was not an uncommon sight. Even the sober, gentler men assumed the dominant role at home, insisting that wives brought up the children while they went to work, even when the woman had higher-paid skills (Anders, 2022b).

In this photograph (Fig. 4.10), we see the pipe band leading the Rose Fete parade through the Lowry landscape of back-to-back houses, mills and chimneys, where working-class lives were played out in all their complexity. Several of my aunties worked as sewing machinists in the textile factory visible here behind the houses, and my grandma set her clock by its one o'clock hooter. There was still a lot of marching back then. The war had ended 19 years before, but the dust still hadn't settled. The Sea Cadets still practised bugling late into the evening in their drill hall opposite our house. When at play, we fought the Germans in the school playground and outside the public bomb shelters on the sandstone ridge. My mum would often open the shoe box with her father's war medals and the photographs of the young soldiers and sailors she had known, some of whom never returned. The ghosts



Figure 4.10: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

of the war were everywhere, and we, the young baby boomers, were paraded like the angels of the recent peace.

In another photograph, my scowling little sister Elaine, a petal thrower, is guided by our neighbour Margaret Cooke along the Heaward Street cobbles, the street where Danyliw lived (Fig. 4.11). Behind them is Mrs Wood, her daughter Jacqueline (Collins) would eventually be the last ever retiring rose Queen in 1969. I love this photograph which was given to our family by Mr Danyliw in 1963. I see in it the record of those Brinksway lives and the love they shared, similar to the 'love as treasure' that literary theorist Roland Barthes saw in the photograph of his parents and which he feared would one day disappear forever when there was no one remaining to attest to it ([1980] 2000, p.94). Barthes expands on this idea of love to include the ideas of Good(ness), Justice and Unity that he hopes photographs might preserve for history (2000, p.94). Barthes' claims for his photograph might sound grandiose now, but I can see here the neighbourly love of everyone who has worked to make this annual event for us as part of The Sunday School's endeavours to be good, fair and community-minded. Danyliw created the future memory of the Rose Fete parade for us, mitigating against its eventual forgetting, until it disappears forever when none of us are left to bear witness to it.

I also think about the group of young women visible at the rear of the parade. Brinksway did not last long enough for my sister and me to become adults there. I feel a certain nostalgia for what might have been, had we been able to carry on living there and to fully take our part in the next generation of our community. There is a double poignancy at work in Danyliw's photographs: he created a visual record of the fleeting Rose Fete spectacle, there and gone in a day, and also



Figure 4.11: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c.1962. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

the wider record of our daily lives before the slum clearance and the dispersal of our neighbourhood.

Whenever my family spoke about Mr Danyliw, voices always dropped to a hush. I picked up snatches of whispered conversations about his time as a forced labourer under Nazi persecution when he was ordered to dig mass graves. I could tell that people looked up to him. There was something different about him that was treated with respect. At that time, we all understood him to be Polish. I learned only recently, from his daughter Marika that this was a deception he had used at the end of the war to avoid forced repatriation under Operation Keelhaul, back to Ukraine, then part of Stalin's Soviet Union, and the prospect of a Gulag prison, which was the fate of his cousin (Anders, 2022a, 2023a). The Lviv area of modern-day Ukraine, where Danyliw was born in 1920, was then situated in Poland. Danyliw's war-time identity card starts with his nationality as Ukrainian, crossed out to Lithuanian, crossed out to Polish. At the end of World War II, his homeland was occupied by the Red Army and ceded to the Soviet Union at the 1945 Yalta Conference (Epstein, 1965, pp.22–6). Western Allied soldiers deceived and physically forced displaced Soviet citizens and prisoners

of war into repatriation to the Soviet Union, following an agreement struck with Stalin at the Yalta Conference in 1945 (Epstein, 1965, pp.22–6). As a condition of his unclear refugee status, Danyliw had to report regularly to Stockport Police up until 1964 (Anders, 2022a).

Danyliw's precarious post-war status and his appetite for photography call to mind Susan Sontag's observations that 'photographs [...] help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure' (Sontag, [1977] 2002, p.9). She continues that '[p]eople robbed of their past seem to make the most fervent picture takers' and that '[p]hotography has become one of the principal devices [...] for giving an appearance of participation' (p.10). Danyliw lacked confidence in spoken English, so he sent his wife to the night school photography classes, which he wanted to attend, and she relayed the lesson to him at home. As a prolific image maker for our community, he successfully swapped words for images as his mode of entry into Brinksway social life, including the sharing of copies of his prints with his neighbours. Sontag writes about the evidential qualities of photography so that '[s]omething [...] seems proven when we are shown a photograph of it' (2002, p.5). Consider the importance of 'evidence'



Figure 4.12: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)



Figure 4.13: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

for a man whose wartime papers had proved he was Aryan and therefore allowed to live and work. The photographs he took of his respectable working-class life formed the dossier that proved he belonged here, in England, in Brinksway, with his family in Heaward Street. According to his daughter, he was an obsessional compiler of documentation, receipts, bills, official letters. He knew the life and death significance of

having the correct papers (Anders, 2022a).

Many of those who remember life in Brinksway talk of the happiness of home in spite of the difficult material conditions. Danyliw captures the intimacy of homelife: Marika asleep, Mrs Danyliw in her hair curlers (Figs. 4.12 and 4.13). The bottle of milk on the table is a middle-class taboo, like elbows on tables, and a signifier of working-class interiors in kitchen-sink

dramas. When I discussed the significance of the milk bottle with his daughter, she assured me that these were candid photographs taken without any arranging of props (Anders, 2023b). These relaxed, domestic photos of his family contrast with those taken in the Sunday School setting, showing his wife and daughter in their best clothes and formal postures. This was a time when staying in to wash your hair was an actual evening event. Behind Mrs Danyliw, the wallpaper has been repaired using off cuts from different patterns. Looking at these two photographs recalls for me the heat of the coal fire and the comfort of the big sofa, the satisfaction of feeling safe at home.

Danyliw's self-portrait shows him at home mending a neighbour's clock (Fig. 4.14). The clocks lined up on the shelf above him are waiting for repair: clockmaking was his original trade before the war. Danyliw was an active member of the Stockport Photographic Club and won at least one competition prize (Anders, 2022a, 2022b). There are several surviving versions of this print, trying out different framings, and so I can imagine it might have been intended for viewing in the context of the photographic club under the genre of self-portrait or men at work.

60 years later, I am considering its merits in the context of the different lives and times that Danyliw experienced in the course of the world events in the mid-20th century and that ultimately landed him in Brinksway. Working there as a clock mender seems to represent his experience of moving like a time traveller, transitioning from one period and identity into another; from wartime refugee (in various guises) into respectable peacetime citizen, fixing time where it does not suit his purpose. By posing with the loupe in this photograph, Danyliw brings my attention to his eyes. The eyes that once witnessed atrocities now examine clock mechanisms and silver nitrate grains in the dusty cellar-dark room.

As an amateur photographic documentarian of 20th-century working-class life, Danyliw differs from other North-West notables like Shirley Baker (1932–2014) who studied Pure Photography at Manchester College of Technology, and later at London Regent Street Polytechnic and London College of Printing. After graduation she worked as a professional photographer and lectured at Salford College of Art and at Manchester Polytechnic (Levy, 2014–23). Baker's work on the Salford and Manchester slums, however warm-hearted, was more of an anthropological exercise, her view was always from the outside. Danyliw's work was more akin to that of photographer Vanley Burke, who records his own community in Handsworth, Birmingham, where the Black immigrant experience of



Figure 4.14: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

racism was a barrier to integration and equality. Like Burke's, Danyliw's photos record his own community under stress attempting to hold on to working-class dignity, self-respect and cultural practices as they were about to be cleared away.

In another image Marika and her friends are sitting on the seesaw in the local park (Fig. 4.15). One of these children lived above The Egerton pub, where their father was landlord, and would spend a lot of time at Marika's house to escape the chaos of that establishment. I read in it the various factors that might tip these children's life chances, one way or the other. Vanley Burke uses a similar visual metaphor in his photograph of the African Caribbean community of Birmingham (Fig 4.16).

Sontag writes of the democratic humanistic photographers who offer a generous affirmation of the variety of everyday life which generates a compassionate response from the spectator (2002, p.99). In 2022, I showed a selection of Danyliw's photographs to surviving members of the Sunday School at their Sunday Service, they 'oohed' and 'aahed' in warm approval. With his straightforward framing of the everyday in all its varieties, Danyliw's photography

might fit within Sontag's classification of democratic humanist, picturing his adopted community and claiming his place in it.

Our infant school closed down in 1964, and we sold our house for £100 (about a month's wages) to an elderly lady who reckoned she would die before it was knocked down. The spectre of the coming motorway was haunting the valley, and people started to move out of Brinksway. Arriving in our new neighbourhood, I was given every encouragement to dissociate myself from Brinksway. I was not to go around saying that my dad used to drink in The Crackers, or that my mum used to go to the washhouse.

I became an outsider at this point, not only from my own past but from what happened next: the running down and demolition of Brinksway, and the traumatic effect on those who stayed until the very end, trapped between the motorway and the river, with demolition all around.

Take this photo of Marika as a teenager about five years after we had moved away, still taking part in the

Rose Fete parades, but increasingly feeling the pinch of living in a place with narrowing expectations and opportunities (Fig. 4.17). She and her parents were among the last to leave. Her school careers advice was to try hairdressing or typing, while I was already riding the magic carpet of grammar school that was taking me even further away from where I had started.

As an adult, I started to haunt the lost streets of Brinksway, inspired by Jeremy Deller's inclusion of the last of the Rose Queens in *Procession*, the parade he devised for the Manchester International Festival in 2009. I sent him some photographs of the Brinksway Rose Fete for his folk archive, another attempt to slow the tide of obliteration. The traces of the lost streets continued to inspire my own creativity. Here I am on the same bridge where I had paraded 45 years previously (Fig. 4.18). The Woolpack pub was still there, but I was the only customer that afternoon. It closed soon after, for ever. The Mersey still flowed beneath the bridge, cleaned up now. But the dominant flow was the motorway traffic a few yards away, humming tunelessly.



Figure 4.15: Michael Danyliw, Untitled, date unknown. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)



Figure 4.16: Vanley Burke, *Young men on a see-saw in Handsworth Park*, 1984. Photograph. 50.8 x 33.64 cm. (Vanley Burke / DACS/Artimage)



Figure 4.17: Michael Danyliw, *Untitled*, c. 1968. Photograph. Private collection. (courtesy of Marika Anders)

Behind me there is a car showroom, supplying the car-owning dream we thought we wanted, the modern future for which we cleared everything away, but which now looks empty and toxic.

When I walk around Brinksway today, there is hardly anything remaining from the past. The roads we paraded along and the park we played in have disappeared under the motorway tarmac. If I stand on the forecourt of the car showroom, I can just about work out where I was born. I stand there straddling two lifetimes and pretend to knock on the door of our old house as if it's still there. No one is in. I can walk along the same path that Rita Tushingham and Dora Bryan took in the opening sequence of *A Taste of Honey*, down to where I used to play out on Morley Street, but nobody is playing out today.

A postmodern office block in the shape of a huge glass pyramid stands in the place between the Sunday School and my grandma's house (Fig. 4.19). Today it stands empty: a hollow monument to the decline and death of the area. This year, I pasted an enlarged copy of one of Danyliw's Rose Fete photographs on the pathway by the side of the glass pyramid, with a chalked inscription 'Brinksway Rose Fete 1962' (Fig. 4.20). It disappeared soon after, presumably taken down by the security guards. The erasure of our history continues.

In 2022, I arranged a reunion evening for members of the Brinksway Clan at a pub in Stockport; the formerly



Figure 4.18: Annie Harrison, *Untitled*, c.2009. Photograph. Private collection. (Photo: author's own)



Figure 4.19: Smith & Brown, *Stockport Pyramid*, Stockport, 16 November 2014. Photograph.
(Photo: <http://www.smithbrownaccountants.co.uk/>, CC by 2.0)



Figure 4.20: Annie Harrison, *Untitled*, 22 January 2023. Photograph. Private collection. (Photo: author's own)

surviving Brinksway pubs having all closed down. The photographs of the evening show us as a circle of friends, in which I am now included. But when I look at them today, I cannot help wondering if we are at our own wake, with the oblivion of amnesia not far away. We shared our photographs and our memories. We shared our different life stories and the routes they had taken, all of us faring reasonably well. We are nostalgic for the lives that we had in Brinksway. We miss the certainties of the times that the altered landscape seems to have forgotten now that its traces are wiped away. The folk-art events of the Sunday School were part of the social glue we now find missing in society. We cannot go back to it, but want to keep it alive in some way. Some of us think that Michael Danyliw's photographs are the true monument for the lost Brinksway. In 2022, I went to meet his daughter Marika, who now lives in Frankfurt, our first meeting since we were in the parades 60 years ago, like two ghosts of our former selves. She has the archive of the many photographs her father took of community life in Brinksway in the 1950s and 60s. We hope to

exhibit them and to find an archival home for in them in the North-West, before the photographs and our memories are lost for ever.

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