DERBY DAYS

Ian Breakwell

RGAP

DERBY DAYS

Ian Breakwell

RGAP

ISBN 0 9540639 1 0

Published by RGAP (Research Group for Artists Publications)
School of Art and Design, University of Derby,
Britannia Mill, Mackworth Road,
Derby DE22 3BL GB

Printed by Russell Press, Nottingham

INTRODUCTION

In many respects, an Ian Breakwell diary might seem to require little in the way of introduction. The formal diary entries, which commenced in 1964 and have continued to date, have appeared in print as books, have been read in live performance, have been serialised for radio and television, and have re-appeared in exhibitions, films, and other multi-media works.

This volume - *Derby Days* - has been drawn together both by the nature and geographical location of the initial material, and also by a process of reflection and re-consideration of this, with new texts being written in response to the gathering pages. Early diary entries are included, some published here for the first time, and many of the themes evident in these continue to appear in the later writing. Images, too, have been incorporated in a similar way, ranging from family photographs to film and video stills. The latter images are drawn from the televised versions of the Diaries, which feature dramatic re-enactments of earlier experiences. Facsimiles of the original annotated shooting scripts provide a further insight into the complex world of childhood imagination and adult reflection.

The point of departure is birth in Long Eaton, Derbyshire. From this event a sequence of texts move backwards and forwards in time through the following decades, dwelling on some moments spent as an art student, and culminating in a series of irreverent but affectionate obituaries, which take the reader full circle. Thus, in *Derby Days*, Ian Breakwell's use of the diary form is revealed as a continuously shifting and regenerative process.

Martin Rogers

opposite & pages 8-16: *Buried Alive* shooting script

BURIED ALIVE:

Characters:IAN BREAKWELL (Himself)
UNCLE TOM (Professional magician)
YOUNG IAN
BLIND MAN.

Institution inmates/nurses: 2 GIRLS
2 WOMEN
1 MAN

Stage: CHIEF NURSE
10 EXTRAS

N.B.If STAGE & INSTITUTION can be found in same location,10 extras can double as inmates/nurses.

****

Locations: LONG EATON,DERBYSHIRE:Street exts.
Suburban houses
LONDON:Cloth Fair Int/Ext.
Smithfield Ext.
People on street.
"THE INSTITUTION" Int/Ext.
"THE STAGE" Int.

Studio:IAN BREAKWELL to camera (Chroma Key) + play back of edited programme (offline)
YOUNG IAN doing magic tricks in spotlight.

Stills:Breakwell family photographs.

①

"Burns Alive"

OPENING TITLE + SIGNATURE TUNE.

I.B.V.O COLOURED SCREEN

After nine warm months in a dark and private place, I came ~~out~~ into the outside world on May 26th 1943.

FLARING LIGHTS
BABIE'S P.O.V.
SILHOUETTED FIGURES BEND INTO SHOT

The bright lights dazzled me.

I.B.V.O.

I shouted and screamed:
I'm here! It's me!

I.B. TO CAMERA

I officially existed fifteen days later, on the 9th June. A certificate proved it.

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHILDREN PLAYING ON THE STREET AND PLAYGROUND
I.B.V.O.
STILL OF LONG EATON HOUSE. ACTRESS V.O.

Out on the streets in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, like children everywhere we lived in a world of make-believe before returning at the end of the day to our separate ~~little~~ houses.

"Ian! Ian!"

I B TO CAMERA

Inside the house my mother strove to break down my timidity and fear of the world outside the front door: standing me on a stool in the middle of the living room, rehearsing over and over again the verses I had to read aloud in school next day:

The Ringmaster.
The scene was set.

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH
I.B.V.O.

Private world and public face.

I.B TO CAMERA

~~One of my great uncles was an illusionist and he taught~~ My Uncle Tom was a semi-professional magician who sold insurance during the daytime, ~~and he taught me the secrets of conjuring. He in turn encouraged me and an early memory is of seeing his chained and padlocked "Escaping Lady" trunk. The escaping lady was my Auntie Joan.~~

~~PHOTO OF UNCLE TOM STILL OF "ESCAPING LADY" ILLUSION.~~

~~PHOTO AUNTIE JOAN~~

BOY ACTOR AS YOUNG IAN. ~~KNOCKS AT FRONT DOOR +~~ ENTERS
INT. LIVING ROOM
MAGICIAN AS UNCLE TOM. BOY'S P.O.V OF UNCLE TOM PERFORMING TRICKS.
REPITITION OF SIMPLE MAGIC FEATS

On all too rare evenings I would visit Uncle Tom, and in surroundings of stifling domesticity (the standard lamp on in the corner of the living room, covers on the arms and backs of the three-piece suite to stop it getting dirty) he would fan cards, multiply ~~billiard balls~~ thimbles, or produce ~~cigarettes~~ coins out of the air.

I B TO CAMERA

I gave my first public performance of conjuring at the age of eleven as part of a variety concert at a mental hospital.

But It was never my intention to be a professional conjuror.
Instead I became an artist and a writer.
Eventually I moved to London.

I. B. ON STREET IN
SMITHFIELD AREA
I B V. O.

I.B WALKS THROUGH
BARLEY MOW ([illegible]
PASSAGE INTO [illegible]
CLOTH FAIR [illegible])
TILT UP TO UPPER
WINDOWS WITH
INSCRIPTIONS

Around the corner from where I live in London there are, in Cloth Fair, some houses which pre-date the Great Fire. The windows are inscribed with names, dates and annotations scratched into the glass, reputedly with diamonds, by guests who spent the night there.

Around the time the house was built the poet John Donne wrote:

INT. CLOTH FAIR
HOUSE.
SEE VARIOUS
INSCRIPTIONS

My name engrav'd herein,
Doth contribute my firmness to this glasse,
~~Which, ever since that charme, hath beene~~
~~As hard, as that which grav'd it, was;~~
~~Thine eye will give it price enough, to mock~~
~~The diamonds of either rock.~~

~~II~~

WINDOWS WITH
MODERN LONDON
BEYOND - SMITHFIELD
GARDENS [illegible]
I B. V. O. ([illegible])

'Tis much that glasse should bee
As all confessing, and through-shine as I,
'Tis more, that it shewes thee to thee,

And cleare reflects thee to thine eye.
But all such rules, loves magique can undoe
Here you see mee, and I am you.

I.B TO CAMERA

Everyone needs to make their mark, to prove that they exist.

GRAFFITI, INITIALS
ETC.
I. B V O.

Graffiti in the bus shelter, initials carved on a tree with a penknife or on a windowpane with a diamond.

I.B TO CAMERA

Pity the poor person who can <u>only</u> make their mark and not their name, for they will at the time be watched by someone who is literate, as

LARGE CROSS
~~PAINTED~~ SCRATCHED ON
GLASS IN VISION
I.B. V. O.

they make their cross, never a tick, they cannot prove officially that they exist.

SUBURBAN HOUSES
EXT.
I B. V. O.

They hide away behind closed doors and curtains.

STREET DWELLERS,
BENCH PEOPLE
VARIOUS LOCATIONS
I B. V. O.

Or outside in the public world they live their lives in private world of their own.

STREET DWELLERS:
SINGING, RANTING,
GESTICULATING.
THEN: SLUMPED
AND STARING.
I.B. V O.

Sometimes they ~~break out in sound or song, they~~ step onstage for brief moments, signalling that they exist.

They are saying:

Look! Here I am! It's me!

They become visible, whether we choose to see them or not, before returning to their solitary confinement.

CLOSER SHOT OF
STARING STREET
DWELLER. I. B. V. O
FADE TO BLACK
HOLD BLACK SCREEN
OUT OF FOCUS ACTRESS
BEHIND GLASS.
SCRATCHES GLASS
WITH PENKNIFE
UNTIL IT SHATTERS

They have gone away, yet there they are still.

But then, there are The Invisible People: those who once were visible, just, who tried to make their mark, ~~who scratched, scratched harder, and harder, and HARDER..... with disastrous results.~~

SLOW ZOOM INTO SHATTERED GLASS FADING TO BLACK.

I.B.V.O.

Now they live forever in private worlds not of their own choosing.

Out of sight and out of mind.

Buried alive.

CAPTION:
I.B.V.O

12th February 1976
In connection with my work with the Artist Placement Group
I am visiting, ~~with my camera~~, a high security mental hospital in the North of England.

LOCATION: MENTAL HOSPITAL.INT.
C.U. MALE HANDS LOCKING + UNLOCKING HEAVY DOORS AND SLAMMING SHUT
SHOTS TO INDICATE GLIMPSES OF SCENES DESCRIBED HERE. I.B. POV
SEE I.B.
SOUNDS OF FOOTSTEPS, DOORS, OCCASIONAL MURMURING – NOT IDENTIFIABLE.

~~: the endless unlocking and locking of doors.~~

~~: steel doors~~

~~: pairs of shoes outside some of the doors~~

~~: observation-holes in doors of rooms; just big enough to get a hand through the one without armour-plated glass~~

~~: I wink at the eye in the observation-hole; it winks back~~

: I look through the observation-hole of the ~~first~~ next room; a girl wearing only a ~~short~~ baggy sweater is sitting cross-legged ~~on the rubber mattress~~ in the bare room – she smiles back.

~~HUNDREDS OF KEYS HUNG ON WALL HOOKS.~~

DOOR, HANDS, KEYS AND LOCK C.U.
I B V O.

SEEN THROUGH OBSERVATION HOLE OR WINDOW

N.B. COLOUR TREATMENT OF MENTAL HOSPITAL TO BE MONOCHROMATIC. FLASHES

~~A view through one window consisting entirely of rows of keys. The fourteenth door will not open: the problem is that someone is simultaneously trying to lock the door on the other side of the keyhole.~~

A fully dressed woman in a locked side-room, lying on a mattress in a pool of piss. A girl crouching on the floor in the middle of a

SEEN THROUGH WINDOW. "A GIRL... ONE WEEK AGO."
I.B.V.O. (SOME SHOTS TO ECHO HYSTERIC STILLS IN "MASK TO MASK")
INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ROOMS SEEN FROM INMATES P.O.V.
SMEARED MARKS ON WALLS

"EVEN HERE ... MARK"
I.B.V.O.

SEEN THROUGH HALF-OPEN DOOR. PROCESSION: ACTRESS IN FLORAL JACKET PASSES AND TURNS SLOWLY AROUND LIKE AN ANIMATED PIROUETTE.
I.B.V.O.

locked room, a handbag beside her, ~~who~~ she has moved three feet to the left of the position she was crouching in one week ago.

I wink at the eye in the observation hole; it winks back.

: Room-walls scarred by fingernails,

~~: room-doors~~ indented and battered by feet

~~: room-floors, walls and beds,~~ stained by old piss and shit, like a drawing endlessly erased.

: even here, in despair, the invisible people have left their mark.

~~: Old and new fashions in straight-jackets;~~ some women in traditional canvas jackets with thong back-lacing; ~~one~~ in a prototype nylon floral design straight-jacket, designed and made in the hospital.

~~Now they live forever in private worlds not of their own choosing.~~
~~Out of sight and out of mind.~~
~~Buried alive.~~

PART OF ROOM, SEEN THROUGH DOOR
I.B.V.O

WIDER SHOT.
SOUNDTRACK
DULL RHYTHMIC BANGING
CU FACES ON BOUNCING BALLS.

CONTINUATION OF ABOVE.
WOMAN BANGING HER HEAD SEEN IN BACKGROUND.
NURSE + PATIENT TO ECHO GOYA'S "SELF PORTRAIT WITH DOCTOR ARRIETA" IN "HOUSE OF THE DEAF MAN"

GESTURES TRAILING I.B'S PAINTINGS PROG 5 + GOYA'S PROG 4.

The Day Room

: behind armour plated glass; ~~furniture and fittings screwed to the floor.~~

old and new fashions in straitjackets.
~~: big inflatable bouncing balls with faces and ears on, to play with.~~
A woman in a canvas straitjacket with one arm free
: A woman in a floral nylon straight-jacket designed and made in the hospital.
~~walking round and round on tip-toes.~~

: a woman banging her head continuously against the wall

~~: a girl in a canvas straight-jaket with one arm free~~

~~: the nurse in tight blue skirt and black stockings kicks one of the big inflatable balls with face and ears on, it hits the girl in the canvas straight-jacket behind the right ear, bounces off, and wobbles to a standstill;~~

~~the woman in the nylon floral straight-jacket walks round the ball on tip-toes.~~

MENTAL HOSPITAL EXT.
INMATES SHUFFLING ALONG, SITTING ON BENCHES
SHOOT THROUGH MESH FENCE TO ECHO PAINTINGS PROG 3+5

In the grounds:
: 'the pens': wire mesh cages surrounding scraped grass.
: a pair of shoes with a name inside by a wooden bench.

I. B V O

I. B + ACTOR ENTERS HALL. CAMERA TRACKS PAST I. B STANDING STOCK STILL. SEE EMPTY STAGE. TILT UP AND LOCK OFF ON PROS ARCH LIGHTING CHANGE ON STAGE IN VISION. TILT DOWN TO CHILD AS YOUNG IAN PERFORMING MAGIC TRICKS.

On the way out the Chief Nurse escorted me through the Recreation Hall. I stood transfixed.

There was the Recreation Hall stage with its massive ~~pink~~ proscenium arch. The same stage on which in 1954 I had performed as a boy conjuror in that Charity Variety Troupe, ~~changing water into wine, cutting ropes and making them whole again, manipulating billiard balls~~ producing flowers and, fanning cards, in front of the rows of faces staring dumbly from beyond the footlights and the uniformed nurses standing in the aisles.

I. B. V. O.
FOOTLIGHTS TO REFER BACK TO ARC LIGHTS IN FIRST SCENE.
REVERSE ANGLE FROM STAGE. ROW OF DIMLY DISCERNABLE FACES. GRADUALLY FADE TO BLACK. I. B V. O.

Some of the patients I have seen today would probably have seen my act ~~21 years~~ over 20 ago.

REPEAT SEVERAL KEY IMAGES FROM THIS PROGRAMME AND PROG 2.
+ SOUND/MUSIC TRACK.
CREDITS.

'I gave my first public performance of conjuring at the age of eleven, as part of a variety concert at a mental hospital'

'Outside in the public world, they live their lives in private worlds'

'A fully dressed woman in a locked side room, lying on a mattress in a pool of piss'

'A girl crouching on the floor in the middle of a locked room, a handbag beside her'

'The Day Room: behind armour-plated glass'

'Old and new fashions in strait-jackets'

'A woman banging her head continuously against the wall'

'Producing flowers and fanning cards ....'

'... in front of rows of faces staring dumbly beyond the footlights'

Ian Breakwell in Long Eaton 1965

1962 Derby College of Art

Figure Composition Class

The composition should contain a minimum of three full-length figures (with visible feet) within a perspective setting of buildings of brick or stone (including a clock tower) and at least two trees. Predominant colours to be burnt umber and yellow ochre. Title: *Autumn Evening.*

I'm painting quickly after coming back late from an extended lunch hour in the Regent Snooker Hall at the back of the college. The best of three frames I'd played against Dave had been delayed while we argued about whose turn it was to play the role of Minnesota Fats, the king of the Pittsburgh pool shooters, who was eventually dethroned by the upstart Fast Eddie Felson in the film *The Hustler*, which had recently come to our local cinema and held us in its thrall.

Neither of us wanted to be brash, good-looking Paul Newman (Fast Eddie). We both yearned to be honey-talking, wise old Fats (Jackie Gleason) who enters Ames's Pool Hall every evening at 8pm on the nose through double doors deferentially opened by a limping flunkey. Fats is immaculately dressed in a Homburg hat and six-buttoned overcoat with a double-folded silk handkerchief in the breast pocket and a duplicate in the same pocket of his three-piece suit, in the button-hole of which is a carnation. With a silver lighter he lights a cigarette taken from a silver case, twirling it in his jewelled fingers like a conjurer, then proprietorially surveys the poolroom like a priest in his church. The Church of the Good Hustler.

So today it was my turn to be the Fat Man. Now Fats was big, heavy, like an elegant bear. Whereas I was so thin that the seven stone weakling who got sand kicked in his face by the hunk in the Charles Atlas body-building advertisement actually looked physically better than me. Within two years, hollow-cheeked, scrawny youths with northern accents would become pin-ups as the beat groups swept the charts. But not yet, so for me to impersonate Fats required a vivid imagination, and that at least I had.

Minnesota Fats

A second difficulty was that in 1960s England, pool was an unknown, foreign game. The balls were bafflingly numbered, the cue bridged under the index finger, and shots were played without fully lowering the head. Yet pool was recognisably related to the game we knew: snooker, which still awaited its discovery by television and was considered a disreputable pastime of mis-spent youth, played by pale-faced wasters in dimly lit saloons above Burtons Tailors shops. In the Regent Snooker Hall the sustenance was Spam rolls and stewed tea, the clientèle ex-footballers, spivs and layabouts, but the ambience was not too far from Ames's Pittsburgh Pool Hall: the shaded lamps over the baize tables, the dark wooden cue racks, the signs saying 'Don't sit on the tables. Use the rest'. We could easily imagine that Ames's had the same miasma of unventilated cigarette smoke, chalk dust and fetid toilets as the Regent. However, in a lunch break we couldn't hope to duplicate the film's epic, 36-hour game, which we knew, literally, frame by frame, shot by shot.

Fats gets off to a flyer, watched by an admiring Eddie. "Woooo, he is great! See that old Fat Man, look at the way he moves, like a dancer. And those fingers, those chubby fingers, that stroke, like he's playing a violin or somethin'."

Then the game ebbs and flows, first Fats then Eddie holding sway, against a jazz-scored montage of cigar-chomping faces and hypnotic incantation: "Seven ball in the corner." Kerchunk. "Six in the middle." Kerchunk. "One twenty five. Game. Thirteen. Five. Ten. Game. Two in the corner. Thirteen. Ace in the side. Three ball. One twenty five. Game. Rack 'em."

Now Fats is $18,000 down and sits impassively like a buddha, as the inspired Eddie lines up another plant before lifting his eyes and saying to Trevor, who is watching our game in the role of George C. Scott:

"Hey mister."

"The name's Gordon. Bert Gordon."

"Mister. You've been sitting in that spot for hours, now would you mind moving, it bothers me."

Trevor takes off his wraparound shades, sips his glass of milk, moves his chair one inch to the left and drawls to me out of the side of his mouth: "Fats, stay with this kid, he's a loser." Then with mimed hand gestures and no props, I enact the film's most magical scene, where Fats, after 25 hours of the match, takes time out to wash and brush up, dusts his hands with talc, sets a fresh carnation in his button-hole, then pink and powdered like a big, dimpled baby, ambles back to the table, fixes Newman with his piggy little eyes and smiling benignly says: "OK Fast Eddie, let's play some pool."

And you just know he's going to take back every last dollar with interest, except that Fats is a gent and, 12 hours later, having reduced Eddie to a beaten, drunken wreck, he refuses to take his last $200, declares the game over and exits in Homburg and overcoat through the same doors which he had entered a night and a day earlier; the epitome of savvy, cool artistry and style. Everything we aspired to.

Meanwhile, so help me, this Composition Class is chronic, and only 15 minutes left to get this third figure right. Maybe if I give him a Homburg, yes, that's better, and an overcoat with six buttons, yeah, easy, and just in time, it's 5 o'clock, time to go home.

At the bus station I climb on to the Long Eaton bus and Dave on to the one for Belper. We wave from the steps and Dave shouts:

"Fat Man, you shoot a great game of pool." "So do you, Fast Eddie." I respond, raising an imaginary whisky glass.

There's a free seat next to a woman with a blue-rinsed perm who shifts up and says: "Plenty of room for a whippet like you."

I grin: "Ah, but you know what they say, in every thin person there's a fat one trying to get out."

She gives me a funny look and stares hard out of the window.

1962 Derby College of Art

Minnesota Fats was just one of our numerous role models who had in common an idiosyncratic style: Mose Allison, Thelonious Monk, Bo Diddley, Nat Jackley, Edward Burra. Eccentric individuals who lived by different rules from those represented in the stifling conventions of the Figure Composition Class. None of them lived in Derby, we felt sure of that.

Then the Figure Composition Studio door creaked open and into the room shuffled a stooping, bearded man. Under his left arm was a brown paper parcel and in his right hand a shopping bag. Peering myopically ahead he made his way with a curious, off-balance gait to a vacant easel, sat down in front of it on a stool, unwrapped the parcel and took from it a small, half-finished canvas which he fixed to the easel after adjusting the wing-nuts until it was at the right height. All this took about half an hour. Then he carefully fixed a pair of bi-focals to the end of his nose, and looking just like Sigmund Freud, stared intently for a further twenty minutes at the tiny canvas. The picture consisted of a tangle of deathly white intestinal forms on a bilious, acidic-green ground, above which was bare canvas and the pencilled outline of a clock tower. The combination of colour and paint texture, reminiscent of boiled tripe with mushy peas, was not one on the recommended list for Figure Comp. Indeed the painting appeared to have no recognisable composition at all, but seemed like some nacreous, spawned thing. Weird. Interesting.

Eventually, as if waking from a dream, he unzipped the shopping bag and took from it first a palette, linseed oil and brushes, then twenty seven small tubes of oil paint which he carefully lined up side by side on the table in front of the palette. One by one, he began to unscrew the tops. Twenty seven minutes later each top lay alongside its corresponding tube. He peered at them and then, once, more, gazed intently at the canvas. I looked across at Dave, who had also stopped painting and was staring with bemused fascination.

The big wall clock ticked on. You could have heard a pin drop. Slowly, still staring at the canvas, he extended a hand towards a brush. The clock chimed and the class was over.

As we filed out of the room I looked back. He was carefully replacing the tops on the tubes. Outside the window the light was fading.

"An artiste." I whispered.

"Definitely." said Dave.

1962 Derby College of Art

The snooker hall has been closed for three days now. A man went berserk and ripped up all the green baize tops with a cue, wielding it like a spear, roaring and screaming, tearing the cloth with his hands and teeth.

"I thought he had a funny look in his eyes when he came in." said Dennis the doorman.

"Yeah, didn't I always say that fuckin' evil tea they served would send somebody mental someday?" said Graham.

No fantasy Fats, no Fast Eddie, and we can't play records in the Figure Composition Class, so Bo, Mose and Monk can't reassure us that there's life beyond perms and chips. But then the man with the green and white painting returned mid-way through our dutiful portrayal of *Saturday Morning Shopping* (seven figures: two tradesmen, three housewives, two children, colours to include two complementaries). Again he went through the same, slow ritual of setting the picture up on the easel and peering closely at it, but not, this time, the laying out of the tubes of paint which, it turned out when he opened the shopping bag, he had forgotten. Resignedly he zipped up the bag, re-wrapped the painting and shuffled out of the room.

After the tea-break it's time to do 'our own work'. I'm doing a drawing on a sheet of fluorescent green day-glo paper which I got from the supermarket where I work on Saturdays. The drawing is based on the Comedia del'Arte, imagined as an ice-panto. It's called *Bucco and The Bright World Outside*, and when it's finished I'm going to put it in an ornate gilt frame I've found, like a proscenium arch. While I'm drawing I'm listening to a record on the Dansette: Huddie 'Leadbelly' Leadbetter's *TB Blues*: "Everywhere I go, when I walk down the street, people looking at me from my head to my feet. Mmmmmm, the TB is killing me."

True enough, now as then, in Derby as in Alabama, it runs in the family. The first time I went to the sanatorium, when I was seven, was to visit cousin Malcolm, tightly tucked up like a swaddled baby in a bed on the verandah looking out over the frost-covered lawn. We sat

shivering by his bedside, cheering him up. Mum said "Eh, by gyney Malcolm, this fresh air'll do you the power uh good." "Ay," said Malcolm, blue nosed with cold, "ah reckun uz ow it's kill or cure." Mum fiddled with her handbag then went to the lav. Malcolm, his arms pinioned under the bedclothes, beckoned me closer with a movement of his head and whispered "Ahm gaspin furra fag our Ian, yuh wunna nip aht an gerruz ten Parkies would yuh? There's a ten bob note in me dressing gown pocket." "Give over Malcolm, yuhl get me shot. Ah canna do owt like that, Auntie Evelyn uhd tan me hide if she found out. Anyroad ere comes Mum, nah shurrup."

Next time it was my brother, then my dad. He was indoors, thank goodness, in a big, bright and airy ward with a scrubbed wooden floor. In the next bed was a small man who looked like Jimmy Clitheroe, with whispy hair and a high pitched voice; he'd gone consumptive as a side effect of being gored in the balls by a bull. "It never rains but it pours." Mum said.

The studio door opens, and a painting tutor strolls in. He's wearing a safari jacket, T-shirt, jeans and baseball boots. Under his arm he's got a Miles Davis LP and a Barnett Newman catalogue. Mister Cool. He listens with an expression of wry condescension to Leadbelly's rough, anguished voice and pounding twelve string guitar. Scratching his crew cut head he says as he leaves, "What I don't understand is why he's so upset about television?"

The great music hall performer George Formby Senior, father of the more famous ukelele-playing George, built his act around his wracking cough which he used to punctuate his mordant monologues and surreal comic songs. This cough was no affectation, but the result of the tuberculosis which would eventually kill him. Underneath his tramp costume George wore a gamekeeper's jacket, the pockets of which were stuffed with ice cubes to stop him haemorrhaging onstage. And the more he coughed the more the audience roared with laughter.

One night, the story goes, and I care not whether it is showbusiness myth, George Senior was playing a northern variety theatre where a locally favourite, but inferior act was placed above him on the bill. George's affronted complaints to the theatre manager fell on deaf ears,

so at the last minute he changed his act. As the curtains opened he walked slowly downstage beneath a single spot, wound a piece of string around the index fingers of his left and right hands, stretched it with intense concentration until it snapped, then he coughed, and leaning over the footlights said to the audience : "Go home and tell your friends what you have seen." Then he walked off.

Even when he was coughing his guts up, George would, I'm sure, never publicly have mentioned tuberculosis, but others, like Leadbelly, did. In the late 1950s, as an underage schoolboy, I used to sneak into a Nottingham jazz club which occasionally hired, no doubt cheaply, genuinely authentic black American blues artistes. It was there that I saw Speckled Red, the albino brothel pianist, who was old, drunk, raucous and given to careering off the end of the keyboard and falling on the floor. An inspiring role model for an impressionable young lad. Then some months later came the emaciated Victoria Spivey from New Orleans (New Orleans! And I was in West Bridgford), who looked about 100 and had more rings on her fingers than teeth in her shrunken head. When she croaked out *'TB Blues'* you could taste it.

A famously tubercular Nottinghamian was the writer D.H.Lawrence. A miner's son, he won a special free scholarship for an academically gifted poor boy, to Nottingham High School, which was otherwise a fee-paying day school. Years later I won the same scholarship, though I only discovered that by reading Lawrence's biography on the back of a Penguin book. In four years at the school, no-one had told me, even though, in the school magazine, they used to list the subsequent achievements of old boys who had gone on to become diplomats, been awarded the MBE, or rowed in the Boat Race. Yet they never mentioned Lawrence, and their snooty embarrassment became acute in November 1960 when the *'Lady Chatterley's Lover'* trial took place, and I gleefully revelled in my previously uncomfortable odd-boy-out status, which I now shared with the most topically notorious author in the world. Lawrence, like other tuberculosis sufferers who could afford to, travelled to foreign beaches and deserts to seek relief for his clotted lungs in hot, dry climates, and he wrote books about his travels. TB became associated with the exotic and the creative personality, typified by the high boned, sunken cheeked, wide eyed faces of writers,

composers and artists. Lawrence, Aubrey Beardsley, Katherine Mansfield, Franz Kafka, they all looked great in photographs. Lenny Bruce did a very funny routine about why tuberculosis was hip, and bronchitis uncool. TB wasn't hip in Long Eaton though.

Would the TB be killing me next I wondered? My turn never came, though there was a nasty false alarm when I started coughing blood during the tea-break in the staff room at Tesco's where I did my Saturday job. Big gobbets of red and green, like traffic lights. "Pick the bones outta that!" said Ronnie the meat packer. "You'd berra stop smokin them Parkie tipped yoth, afor yuh cough your ring up. Bloody rammel, they're no bloody good fuh man nuh bloody beast. I wunna gi em ouse room meesen." "I reckon you could be right there Ronnie." I said between coughs. The factory that made filter tips was only five miles away, a by-product from their main production of man-made dress fibres. When the bus from Long Eaton to Derby passed the factory the conductor closed all the windows to keep out the choking fumes. An evil place, my Dad used to work there and it nearly killed him. In the ambulance they estimated he had twenty minutes to live unless he was operated on. Luckily there were no traffic jams on the way to the hospital, but that was the start of all his trouble.

I chucked the fag packet into the wastebin, though it meant I wouldn't be able to buy any untipped until I got paid at the end of the day, but the teabreak was over anyway and Stan the supervisor snapped "Get yer bloody skates on Ian, yuh dozy bugger, and stack some shelves. An dunna forget tuh put the dented tins at the back." I've taken a step down market here I thought ruefully as I pulled on my grubby nylon uniform and set off for the shop floor. My previous job, from which I'd been sacked, was across the road at Fine Fare, which had been opened by the Dagenham Girl Pipers and had a manager who was a prizewinning ex-ballroom dancer. Tesco's manager was an ex-bookie and the store had been opened by a chimpanzee.

1962 London - Charing Cross Road

It was my first day-trip down south to the big city. To see the sights, go round the galleries, browse in the bookshops, buy a book. I'd saved up.

The bookshop was huge, three times bigger even than the Co-op department store in Long Eaton. The method of payment was also different from the Co-op. There, a bill of sale was written out, then sealed inside an iron container with the money and dispatched down a hydraulic tube to the unseen nether regions of the accounts office, from which the iron capsule eventually returned containing the receipt and change. Here, I joined a queue to present my chosen book, with my cash, to an assistant seated in a glass-walled kiosk like those in the entrances of cinemas. Came my turn and I stared in wonder through the glass at the most exquisite young woman I had ever seen. Her bobbed, golden hair shone like silk, framing liquid, aquamarine eyes above high cheekbones over which was stretched alabaster skin as smooth as a sugared almond. As if an identikit of beautician's clichés had been used to assemble the perfectly structured face. A stylized beauty so different from the faces in my home town, where women still wore headscarves and curlers until Saturday night. How could it be that this flawless face was a shop assistant's, looking blankly out through the window of a cramped kiosk instead of from the cover of a fashion magazine?

I pushed my pound note through the grille and she slid her right arm languidly across the counter to take it. The bare, slender arm, its skin as unblemished as the face, tapered in perfect proportion from the soft flesh above the elbow, down past the almost imperceptible wrist to a handless single finger, at the end of which was a long, red-lacquered fingernail. The prehensile finger hooked my note, tightening around the Queen's neck.

The kiosk woman's inscrutable blue eyes met mine, which had widened as a flush of giddiness passed through me. Embarrassed, I looked down at the book in my left hand, from the cover of which Franz Kafka's high-cheekboned face looked at me with hypnotic eyes and a little half-smile which seemed to say: "Welcome to the city, my friend, welcome to my world."

26.12.1964 Long Eaton, Derbyshire

The front room of the terrace house faces onto the street. The curtains do not quite meet in the middle. The walls of the room are white-embossed. On the wall is a brass-framed mirror; on the corner of the mirror a stuffed canary is perched. The ceiling is white-embossed, the carpet green with a yellow floral pattern. Grey, nylon-covered chairs; black, yellow and green nylon-fur cushions. On the wall, a pair of brass bellows, on which is a side view of a galleon, hang from a hook in the shape of a front view of a galleon. On the mantelpiece is a hat-shaped clock, a bell-shaped musical box, a swan-shaped flowerpot, and two empty candlesticks. On the brown carved sideboard, brown carved table, white painted window ledge, and veneered cocktail cabinet, are white vases filled with paper flowers. The woman who makes the paper flowers kneels on the black nylon rug in front of the convector fire. She is 50 years old, plump like a cushion. She is talking to a poodle. The woman dresses the poodle in a green woollen suit, boots and hat. The woman's husband, who is sitting in a chair by the fire, takes off his shoes and socks, and his wife takes a polaroid photograph of the dog licking her husband's feet.

17 MAR

17. 3. 1976.
Long Eaton, Derbyshire.
(ABOVE): View now of what was my grandfather's allotment, which I used to help him tend when I was a small boy. Everyone in the family used to call it 'Grandad's Garden'. It was overgrown and chaotic ; littered with broken pots, rusting tools, smashed cold-frames, and ankle deep in chicken-shit, duck-shit, pig-shit and dog-shit. There was an old decrepit summer house with a verandah : the paint-work was blistered and peeling ; inside was a sofa with the springs sticking out ; on the shelves were dirty cups without handles and tins of rusty nails.
(BELOW) : View now of the allotment opposite my grand-father's, virtually unchanged from how I remember it. It was neat and orderly. My family used to say : " Why can't Grandad's Garden be like that ?" He used to say : " One day it will get tidied up. "

Ireland.
Roscarberry. County Cork. 2.p.m.

Through the skylight above the iron bed big rain clouds were building up. There was a chill in the air ; but the bed was warm. Warm enough to stretch out like two cats. He stroked her hair. She knelt between his legs, her breasts lightly touching the insides of his thighs. They both smiled at the same time. He gripped the rails at the bedhead and gazed up at the skylight above. Raindrops began to fall on the glass. Vague memories stirred in his mind as she pushed aside the quilt. He was in his pram, on his back, tucked up, warm as toast, the waterproof pram flap buttoned up to his chin, the cold hair on his face, raindrops hitting the pram hood over his head. The quilt slid off her shoulders. Big faces loomed up over the pram. Her breath was warm on his neck. Fingers touched his lips. The rain moved in rivulets across the skylight.

18.3.1979

That old photograph, I can see it now - a snapshot of me as a child walking along the promenade at Skegness, my father walking behind me, a fixed smile on his face, his hand on the back of my neck.

Every time she saw the photograph, my mother used to laugh and say "It looks like he was going to strangle you!"

'On the banks of the Trent, on the outskirts of town, is the Ratcliffe on Soar power station, towering over the local beauty spot, Trent Lock'

The train from London to Derby passes through the Midlands of England; Luton, Bedford, Kettering, Market Harborough, Leicester, Loughborough. Limboland. Neither North nor South, East nor West. Derby is the doorstep to the North. Long Eaton is nine miles east of Derby, in the valley of the River Trent.

On the banks of the Trent, on the outskirts of town, is the Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station, towering over the local beauty spot, Trent Lock, which comes into view immediately after the train comes out of the northern portal of the Redhill tunnel, and passes over the three-hundred foot spans of the cast-iron bridge across the river. Trent Lock was known as 'Twisthands Scarborough' in the days when the lace machinists were either too busy or too poor to take their holidays elsewhere. My mother and father had a holiday caravan there, and I used to go down for a ham salad tea on a Sunday afternoon.

Then the train passes Fletcher's Pond, a railway ballast hole in which swim big carp. Then across the canal past the Sheet Stores and the train reaches Long Eaton station.

My father worked as a machinist, a 'twisthand', in the Lace Mill on Leopold Street. Sometimes when I was a boy I used to take him his 'snap' at dinnertime: a flask of tea and sandwiches: beef, or beef dripping, or cucumber soaked in vinegar. The entrance to the factory was through a heavy wooden door and then up a winding spiral staircase, the stone steps worn down in the centre; the throb of the machinery two floors up gradually getting louder, then another heavy wooden door leading from the cool dark of the staircase into the heat of the machine shop; the smell of oil and the stunning noise, the oil-soaked floor vibrating, the rows of lace bobbins clattering up and down on their spindles, the teeth of the looms moving backwards and forwards. Then along the wooden walkways alongside the machines until I came to where my father was standing in his blue overalls watching the bobbins and wiping the oil off his hands with a wad of cotton waste. You could hardly hear yourself speak: I had to put my mouth close to his ear and shout "I've brought your snap!"

'Bowler hats, umbrellas, and briefcases lay beneath the waterfall, all turned to stone'

He could not bear to watch oranges or tomatoes being eaten; if ever they appeared on the table he would leave the room. His chair was by the fire, facing the television set, alongside the standard lamp. Hour after hour, night after night, he sat staring at the television, a one pound bag of sugared almonds wedged between the cushion and the side of the chair.

Every half hour a Park Drive cigarette, the smoke sucked deep into the lungs, then blown out in a continuous stream across the room to swirl round the head of the Highland Piper on the top of the television set who turned round and round and played *'Scotland the Brave'* when wound up. When I noticed that he was nipping his cigarettes out halfway down, that's when I realized we were feeling the pinch. The dole and the pittance my mother was bringing in by making up nylon overalls on piece-rate was not sufficient. The bottom had fallen out of the lace market. There were queues outside the Labour Exchange. Half time. One third time. The odd day. Set on. Laid off. Each cigarette nipped out three times. A pocket full of nub ends.

For one complete month he never uttered a single word to any of the family. My mother eventually broke down sobbing during a Sunday dinner, tears dripping into the gravy. My brother started bawling. I went and sat in the shed at the bottom of the garden. The shed was full of bikes, spades, forks, tins of paint and varnish, brushes, hammers and saws, a lawnmower, a dolly-tub and ponch. On the wall, two photographs of my father looked down at me, one a football team photo, the other a studio portrait: pinned collar, tightly-knotted tie, brilliantined hair, shiny new false teeth. On the shelf underneath the photographs were two of my grandfather's gallstones which he had given me as a present when he came out of hospital. As I stared at them they seemed like eggs laid by a stone bird. A thin, stooping bird with hunched shoulders and a grotesque hooked beak, crouching in a stone landscape, moonlit, at the foot of stone steps leading to a petrified forest. In the middle of the forest was a frozen waterfall. Bowler hats, umbrellas and briefcases lay beneath the waterfall, all turned to stone. Standing alongside the waterfall was a stone ladder at the foot of which lay a boy who had fallen, his arm twisted round his broken neck. The boy was calcified too: a fossil. Above the boy stood his father, a statue with pathetic outstretched arms which had tried to catch the fallen child.

In the town in the valley, below the rocks, the neighbours also stood like statues. Mrs.Wilson, one foot on the step about to enter the coal-house. Mr Brown mowing the lawn. Mrs Cresswell leaning on her front gate, her hand cupped to her mouth, her forehead furrowed. In the field behind the street, little Tony Cresswell turned to stone while running, around his waist a bag of exploding fireworks, his mouth open in a soundless scream, his eyes bulging. In the middle of the side street a group of children with pennies in the their hands stood in a circle around backward Oscar, waiting for him to put the lump of dogshit in his mouth, waiting forever because he, like them, was turned to stone, as was the small boy with his hands thrust through the bars of the playground gate as his mother finally turned to walk away and leave him to his first day at school. Both pavements of the town's main street were lined with children in uniforms, their arms half raised, their mouths half opened. The Queen sat in a stone limousine, her right hand raised, a smile fixed on her face like that of a ventriloquist's dummy.

Rain began to fall on the roof of the shed. The sky grew dark outside the window. At the corner of the window-pane a spider sat in the middle of its web. A fly landed on the web and the spider caught it, hurried back to the centre of the web, and ate it.

The centre of the web. The eye of the needle. The winking eye in the plughole of the sink after the water has run out. The small, skinny boy standing in the washroom, pretending fascination as he stares down into the sink at the winking eye. Outside, the noise of his playmates racing round the playground. At the entrance to the washroom the school bully leans against the door, cracking his knuckles.

"Look," says the little boy, desperately trying to buy time (eight more minutes to the end of playtime), "look at the winking eye, isn't it fascinating?"

"Never mind that," smirks the bully, "come out into the playground."

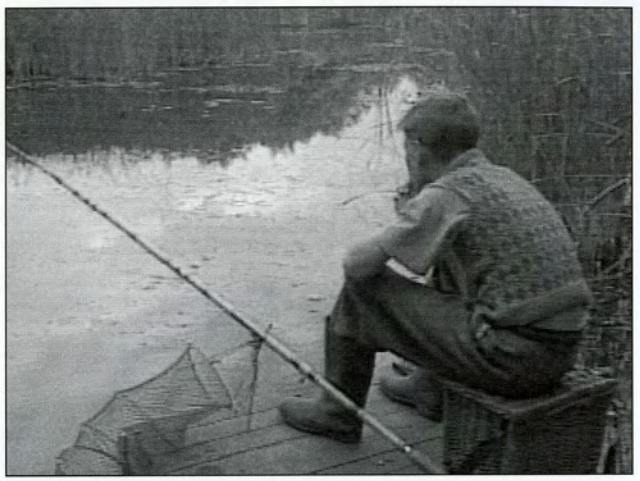
When my father was dying I was summoned to the hospital; I travelled up to Nottingham from London on a fast morning train, spending the whole journey drinking in the Buffet Car with a lecturer from an American University celebrating his return to England; his accent shifted between Mid-West and Yorkshire. My brother met me at the station, and we drove to the hospital joking and laughing; I remember admiring the cassette tape-recorder he had in the front seat of his car. At the hospital my mother met me; she was sedated, her face haggard; but I had seen her suffer a series of crises over the years, many of them involving my father's illnesses, so it wasn't anything new. I was taken in to see my father. His face looked much the same: clean-shaven, thin and hard. All the damage was under the sheets. He showed me his blue left leg; obviously gangrene was setting in; he hoped they would chop it off. The other leg was not much better, and very likely to come off too, I thought, though I didn't say so. The whole of the top half of his body had been operated on the previous week. He was making plans for living on one leg; he had undergone enough operations in his life to finish ten men, and had survived them all.

The doctor arrived and I left the ward thinking that he might even survive this lot. I tried to envisage my mother's future in face of the possibility of twenty-four hour care of a legless cripple with heart disease, for the rest of his life. I returned two hours later with a copy of *Tit-Bits* which I had bought for him; I offered him an *Evening Standard*, but he said "No, I'm not a London man." His mood had changed; he was very talkative, so contrary to his normal nature that it was embarrassing. It took me several minutes to realize that he was talking about seeing figures of naked women on the ceiling. Even allowing for the drugs he must have been under I couldn't believe I was hearing it; my father seeing visions! I knew then that it was the last time I would see him. I nodded.

"See you!" I said.

"Look after yourself." he said.

"And you." I said.



'The water is opaque and dark, you cannot see below the surface, only imagine what might be beneath'

opposite & pages 48-53: *The Fence at Forbes* shooting script

"THE FENCE AT FORBES"

Characters:IAN BREAKWELL (Himself)
YOUNG IAN
PEOPLE IN BUS QUEUE (5)

****

Locations:LONG EATON,DERBYSHIRE:Forbes Pond Night/Dawn/Day.
Terraced Houses Day
Industrial landscape Day
Streets Night
Streets & Bus queue Day
People on park benches Day

LONDON:Anthony Reynolds Gallery for Ian Breakwell's paintings.
Fish in aquaria
People on park benches.

Studio:IAN BREAKWELL to camera (Chroma key) + play back of edited programme (offline)
IAN BREAKWELL hooked on fishing line (ARTIST'S DREAM)

Stills:"EL DESTINO" painting by GOYA
Photographs.

COLOUR TREATMENT: MONOCHROMATIC FOR TOWNSCAPE, MUTED COLOUR FOR DAWN AT LAKESIDE, THROUGH TO FULL COLOUR WHEN FULL DAYLIGHT: REVERSE GRADUALLY BACK TO MONOCHROME FOR END SEQUENCE OF TOWNSCAPE & BUS QUEUE.

OPENING TITLES AND SIG TUNE

LOCATION: EXT FORBES POND DAWN
I.B.V.O.

Forbes Pond is an old railway ballast pit in Long Eaton, Derbyshire: the town in which I grew up.

LOCATION EXT
I.B.V.O.

The fence at Forbes was the boundary, the dividing line between the grey, barren routine of the small industrial town, and the unpredictable, magic world of animals, birds and fish.

LOCATION: EXT + I.B. FISHING PHOTO
I.B.V.O.

Forbes Pond contain~~s~~ed Pike, Bream, Roach and Eels, but I used to fish it for Tench. The Tench is a wary fish, not easy to catch.

GENERAL SHOTS OF FORBES POND.

In the summer, in the evening and the early morning, it moves out of the thick weed ~~which is its daytime habitat~~ to feed. So, to catch Tench you need to fish when the heat of the sun is not on the water: at dawn, at dusk, or through the night.

I.B. TO CAMERA.

When I was a boy I would get up to go fishing at 3a.m
~~When I lived at home, on nights when I was going fishing the~~

I.B. TO CAMERA AGAINST CHROMAKEY B/G BOY CYCLING

LOCATION: NIGHT BOY ACTOR AS I.B. CYCLING THROUGH TOWN TO POND I.B.V.O.

~~following morning I would sleep in my clothes on the settee downstairs so as not to wake anyone when the alarm went off at 3 a.m.~~ After making a flask of coffee I cycled to the pond, the lights still on in the streets of the deserted town.

BOY ON DECKCHAIR BY POND I.B.V.O.

I fished by night and slept by day.

AS ABOVE
I.B.V.O.

I remember a summer night about twenty five years ago sitting on the banks of Forbes Pond, ~~when after fishing for two nights in succession I dozed off just~~ half asleep, half awake in the hour before dawn.

EITHER: I.B TO CAMERA OR C/U'S OF WATER, WEED, BANKS ETC MIST. (NO DOG)
I.B.V.O.

~~before dawn. When I woke I looked to my right and out of the mist drifting~~ over the pond a black dog emerged from below the water, ~~crawled to the edge and climbed the shale embankment to the railway line.~~

~~The ripples settled.~~ The

I.B.V.O.

EITHER: I.B. TO CAMERA OR BOY REACTING TO SOUNDS + EERIE ATMOSPHERE. I.B.V.O.

~~grebes began to dive. Fish broke surface without a sound.~~ The ~~flannel-weed moved and a large V-wave spread across the pond.~~ I heard a twig snap and turned round. A nun stood in the bushes, watching me. She turned and walked away into the mist.

I.B. TO CAMERA

Only once did I fall completely asleep
~~The only other time I fell asleep~~ at Forbes, ~~was two summers later.~~ ~~I arrived just after dusk at my favourite spot beneath the railway embankment, then found that I had forgotten~~ my portable deckchair which I usually had strapped to the crossbar of my bicycle. I began fishing after dark at my favourite spot below the railway embankment. I spread my waterproof cycle-cape on the ground and sat on it. The fish were not feeding and I lay back, ~~on the cape. I fell asleep.~~ I woke sometime later with the sensation of something sitting on my chest. I opened my eyes: it was a big rat. I jumped to my feet but the rat clung on to my clothing until I hit it and it lost its hold and scurried off into the

LOCATION: EXT NIGHT. BOY AS I.B.

~~SHOTS OF~~ FAST REACTIONS. C/U'S END ON BOY'S HORRIFIED EXPRESSION.
I.B.V.O.

C/U OF BOY

reeds together with the many other rats which had gathered around me.

I.B. TO CAMERA
V.O. more

Another night my mate who I was fishing with ~~fell~~ asleep with his head resting on a loaf of bread as a pillow; by the morning the rats had tunnelled through the loaf, leaving just the crust beneath his head like a pillow case.

I.B. TO CAMERA

When I left Derbyshire, eventually to live in London, I sold my fishing tackle and didn't fish for ten years. When I did buy a rod again, the idea of catching inedible fish and relishing their struggles to escape the hook, then returning them to the water only slightly the worse for wear seemed to me now to be as stupid as it must to those who have never fished. So now I only fish for the pot, and I eat every fish I catch.

RECENT PHOTOS OF I.B. FISHING IN IRELAND + COOKING FISH HE HAS CAUGHT.
I.B.V.O.

I. B. TO CAMERA

~~And in any case, to think that fishing is solely to do with catching fish is to miss the point~~. A solitary angler can fish for hours, days, weeks on end in this private world and not catch anything, yet still consider the time well spent.

MIX TO
LOCATION: POND JUST BEFORE DAWN. BOY FISHING. C/U. WATER
I. B. V. O.

In the grey light of dawn, mist wreathes the water and all is quiet. Then comes the dawn chorus and the mist begins to clear. Oily black fins break the surface. ~~The fish are starting to feed.~~

C/U. WATER SURFACE ETC. SHOTS TO TAKE THE AUDIENCE BELOW THE SURFACE GRADUALLY MIX IN SHOTS OF TERRACED HOUSES. SLOWLY LOOSE WATER.
I. B. V. O.

While the sun is not yet risen the water is opaque and dark, you cannot see below the surface, only imagine what might be beneath.

~~And mystery was in short supply in the long Autumn~~

I. B. B.C.U TO CAMERA. EYES OPEN

To this day the principle remains the same: staring hard at surface appearance ~~with retinal eyes~~ simultaneously allows ~~the imagination~~ free rein to imagine, in my mind's eye, what lies behind that surface reality.

EYES CLOSE SLOW MIX BACK TO SHOTS OF TERRACED HOUSES MIX TO DETAILS OF HOUSES SLOW MIX BACK TO I. B. B.C.U. EYES CLOSED SLOW MIX TO WATER SLOW MIX TO B.C.U. FISH I. B. V. O. FADE TO DARK WATER THEN BLACK.

What is behind that door, that wall, those closed curtains? The private eye imagines the private world behind the public face. Every pond has a Loch Ness Monster. The one that got away.

LOCATION: POND DAY BOY PACKING UP HIS FISHING TACKLE
I. B. V. O.

It's 8 a.m. and not a fish caught since first light. Just one missed bite at seven.

The realist would say that the lack of results means a blank, fruitless morning: "You could have had a fish to show for it if you hadn't been daydreaming". But looking at it ~~a different way~~, with a different eye the very blankness may be most fruitful.

I. B'S PAINTING "DAYDREAM"
FADE TO BLACK
GRADUALLY FADE UP SHOT OF POND AND FADE OUT AGAIN. I. B. V. O.

Perhaps the daydreaming is more important.

And half of what we call night is actually day. In summer it's light by 4 a.m. In winter half the day is ~~as~~ dark as night.

I. B'S PAINTING "NIGHT + DAY"
I. B. V. O.

Fishing half the night and sleeping half the day the dividing line between daydream and nightdream becomes blurred.

I. B. TO CAMERA

~~I rarely remember my nightdreams, and those I do recall~~ are hardly worth remembering they are so mundane.

STILL OF I. B. WORKING ON HIS PAINTINGS

I do however spend much of each day, like many other artists and writers, immersed in "~~strange~~", dreamlike images.

CLOSER SHOT OF I. B. WORKING ON PAINTINGS

So maybe my mundane nightdreams are compensating for my ~~daydreams~~.

I. B'S PAINTING: "A NEW ORDER" DAYDREAMING FACES, VARIOUS LOCATIONS C.U.
I. B. V. O.

All those blank, vacant faces we see all around us ~~on trains and buses, on park benches and in station waiting rooms~~: are they daydreaming too?

I. B'S PAINTING: "SLEEPLESS NIGHT".
I. B'S PAINTING: "BEHIND THE WALL". END ON DETAIL OF BLACK GRAPHITE WALL.
I. B. V. O.

Without sleep, without nightdreams, we go mad.

But without daydreams the nightsleep of reason begets monsters.

~~"THE ARTIST'S DREAM" COLLAGE - I. B. HOOKED ON LINE~~.

LOCATION: POND DAY BOY STARTING TO LEAVE. EMERGES THROUGH UNDERGROWTH + THROUGH FENCE.
I. B. V. O.

It's 9 a.m.: the sun shines on the sparkling water and all the pastel colours become bright and clear.

Time to go.

'Time to go'

'At the bus stop the queue of people are waiting to be taken to their day of work'

BOY ON BIKE PEDALLING UP CANAL BRIDGE, DERBY ROAD, LONG EATON.
I.B.V.O.

And as soon as the long hours of concentration come to an end, the tiredness hits as you wearily cycle back home, ~~uphill~~ in the hot sun, sweltering in the sweaters and coat you needed in the shivering dawn.

BOY CYCLING IN STREET. COMES TO BUS STOP. I.B.V.O

BOY PUSHING BIKE

Two miles further on and nearly home. Back in the public world. ~~Its clouded over now and starting to rain.~~ At the bus stop the queue of people are waiting to be taken to ~~work.~~ begin their day of work.

BOY PASSES PEOPLE IN QUEUE
HOLD ON FACES

REPEAT SOME KEY IMAGES FROM THE PROG + IMAGES FROM NEXT PROG (N°3) WITH SOUND/MUSIC TRACK.

CREDITS.

Señor Wences

20.4.99.

Señor Wences, the ventriloquist, has died on his 103rd birthday.

As a little boy, I watched Wences many times on the television. He was a class act. At that time, in the 1950s, the most popular ventriloquial act in England was, paradoxically, on the radio: Peter Brough and his dummy Archie Andrews, who perpetuated the peculiar tradition of radio ventriloquism which had been pioneered in America in the 1940s by Edgar Bergen with his doll Charlie McCarthy.

Neither Bergen nor Brough were technically good ventriloquists, so radio was logically the most suitable medium for them. And though Bergen made films, notably with W.C. Fields in *The Man on the Flying Trapeze*, judicious editing compensated for his moving lips and vibrating larynx.

Brough was even less skilled, and from the back row of the stalls at a Nottingham Empire children's matinee, I could see his lips moving so animatedly that it seemed as if it was Archie who was manipulating him. To distract attention hundreds of tiny Archie Andrews harmonicas were thrown out into the audience. I swallowed mine while sucking it too vigorously and had to be thumped on the back until I retched it up.

Other English ventriloquists, with better techniques than Peter Brough, thrived during the early days of television. I remember two who, in different ways. provocatively turned attention away from the dummy to themselves. Arthur Worsley, 'the mute ventriloquist', never spoke a word but responded with laconic body language to his dummy Charlie Brown's incessant consonant-filled chatter. While the fascination of Bobbie Kimber was in trying to decide whether she was in fact a man in drag, which was made more difficult at that time of short back and sides by the fact that 'her' long, luxuriant hair appeared to be real and not a wig. So, if she was a man then it was a tripartite act: a man speaking through the persona of a woman speaking through a doll.

Though historically linked with magic and illusion, ventriloquism actually contradicts the magician's challenge that 'You know I am deceiving you, but you don't know how'. When the magician saws a woman in half, then restores her to wholeness, we know that he has not done so in reality but only appeared to. The only way we can know how he has deceived us is either by logical deduction or by gaining access to the secret technical specifications of the illusion.

By comparison, not only do we know that it is not the ventriloquist's dummy which is speaking but, in fact, the ventriloquist, we also know how the ventriloquist does it: by projecting his voice without moving his lips. There is no secret, just an acknowledged professional skill to be admired according to the degree of expertise with which it is accomplished. No more mysterious than watching a master carpenter or glass-blower at work.

So what lifts ventriloquism beyond craftsmanship? Well, it needs to be funny, for ventriloquism is essentially a comic act. Then it depends on the ability of the ventriloquist to imbue the dummy with character, so it becomes a double act. The best ventriloquists, like Wences, were so technically skilled that attention focused on the characterful dummy and its funny repartee with its manipulator.

Technically inferior ventriloquists cannot so easily divert the audience's attention away from themselves; they take on a strained, fixed facial expression with staring eyes, similar to their dummy's. If the act is very funny, quick-fire and has a characterful doll, then that will compensate for technical shortcomings, and is certainly preferable to a technically perfect ventriloquist who is not funny, and consequently has a characterless dummy.

As a boy, Sandy Powell was assistant with his mother's touring puppet show: *Lillie Powell's Living Marionettes*. Then they formed a double act: *'Lillie and Sandy'* in which mother and son wore matching dresses and jewellery. Subsequently Sandy went solo and in the 1920s and '30s sold millions of records of his mildly amusing monologues and sentimental parlour songs.

At the height of his popularity, irritated by sharing the bill with technically adept but, in his opinion unfunny ventriloquists, Powell

devised a magnificently shambolic vent act of his own which reduced the genre to farce, with a gradually disintegrating dummy dressed in the same guardsman's uniform as himself, and an ill-concealed assistant in the wings providing the thrown voice in a vain attempt to bolster Sandy's sweating, feverish struggle to divert attention from his preposterous lack of ventriloquial skills.

The almost Dadaist absurdity of Powell's strangulated spluttering and choking was still famous in the 1960s when I was an art student, and was just one of many examples from different forms of theatre other than the scripted play which have influenced me from then until now. Then, at Derby College of Art, I did a lot of paintings, drawings and prints of stylised figures in theatrical interiors, influenced by everything from ice-panto to variety shows, Punch and Judy and seaside concerts, and also a series of paintings and drawings done at ballet rehearsals in Germany as an exchange student. Sometimes I put carved, ornate frames around the pictures in direct reference to the proscenium arch.

Derby College of Art had a lecture theatre with a proscenium arch stage, on which, with other students, I did an evening of performances for an audience of visiting Germans, just throwing the separate performances together like a string of music hall acts, not like conventional theatre but also not like Happenings, which I hadn't yet heard of. I appeared first as *The Reincarnation of Frankie Half-Pint Jaxon* (an obscure American 1930s bandleader and lewd singer) in a see-through polythene suit and a gas mask, with big clapperboards like snowshoes strapped to my feet, with which I clattered about the stage, whirling round and round to the sound of amplified tapes of my voice and slides projected onto me and the backdrop. Then I did a double vent act with fellow student, Kevin Coyne; I was the ventriloquist and he was the live dummy sitting on my knee as we conducted an inane dialogue.

In those distant days of black and white television, Sandy Powell was not alone in his demolition of the skillful conventions of ventriloquism. Tommy Cooper did a chaotic routine on board a stage set of a violently rolling cruiseship, with ventriloquist and doll being hurled from side to side as seawater gushed through the portholes. Maybe it's symptomatic that whereas I watched Señor Wences, the master craftsman who was also funny, with respect and admiration, it was Sandy Powell and Tommy Cooper's subversion of the craft which was personally inspirational.

Wences, however, was technically in a different league. Not only could you not see his lips or adam's apple moving even in television close-up, but he could throw his voice unerringly while smoking a cigarette, drinking water, or even juggling. Whereas other ventriloquists used wooden dummies who sat on their knee, Wences didn't use conventional dolls at all. He did early in his career, but when his doll, Pedro, was decapitated in a car crash, Wences decided to work with just the disembodied head in a box, which gave great scope for modulation of the thrown voice as the box was slowly or rapidly opened or closed.

But it was Wences's other creation, the Little Girl, which made him famous. The Little Girl was Wences's hand, which he transformed onstage into an animated face by applying lipstick to the cleft between his thumb and forefinger, before painting two eyes onto his second finger. Then he and the Little Girl would engage in conversation, punctuated by her habit of sticking out her very long tongue, which I presume Wences managed by some kind of prosthetic extension to one of his other fingers. That tongue was an unnerving thing: sometimes it would stick out rudely, then lick extravagantly around the lips, or hang down at full length in a manner reminiscent of the side-effects of presenile dementia drugs. The Little Girl had, though probably unintentionally, a suggestive element of auto-eroticism: Lady Five Fingers. Apparently some comedian did launch an obscene version of the act, but Wences successfully sued.

Yet, though Wences created a singular performance which did not depend on a miniaturised wooden adult sitting on his knee, this was only unusual within the relatively recent conventions of stage vent acts. Historically, ventriloquism had for centuries employed the phenomenon of throwing the human voice from a distance, either into inanimate objects or disembodied space. And today, in every city throughout the world, there are unselfconscious people holding ventriloquial conversations with themselves, without the need for either dummies or even mobile phones for props, and sublimely indifferent to any effort to disguise lip and larynx movements.

19.11.1986 17.02 train from Victoria to East Croydon.

The home going commuters sit shoulder to shoulder and silent, hiding behind their evening newspapers; except for a man who stares down at his fingers tapping the briefcase on his knee as he quietly converses with himself:
"What do you do at weekends?"
"Not a lot."
"Dig the garden? Mow the lawn? Prune the roses?"
"At this time of year?"
"So what do you do?"
"Oh, you know, a bit of this, a bit of that."
"A bit of which, a bit of what? A round of golf? Walk the dog? A pint and a game of darts?"
"I don't go out much. Not at all in fact."
"Stay at home then? Video? Cooking? Carpetbowls?"
"No."
"An armchair man eh? Pipe, slippers and the TV Times?"
"l don't have a television."
"No television? Well, well, still a radio devotee, there's not too many of those nowadays."
"I don't have a radio."
"No radio even! A large scotch and a good book is it?"
"I don't drink much, and I hardly read at all."
"Well, what then? Patience?"
"No."
"Crosswords?"
"No."
"Solitaire?"
"No."
"So what do you do?"
"I sit and think."
"Think? Think? All weekend? And what do you do when you stop thinking?"
"I talk to myself."
"?"
"I talk to myself. After l've thought things out I converse with myself. Discuss, debate. Sometimes I disagree with myself and argue."
"I don't believe you."

3.6.1999

The ventriloquist Peter Brough has died. The newspaper obituary, headlined 'The voice of Archie Andrews', features a picture of the popeyed, grinning Archie with the dapper Brough, whose smooth smile is unremarkable except for the two upper front teeth being diagonally filed down to create an inverted V-shaped gap in order to improve his dodgy voice-throwing technique. The obit says a son and daughter survive him. Yet surely Archie, unless he has been cremated, survives him too? Inanimate, in a box perhaps, but then so is Brough, who Archie will outlast, wood being more enduring than flesh.

21.3.2001

The former film star, Anthony Steel, died today, and this reminds me of how, some years ago, a perfectly respectable middle-aged single woman called Beryl suggested to me that I should, as I interpreted it, pimp for her, and how, with an embarrassed chuckle I said I didn't think I was the right person for the task. "Oh, but you are," said Beryl "have another macaroon." And I wished I'd never mentioned my habit of whiling away the time in supermarket queues by guessing the personal circumstances and lifestyle of the people in front of me at the checkout till by the contents of their trolleys and baskets.

Those with loaded trolleys didn't interest Beryl, because they were shopping for the family. It was the mature basket men, almost certainly single, divorced or widowed, who intrigued her, and the plan she outlined was that once I had identified an eligible candidate she would emerge from where she'd been lurking behind the Home Baking shelves, take my place in the queue, and chat him up. Which is where, eventually, Steel entered the frame.

Anthony Steel and Dirk Bogarde were the highest paid stars in the 1950s British film industry boom. Impossibly handsome and debonair, Steel was marketed by the Rank Organisation as a cinema heart throb to rival the big American stars. He was the stiff upper-lipped hero of numerous retrospective war films, and I remember seeing him in *Storm Over the Nile* at the Long Eaton Empire, where his genteel vocal tones were intercut with alien proletarian voices from the darkness of the stalls, loudly declaiming "Get yerands off yuh dutty sod!" and "Ev yuh gorany fags left Les?"

At that time there were two cinemas in LE, the other being the Palace which, though a nondescript barn of a place, was palatial compared to the Empire, which was the archetypal fleapit. Walls shiny with tar from countless cigarettes, moth-eaten carpets, lumpy seats, the back row doubles for couples stained with accretions of bodily fluids. But, when the houselights went down, darkness hid all this, and as the dusty ruched curtains swished apart and the screen filled with coloured light there was still, always, that magical moment of anticipation. No matter what the film, which was usually unmemorable, the standard Hollywood and Rank circuit fare.

Occasionally an oddity slipped through this circuit net, such as *Incident At Owl Creek*, based on an Ambrose Bierce short story, or the weird *Carnival of Souls*, in which everything - acting, camerawork and music - appeared to have been done under the influence of some trance-inducing drug. And on one fabled occasion audience interaction with the movie was absolute when, at the height of the Teddy Boy era, the Empire foolishly premiered *Rock Around the Clock* on Bonfire Night. Bangers punctuated the soundtrack, snow fountains cascaded in the aisles, and the film ended abruptly when a five bob rocket went straight through the lead actor's open mouth.

These rare exceptions aside, you usually went to the Empire or the Palace on a weekly basis, to see whatever film was on, the limit of knowledge being whether it was a Western, a comedy or a musical, and who starred in it. There were no film reviews in the *Long Eaton Advertiser*, and no indication of the director who made the film. Hollywood made it, Rank made it. That authorial awareness had to wait a few years until the mid-1960s at Derby College of Art when a film society was formed and *The Seventh Seal* was screened, preceded by a title: 'A film by Ingmar Bergman', and I realised that films could be personal creative statements. Film-makers made films, just as authors wrote novels and artists painted pictures.

The degree to which my childhood and adolescence was indelibly etched by the ethos of assembly-line Hollywood product was impressed on me recently when I was in the Alabama Hills, which are nowhere near Alabama but, in fact, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in California, 200 miles north of LA, close enough for them to be repeatedly used by Hollywood as cheap locations for B-movie Westerns and serials. The bizarrely organic formations of wind and sand blasted rocks, glowing amber in the dazzling light of a desert sun, were as opposite a landscape to the Trent Valley flatland surrounding LE as one could conceive, and yet just as reassuringly familiar, for they were the alternative projected landscape which I regularly entered when I stepped through the muffled doors of the Empire or the Palace.

The hills were now deserted as I wandered through them, but I expected smoke signals to rise into the sky, and Hopalong Cassidy or the Lone Ranger to come galloping around a rock outcrop at any

minute. Thus, as the setting for so many formulaic 'oaters', this extraordinary landscape, reminiscent of the paintings of Yves Tanguy and Max Ernst, was rendered banal by association, so that imaginative film-makers, who could have creatively exploited its surreal geological configurations, instead avoided its downgraded familiarity. Now, as the passage of time has eroded not just the rocks but also all those Saturday matinee films, the Alabama Hills have once again, tentatively, begun to reappear in movies, most recently *Gladiator*. Still, to a child in LE in the 1950s those hills were simultaneously exotic and close to home, for it was approximations of their shapes which I moulded out of back-garden soil and water to provide the 'sets' for my painted lead Cowboys and Indians.

Meanwhile, while I and the other punters at the Empire were half-heartedly watching *Storm Over the Nile*, Anthony Steel's life had taken a dramatic turn off screen. He had broken his contract with Rank and hot-footed it to Hollywood in pursuit of the Swedish actress Anita Ekberg. The word voluptuous was invented for Ekberg, and although it was never the kind of film which would play the Long Eaton Empire, when one saw magazine photographs of her dancing in the Trevi fountain in *La Dolce Vita*, we in LE thought who can blame him? Especially when the *Sunday Pictorial* published a paparazzi photo-feature of the newly wed Anthony and Anita in a series of frenzied clinches by the side of their LA swimming pool, which the Pictorial, being a family newspaper, did not explicitly show but clearly implied that they were shagging themselves stupid.

But it was the formidable Ekberg who had the stamina for the long haul. Steel corpsed in Hollywood, and when the marriage ended in drunken acrimony Rank didn't want to know when he returned to England with his tail between his legs.

From then on it was all downhill, and finally Steel was to end up a forgotten recluse living behind the permanently locked door of sordid sheltered accommodation in Northolt, West London, which is one of the few districts in the capital city to rival Long Eaton as nowheresville.

In the 1980s however, Steel was still doing provincial stage tours, and when, one day, I found myself standing behind him in a London supermarket queue, I couldn't help studying him, and his shopping basket. He was, though raddled, still handsome but silver haired and the pallor of his face had been long absent from California sun. And his basket was a perfect reflection of his hair and face, for everything in it was white. White bread, skimmed milk, rice, a fillet of haddock, plain yoghurt, Bath Oliver biscuits, a portion of Brie and a packet of meringues. The shopping of a single man of some discernment but limited means, who lived alone and whose persona, mirrored in his food, was of someone who had been drained of colour, as if vampirised. The tempestuous years with the voracious Ekberg must have taken their toll. I wondered whether Beryl might potentially be the person to put some blood back in his veins and colour into his life, but she wasn't there, and then neither was he as he paid his bill and exited left out of the store with the sadly dignified gait of the old actor.

And Beryl? I've not seen nor heard from her in years. Perhaps one day in her local supermarket, having judiciously assessed his basket, she met her dream man. I hope so.

References and Sources

Frontispiece	*The Elusive State of Happiness* Collage and photograph on card by Ian Breakwell, 1979. Collection of the Arts Council of England 'A discarded photograph found outside a passport photo-booth in Long Eaton, surrounded by headlines from the local newspaper, the *Long Eaton Advertiser'*
pages 7-16	Facsimile of the shooting script of *Buried Alive*, programme 1 of Ian Breakwell's five part television series; with annotations by Anna Ridley *Annalogue* production for Channel 4 1988
pages 17-23	Stills from *Buried Alive* *Annalogue* production for Channel 4 1988
page 26	Jackie Gleason as Minnesota Fats in *The Hustler* Directed Robert Rossen 1961
pages 37,38	Facsimile pages from *Ian Breakwell's Diary* Photomontage with typewritten text
pages 39,40,42	Stills from *Growth*, programme 10 of the 21 part television series *Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary* *Annalogue* production for Channel 4 1984
pages 47-53	Facsimile of the shooting script of *The Fence at Forbes*, programme 2 of Ian Breakwell's television series *Public Face Private Eye*; with annotations by Anna Ridley *Annalogue* production for Channel 4 1988
pages 46,52	Stills from *The Fence at Forbes* *Annalogue* production for Channel 4 1988
page 68	Still from *Buried Alive* *Annalogue* production for Channel 4 1988

'It was never my intention to be a professional conjurer, instead I became an artist and writer'

Ian Breakwell was born in Derby in 1943 and brought up in Long Eaton. He studied painting and lithography at Derby College of Art from 1961 to 1965. Since then, he has become one of the most renowned multi-media artists in the UK.

He exhibits at Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London, and his artworks are in many public collections, including the Tate Gallery. His celebrated *Diaries* have been published several times, and serialised for television and radio. His illustrated short fictions, *The Artists Dream*, and the two anthologies he co-edited with Paul Hammond, *Seeing in the Dark* and *Brought to Book* received much press acclaim.

This volume *Derby Days* is the result of a collaboration between Ian Breakwell and the Research Group for Artists Publications during 2001. RGAP was formed by Martin Rogers in 1994 at the School of Art and Design, University of Derby, and publishes artists' books/publications/editions/multiples, and works with other centres in the UK and abroad, setting up collaborative projects, publications, exhibitions and conferences. RGAP has published editions by composers, writers, sound and performance artists, as well as visual artists, and works have been featured in numerous exhibitions related to artists' books and publications.

Acknowledgements

Derby Days has been compiled and edited by Ian Breakwell and Martin Rogers. Thanks are also due to Tony Hill, Chloë Brown, Anna Ridley, and Felicity Sparrow for their assistance in the production of this book.

The Research Group for Artists Publications is supported by the University of Derby.

Photographs:
pp 17,18,19,20,21,22,23,40,42,46,52,68 Annalogue productions; p 26 British Film Institute Stills, Posters, and Designs; pp 54,61 The Guardian.

The following texts/images were previously published as follows:
pp 24-28 'The Fat Man Within' *Sight and Sound* June 1994 Vol. 14 Issue 6
p 35 *Brought to Book* edited by Ian Breakwell and Paul Hammond Penguin 1994
p 36 *Ian Breakwell's Diary 1964-1985* Pluto Press 1986

Derby Days is published in an edition of 1000 copies

Ian Breakwell & RGAP 2001

¥7.50