

**FROM VISUAL EDUCATION TO 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LITERACY:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S POST-  
WAR FILM PRODUCTION EXPERIMENT AND ITS  
RELEVANCE TO RECENT FILM EDUCATION  
STRATEGIES.**

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**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2014**



## Abstract

In 1943 the Ministry of Education took the decision to sponsor the production of an experimental programme of nonfiction films specifically to be used as ‘instructional’ teaching aids in the Secondary classroom. The intervention was a development of pre-war efforts on the part of a number of organisations from the teaching and cultural sectors to realise the value of ‘educational’ film, in response to recognition of the medium’s social and cultural influence. This historical example demonstrates that government recognition of film as an educational resource has been achieved in the past. However, in 2012, the British Film Institute (BFI) launched a new education plan, at the centre of which was the aim to advocate the value of film education to Government (British Film Institute, 2012c). This aim had been the focus of film education initiatives in the previous decade without resolution, for example in the national strategy *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009). My research analyses the Ministry of Education’s production experiment in order to discover whether the findings can inform current film education strategies and offer an insight into why the struggle for government recognition of film education still remains.

This research combines film theory, archival research and education histories in order to contextualise the films within the particular historical moment of their production. I apply a pragmatic approach to the postmodern and poststructural theories of for example, Nichols (1991), Plantinga (1997), Renov (1993) and Winston (1995) in my textual analysis of the 16 films, sourced from the British Film Institute National Archive. The analysis of form and style informs my

discussion of concepts of realism, ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’ in relation to the films and the social and political ideologies conveyed through the texts. I also analyse contemporary documentation sourced from The National Archives in order to identify the objectives, the pedagogical rationale and the ideological project motivating the Ministry’s experiment as a whole and evaluate its outcomes.

I argue that the methodology of the Ministry of Education experiment was flawed so that no definitive conclusions were drawn regarding the educational ‘value’ of film. Furthermore, the ‘experiment’ was turned to political purpose so that the ideological project informing and conveyed through the filmic discourse actually worked to impose the social stratification inherent within the post-war tripartite education system. I also argue that, due in part to technological advances which have removed the need for state sponsorship of educational film production, government recognition is now unnecessary, and carries the risk of ideological and political incentives overcoming the pedagogical objectives of ‘21<sup>st</sup> century literacy’. I make the recommendation that film education initiatives should exist outside of political agendas and instead build links with teacher training institutions in order to ensure the driving force behind its practical application is pedagogical rather than political.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to:

Professor Christine Hall and Professor Pat Thomson;

Patrick Russell and the Non-Fiction curatorial team at the British Film Institute for advice and support, in particular Sonia Genaitay for assistance and guidance in researching and viewing the films;

Mark Reid and Georgia Korossi at the BFI;

Megan McCooley, Yorkshire Film Archive;

Kate North.



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## **Introduction**

This study arises from an interest in debates about film and education that have significantly influenced my own work and career. I first started working in film archives in 2000, when I was appointed as Production Office Assistant in the Commercial Access department of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) Film and Video Archive. My role comprised providing research support and access to footage to commercial production companies, and negotiating license agreements for broadcast. In the production sector there was a wealth of freelance and in-house researchers with high levels of expertise in sourcing archive footage and shaping television and film productions in response to the available material located in the collections. However, there were also a number of producers who assigned the task of locating relevant footage to researchers who were unfamiliar with the role and remit of a film archive. These researchers would call me to ask, “do you have any footage of the war?” and “can you email it to me?” With approximately 120 million feet of original film, as well as video tape material, dating from the ‘Boer War’ of the 1890s until the present day, the answer to the first query was always “yes”, but the question required qualification. The second question was more problematic and required some knowledge of the technical aspects of the work of a film archive. The IWM collection was held on a range of formats, from 35mm nitrate to 9.5mm, ‘amateur’ footage, ‘obsolete’ video tape formats such as U-Matic and, increasingly, digital video material. With such a high volume of footage, the task of transferring from potentially fragile or

flammable film onto digital tape, before encoding into formats such as MPEG to enable emailing the material, was beyond the scope of the Archive and certainly beyond its budget. While it was my role to support these researchers, I was struck by the lack of awareness of some clients regarding the content of the collection and the process of acquiring copies for broadcast. I reasoned that if production researchers, whose job it was to source archive footage, sometimes had little understanding of the work of the archives, then this issue must extend beyond the industry into the wider public. I decided that education was the key to disseminating our work and raising greater awareness of the role of the film archives.

Having re-trained as a Further Education teacher and spent a year working in an FE college, I took a job as Education Development Officer at the Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA). The purpose of my role was to develop an education strategy that would enable a relatively small organisation to engage with learners of all levels, in both formal and informal education, across a region that was home to five million people. The role had been established by the Archive and funded by the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward, because the Director and Board of Trustees believed there was a demand for access to the collections from the education sector. However, there was little evidence for this belief and no strategic plan for how this might be achieved with limited resources.

After two years of running pilot projects, I developed the Archive's *Learning and Access Strategy* and set about fulfilling its aims for the following four years.

Since the YFA is a charitable organisation and I had made the policy decision that education should be free at the point of access, much of my time was spent sourcing funding for the Archive's education and outreach work. As a result, this work was often project-based and dependent not only on the YFA's strategic concerns, but also those of the funding organisations, and, more importantly, the learning objectives of the education institutions and individuals with whom I worked. At the beginning, I was the only staff member working within education and, although an Education Officer was appointed four years later, the size of the potential audience coupled with the logistical constraints of a 40 hour week, meant that working in partnership with other organisations was essential to ensuring I could deliver programmes of work effectively. This partnership work brought me into contact with a vast number of teachers, education officers, archivists, students, filmmakers, academics, outreach workers and community groups, all with the same belief as my own: that film could and should be an essential part of education.

However, my experience of partnership working soon taught me that, although there was a great deal of film education activity, there was no national policy that would enable us in any formal capacity to embed film within the National Curriculum. Excellent work was being carried out but, without support from government in terms of both policy and consistent funding streams, this work was unsustainable and disparate. Although film education practitioners took pains to build networks, and share good practice and information, the project-based nature of delivery meant that we faced difficulties in continuing with the work once the

specific project activity was complete. Evaluations were written, shared and at times, led to further project-funding, but with differing funding priorities and reporting mechanisms, it was difficult to sustain good practice in the long term.

I was aware, of course, of the significant attempts at embedding film/media into formal, curriculum education on a national scale that had been made during my own career - for example, the UK Film Council-funded *21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Strategy* (UK Film Council, 2009) that aimed to evaluate selected film education work and provide recommendations of good practice in order to influence government agendas. However, as I researched further into the history of these interventions and attempts to develop a coherent national film education policy supported by sustainable funding streams, I became increasingly conscious of the fact that the problems and issues had been rehearsed and repeated many times over the years. In the inter-war years, for example, concerns articulated by the National Council of Public Morals, that cinema was potentially harmful to society, led to the establishing of the Cinema Commission of Enquiry which reported in 1925 on the 'value' of film to education. The Report referenced the potential of the medium to contribute to education but left open any precise definition of what this contribution might be (Low, 1971).

Later documents have endeavoured to articulate this contribution. At the time of writing, for example, the British Film Institute (BFI) is working on a new education initiative, incorporated within the organisation's strategic development plan, *Film Forever: Supporting UK Film* (British Film Institute, 2012c). The



education plans outlined in *Film Forever* (British Film Institute, 2012c) were published after consultation with a wide cross-section of organisations and individuals across the UK involved in delivering moving image media education activity and strategy. The plan was developed partly as a result of the BFI's shift in remit: since the dissolution of the UK Film Council in 2011, the BFI's role combined its former responsibilities for the National Archive, programming, distribution, film festivals and publishing activities with investment of Lottery funding across a range of industry sectors, as well as education (British Film Institute, 2012c). The education offer comprises a three-tiered approach. The first tier will be an online platform hosting moving image material and accompanying resources to support teaching and learning. The second tier is described as an "integrated film education programme" which aims to deliver education activities across the UK, and the third tier is a programme of Youth Film Academies designed to teach practical filmmaking (British Film Institute, 2012a). The Academy is aimed at young people aged 16-19 and in 2013 the Department for Education (DfE) committed to supporting the programme with investment of £1million per year over three years. The online platform and associated activity programme is co-ordinated by a newly established organisation, Film Nation UK, in partnership with more than 100 regional and national partners (British Film Institute, 2013a; Film Nation UK, 2013). The online resource and activity is aimed at young people aged 5-19 and will be made available to all 26,700 schools in the UK. The project involves working with a large number of delivery partners with a broad and strategic reach into education, including the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) (Film Nation UK, 2013). In addition, Film Nation UK has a

range of funding partners to support the work. These include the Welsh Government, the Northern Ireland Government's Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Isle of Man Government as well as the BFI itself, the Film Agency for Wales and Northern Ireland Screen (Film Nation UK, 2013). The scope of the programme and involvement of established delivery, as well as funding, partners represents an exciting and innovative new initiative in the BFI's history. However, one of the central aims of this current education offer to "make the case to Government in Westminster and in the devolved UK administrations for film education to be more firmly embedded in curricula" (British Film Institute, 2012c, p.12) echoes the strategic aims of film education initiatives that stretch back over many years.

The Film Appreciation Department of the British Film Institute was established in 1950, and although this department incorporated educational activity such as conferences and summer schools, the BFI's work in developing resources for the classroom began in earnest with the appointment of Cary Bazalgette in 1979 (Bazalgette, 2010). The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 provided an opportunity for the BFI to make the case for the relevance of film/media to education. The case was made with a specific focus on primary schools. After issuing a statement to, amongst others, the Government's working party for English, the case that film and television should receive some critical attention within schools received support from the Secretary of State for Education (Bazalgette, 2010). However, the impact of this support was in no way definitive and media education practitioners felt the need to continue their

advocacy throughout the 1990s. This advocacy involved disparate arguments: that media education is an adjunct to English; that media education can protect children from ‘harmful effects’; that film education offered an avenue for creative practice. The “discordant clamour” created by the advocates of these positions resulted in few advances and little recognition within the Government’s formal education agenda (Bazalgette, 2010, p.21). Nevertheless, the BFI and others, such as Film Education, established in 1985, which, until its recent closure, provided free resources for teachers to support the study of film, did make significant progress in terms of reaching schools, developing film/media resources for the classroom and building support and networks for teachers and media/education practitioners. However, the central issue, of achieving Government recognition of the role of moving image media in education, outside of the established Film and Media Studies GCSE and A Level curricula, was still unresolved.

In 1999, the BFI publication *Making Movies Matter*, a report from the Film Education Working Group, called for “a new attitude towards the moving image amongst education policy-makers. They should recognise that critical and creative moving image skills will be a key element of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (British Film Institute, 1999, p.2). This report can be seen as marking the start of renewed efforts to establish a formal relationship between moving image media and the curriculum. There were to be many further attempts to achieve this aim following in its wake. *The Charter for Media Literacy*, published in 2005, aimed to raise awareness of, and advocate for, ‘media literacy’, defined as, “access to digital

technologies – to be digitally fluent – but to be confident in understanding them, expressing themselves creatively and communicating their ideas productively through them” (Media Literacy Task Force, 2005, p.1). The Media Literacy Task Force was set up with the support of Tessa Jowell MP, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in the Labour Government and by July 2009, the *Charter* had received 211 organisational and individual signatories expressing support and been adopted in 19 additional countries outside of the UK. The *Charter* advocated for “critical understanding” of moving image media that would inform creative production and be informed by access to a greater diversity of media content (Media Literacy Task Force, 2005, p.1). The aim was to enable increased “enjoyment, understanding and exploration of the media” (Media Literacy Task Force, 2005, p.3) and, while functioning as more of a manifesto than rigid guidelines for practitioners, the document and number of signatories demonstrated the level of support for ‘media literacy’. It also highlighted the potential educational and wider social benefits of a critical understanding of media texts.

A few years later, Scottish Screen commissioned research into the concept and ‘benefits’ of media literacy, and the summary report, entitled *Impacts of Moving Image Education* (Bazalgette, 2009), further explored the range of terms used to describe practice. Terminology circulating amongst practitioners, such as ‘media education’, ‘moving image education’ and ‘moving image media literacy’, were each found to carry its own distinct but overlapping definition, the educational outcomes of which could be encompassed by the term, ‘media literacy’ as defined

by the *Charter* in 2005. The report's author, Cary Bazalgette, pointed to the issue that while these practices "may have agreed definitions at a high level of generality, [they] carry different emphases depending on national contexts, educational philosophies, levels of confidence, training and resources, and the priorities of the organisations that drive them forward" (Bazalgette, 2009, p.4). Bazalgette also argued that evidence was needed to demonstrate the benefits of "moving image education", her preferred term, and that the Scottish Screen research functioned as the initial stage of identifying gaps in the available evidence and making recommendations for how these might be redressed (Bazalgette, 2009, p.3). This call for evidence had in fact been preceded just a year before by the recommendations outlined in *Moving Literacy On* (Marsh and Bearne, 2008), an evaluation of the BFI's Lead Practitioner Scheme which aimed to establish expertise in media literacy across all Local Authorities in England. The report's authors argued for the inclusion of media literacy within "mainstream literacy practice" (Marsh and Bearne, 2008, p.2) in parallel with Bazalgette's recommendation that it be recognised as an essential aspect of "modern literacy" and embedded within the English curriculum (Bazalgette, 2009, p.5). Both reports made it clear that the two elements of literacy should remain distinct, but that a combined approach was recommended so that one might inform and build upon the other. Alongside the need for the inclusion of media literacy within the curriculum, Marsh and Bearne (2008) also called for national policy and for funding to be made available by the Department for Schools, Children and Families (DCSF) in order to support and enhance current, often disparate, practice.

In 2009, 10 years after the BFI's call for recognition from "education policy-makers" expressed in *Making Movies Matter* (British Film institute, 1999, p.2), a new initiative was launched with the intention of addressing some of the challenges raised in *Moving Literacy On* (Marsh and Bearne, 2008) and *Impacts of Moving Image Education* (Bazalgette, 2009). The initiative aimed to act on the recommendations for sustained evaluation, the generation of evidence and the need for advocacy to achieve government recognition of the value of media literacy. *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy: A Strategy for Film Education Across the UK* was funded, and published, by the UK Film Council and launched in 2009. In a shift from the previously advocated 'media literacy', the *Strategy* now called for 'film education', although the definition and overall aims ran in parallel. Film education was defined as "making film more accessible to children and young people for their enjoyment, as a means of understanding the world and as a medium of self-expression" (UK Film Council, 2009). The initiative aimed to address the lack of "coherence and consistency" in young people's experience of film education, in response to the increase in the role of audio-visual media as a means of communication and its relevance to business. The '3Cs' originally advocated by the *Charter for Media Literacy* (Media Literacy Task Force, 2005) were incorporated as the central thematic strands of the *Strategy* in order to define the theoretical and practical concerns of film education (UK Film Council, 2009). The '3Cs' were defined as,

Cultural Access: The opportunity to choose from a broad range of films and so get a better understanding of our and other people's culture, way of life and history.

Critical Understanding: the confidence to look behind the surface of the screen, to understand a film's intentions, techniques and qualities.

Creative Activity: the opportunity to make film and moving image, to have some understanding of the technical and creative process that allows the effective expression of a story, a mood or an idea (UK Film Council, 2009).

The intention was to build on these broadly theoretical statements to develop best practice and develop a national strategy through the evaluation of a number of pilot projects, funded through the initiative, and to raise the profile of film education on UK, and international, government policy agendas (UK Film Council, 2009). The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Leadership Group, comprising representatives of BFI Education, Film Club, First Light, Skillset and Film Education worked in partnership with Regional Screen Agencies and under the overall guidance of the UK Film Council to expand on the broad strategic aims of the document and develop criteria for pilot projects. In addition, the Leadership Group worked to develop detailed evaluation schema to ensure that each of the programmes of work would be able to demonstrate key objectives that fell within the '3Cs'. These objectives included access to diverse moving image media, development of critical approaches, professional development for practitioners and the opportunity for creative practice (UK Film Council, 2009). Some clarification is required here regarding the definition of 'creative practice'. As initial Project Manager of one of the pilot projects, delivered by the Yorkshire Film Archive, it was made clear to us that 'creative practice' referred solely to making films. *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009) therefore appeared to be aimed at teaching *about*, rather than *through* film and held links

with the production industry at its core. Furthermore, the budgetary requirements of each project were assessed according to reach and were dependent on the numbers of school pupils engaged in the pilots. The aims of *21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* therefore hinged on demonstrating not only the ‘value’ of film to education, but that this ‘value’ could be quantified in monetary terms and impact on the future of the British film production industry.

The development, delivery and evaluation of the pilot projects took over two years and in 2011, an analysis of *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009) and associated pilot programmes of work was published in an editorial of the Media Education Association’s online journal, *POV. Battling over 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (Bazalgette and Wall, 2011) summarised the findings of the six pilot projects and outlined the positive outcomes as well as some of the issues raised throughout the course of the projects’ delivery and evaluation. Bazalgette and Wall (2011) set the findings within the context of the organisational changes which had recently taken place, referencing the structure and remit of the UK Film Council (UKFC) and its ultimate closure in 2011. The UKFC had been established in 2000 and, although the organisation had overall responsibility for film education, a number of other organisations were established which each had some responsibility for its coordination and development. There was no definitive strategy for this work and, as a result, the nine Regional Screen Agencies (RSAs) established to co-ordinate activity and award funding in their particular area varied greatly and demonstrated disparate working practices. The result was a lack of cohesion across the regions and across individual practitioners



within those regions (Bazalgette and Wall, 2011). When the UKFC was closed and the majority of the RSAs broken up, activity, such as Lottery funding for project work, continued but was dispersed across separate organisations. The newly established Creative England and the BFI were now required to fill the gap left by the closure of the UKFC and, with school expenditure and Continuing Professional Development reduced, increasing numbers of public and private organisations and enterprises had to compete for limited funding to continue any kind of film education activity. Within this organisational context, the *POV* editorial made some encouraging comments regarding the findings of *21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy*, but this was limited to a few brief statements. Bazalgette and Wall (2011) welcomed the creation of evidence to support film education that resulted from the pilot projects, and the range of contexts within which the work took place, which demonstrated a broad application of film to the curriculum and to wider educational settings outside of the formal classroom. However, the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* pilot projects also demonstrated insufficient evaluation that would enable analysis of prior learning and the long term impacts of film education work; an uncoordinated approach to the ‘3Cs’ so that the three elements were not cohesive; and a lack of understanding from teachers regarding the difference between learning *about* film and learning *through* film. The authors cited “under-funding” as the root cause of these difficulties (Bazalgette and Wall, 2011).

The argument had become circular. Funding was needed to carry out sufficiently evaluated activity, yet the evaluation was the central means for demonstrating

‘value’ and therefore leveraging public expenditure for activity. The result of *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009) was a positive step towards breaking this cycle through the available information generated by project activity, but it did not produce conclusive progress in establishing film education as an essential aspect of literacy within the 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum.

The following year, a report commissioned by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Strategy Office was also published on the findings of the initiative. *Integrating Film Into Education – Advocacy Report* (Available Light Advisory, 2012) expressed ten “key messages” (ibid, p.1) based on the evaluation reports from each of the pilot projects. The report’s authors argued that the evaluation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy projects demonstrated the capacity of film education to raise standards for both teachers and pupils, and that improvements were noted in the behaviour and attainment of young people engaged in the projects. These statements went some way to demonstrating the ‘value’ of film education which the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Strategy aimed to advocate. The *Advocacy Report* argued this ‘value’ according to the proportionately small amount of investment that was required from central funds in order to meet the educational objectives outlined by the Government, as detailed in key message number 10: “Film can help Government achieve its education objectives. Findings and successes of Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy can help shape a national plan for film education that is strategic and cost effective” (Available Light Advisory, 2012, p.13).

This advocacy had become even more significant during the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy programme. The UK Film Council, and consequently the *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009) strategy, was formed under the Labour Government which had come to power in 1997, and in 2010 the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition which was formed after the General Election took over leadership of the British Government. The UK Film Council, along with many other ‘quangos’ was scrapped in 2011, leaving the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Leadership Group without a direct line to political power. The need for government recognition may therefore have been heightened by the new Government’s lack of familiarity with the initiative and the fact that the Coalition clearly did not support the UKFC as an organisation.

In response to comments made at feedback sessions following the publication of the *Advocacy Report* (Available Light Advisory, 2012), the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Strategy Office made an attempt to address the uncertainties felt by education practitioners over the term ‘film education’. The Office held a seminar in April 2012 during which practitioners discussed how ‘film education’ could best be articulated to those working in the sector, as well as stakeholders in the wider education and policy context. Given the timing of events, the seminar may also have been a response to a lack of understanding on the part of the Coalition, the dissolution of the UKFC and recognition of the importance of clarity in order to achieve Government support. Even at this point, the terminology was still causing debate and the aim to define ‘film education’ immediately drew criticism. The published result of these discussions, *Re/Defining Film Education: Notes*

*towards a definition of film education* (Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy, 2012) concluded that the term ‘moving image media’ was preferred over ‘film’ to denote the material upon which practice was based. Further discussions centred on establishing a USP (Unique Selling Point) for moving image education, which was expressed through the acronym “REAL”, defined as “relevance, engagement, attainment, literacy” (Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy, 2012, p.9). The next point for clarification was to ascertain exactly what ‘moving image education’ comprised and participants offered an expansion of the ‘3Cs’ in order that the practice could be explained in more detail and the potential benefits of such work adequately described. The result was ‘8Cs’ comprising, “cultural, critical, creative, context, connectivity, collaboration, careers, curiosity” (Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy, 2012). The seminar discussions demonstrated a high level of engagement with concerns over the previous lack of clarity and a detailed attempt at countering the resultant disparate activity caused by a lack of understanding of the concepts involved. The discussions and consequent descriptors provided detail to inform debates about the content and potential outcomes of moving image media education. However, the actual result of debate was an increase in abstract terminology addressed at a variety of target audiences whose needs were conflated. It is unclear from the document who was expected to benefit from the USP and the newly created ‘8Cs’ and whether the information was targeted at teachers, pupils, organisations who might deliver moving image education, policy makers or funders. Since the UKFC which had created and funded *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (2009) was no longer in existence, *Re/Defining Film Education* (Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy, 2012) looked towards the BFI’s *Future Plan 2012-2017* (British Film Institute, 2012d) as,

“an opportunity to create a set of addresses and challenges to the issues raised ... for the first time we have the opportunity to coordinate resources, knowledge, expertise and cultural alignment with cultural funders that hasn’t existed in the last ten years” (Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy, 2012, p.16).

*New Horizons for UK Film: BFI Future Plan 2012-2017* (British Film Institute, 2012d) was the consultation document upon which the current BFI education offer was based and from which the three ‘tiers’ of an online resource, associated activity and Youth Academies originated. However, it is significant that the BFI’s strategic plan still encompasses the aim to “advocate the value of film education” (British Film Institute, 2012d, p.9), an aim that characterised the film education strategies of a number of national organisations for over a decade, had been raised by the BFI some 30 years previously and had targeted funding, expertise and resources expended upon it.

Reading the history of the recursive debates and initiatives about film education that have been recycled over many decades, I was surprised to uncover references to a post-war intervention that adopted a radically different stance. This was a programme of work undertaken by the Ministry of Education to forge a direct link between film and education. In 1943 the Ministry of Education began discussions that led to the decision to sponsor the production of an “experimental” programme of films specifically for the secondary classroom (Hawkes, 1943; Richardson, 1943). The experiment drew on pre-war evidence about the social and cultural influence of film from a number of organisations from the teaching and cultural sectors, including the Commission on Educational and Cultural

Films, the British Institute of Adult Education and the British Film Institute (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932; Dupin, 2006). The programme, which comprised eight ‘visual units’ including a film for classroom projection along with associated filmstrips, printed material for display and teachers’ notes, was the first government intervention into establishing film within formal education (Crossley, 1946; de Moulpiéd, 1946e).

The intervention by the Ministry of Education in the post-war years represents a complete reversal of the advocacy for film/moving image media education which has been on-going since the BFI’s first attempts in the 1980s and which continues today through *Film Forever* (British Film Institute, 2012c). The post-war government, through its Ministry of Education, took the decision that the medium of film should necessarily be included alongside other visual aids already used in the classroom, such as photographs and filmstrips. This decision led to the investment in, and production of, films considered relevant for secondary schools, and plans to offer training for teachers in the specific pedagogies required for teaching through ‘visual education’ (Crossley, 1946; Hawkes, 1943). This commitment to providing the physical and intellectual resources to ensure that film was both available and would contribute to teaching and learning effectively, demonstrated the Ministry’s recognition of the need to incorporate film into the curriculum. In this historical example, the Government itself took charge of piloting and promoting the introduction of film into the classroom. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the direction of the struggle has been inverted, so that it is the film education practitioners who strive to demonstrate the ‘value’ of film education in

order to receive Government recognition of its relevance and the ‘benefits’ film might bring to education.

Film education practitioners and strategists of recent years have never looked to the Ministry of Education experiment as a model of how government support for film education has been achieved in the past. Analysing the Ministry’s experiment would enable us to identify the educational issue/s which the experiment aimed to address, and therefore the motivating circumstances that instigated this government recognition. If parallels exist between the post-war educational demand for ‘visual education’ and the current needs of film education, the practical and theoretical arguments which brought about the government’s intervention in the 1940s could assist film education advocates in devising a strategy that made an effective case for government support in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, analysis of the links between visual education and the post-1944 Education Act curriculum, and the pedagogical rationale for its inclusion within secondary education might offer an example for how current film education strategists could build links between film education and the National Curriculum. In addition, the evaluation of film education activity in recent years has been argued to have been insufficient to prove the case for its ‘value’ (Bazalgette, 2009; Bazalgette and Wall, 2011; Marsh and Bearne, 2008). The Ministry’s evaluation strategy and practice could suggest an alternative methodology that would enhance the impact of demonstrating ‘value’ in the present. This close analysis of an example of a ‘successful’ link between the government and visual education practice in schools could thereby inform current

strategies as to how the repeated struggle to forge a sustainable relationship between film and formal, statutory education might be overcome, or if this aim is truly relevant to achieving the outcome of ‘21st century literacy’. Therefore, my research seeks to address the following question: can analysis of the Ministry of Education visual unit production programme inform current film education strategies and offer an insight into why the struggle for government recognition of film education still remains? In addition, my analysis aims to identify the objectives, the pedagogical rationale and the ideological project motivating the Ministry’s experiment in order to evaluate the outcomes. Identifying the advantages and drawbacks of the Ministry of Education’s control over visual education by evaluating these outcomes will enable me to establish whether the experiment actually achieved the aim of instilling visual education within the curriculum. Furthermore, this evaluation will also reveal wider outcomes, resulting from the government’s influence over curriculum practice in the classroom, such as the political and social overtones of the ideological motivation behind producing this particular set of films, and the centrally-controlled pedagogies of their exhibition. Using this analysis of the experiment outcomes as an example of the impact of government intervention into visual education in the past may give some indication of the result of government recognition in the present day, in terms of the consequences of political influence over educational objectives. Furthermore, the evaluation of the Ministry’s experiment could lead to the discovery of new ways of conceptualising current debates regarding the need for government recognition that re-frame the aims and objectives within alternative contexts. This, in turn, would enable me to establish whether incorporating film education/media literacy into the National Curriculum is the



appropriate means to enabling young people to become 21<sup>st</sup> century literate in the current technological, cultural and political landscape, or if we should re-think the strategic aims of film education outside of government influence.



## **Chapter One: Education in Post-War Britain**

### **Introduction**

In the following chapter, I discuss the 1944 Education Act, the resultant secondary school system, and the differences in curricula, teachers and pupils that characterised the two main strands of secondary education - the Grammar Schools and the Secondary Moderns. The aim is to provide the historical, educational context within which the Ministry of Education's film production experiment took place. I also discuss the history of the curriculum as a site of struggle, from 1944 until the Labour government under Tony Blair. The discussion of the evolution of the social and educational struggle over the curriculum, and of the wider social implications of developments such as the introduction of new examination systems, provide context for the parallel developments in film education in the years since the 1944 education reform. Discussion of recent educational change also enables a comparative analysis of film education in the post-war years with the present day, set within the secondary education framework.

## **Part A: The 1944 Education Act as a Mechanism for Social Division**

### **The ‘Failure’ of the 1944 Education Act**

In 1941 the Norwood Committee was established by the Board of Education, under the auspices of Conservative Minister R.A. Butler, to debate and determine the secondary curriculum. Its formation came soon after the concept of ‘secondary education for all’ became generally accepted, both within the wartime coalition government and the opposition Labour party (Barber, 1994). A comprehensive policy on educational change existed as early as 1942, which outlined four major areas of development that aimed to radicalise the British education system. It should be noted that this policy referred to England and Wales since Scotland had its own markedly different education. The policy called for the abolition of the independent school system or at the least its assimilation into a national system, secondary education for all over the age of eleven, the increase of the school leaving age to sixteen and the abolition of the dual system of education to enable ‘voluntary’ (church) schools to exist alongside those provided by the state. The intention was that the Act would sufficiently alter the education system to bring about these changes (Simon, 1991). Butler’s White Paper *Educational Reconstruction*, published in 1943, included recommendations for a tripartite system of secondary education, endorsed by the Board, that would reflect three main ‘groups’ of pupils. The Norwood Committee based these groups on the ‘divisions of humanity’ defined by Plato in *The Republic*, an assumption which had been carried over from the Spens Report of 1938 (Jones, 2003). The groups described those pupils who had an interest in learning for learning’s sake; those who were proficient in arts or sciences; and those for whom

theoretical ideas were considered beyond their abilities and a practical education more appropriate. The tripartite system of education provided for Grammar, Technical and Secondary Modern Schools accordingly, each with their own curriculum.

The Education Act, or *Green Book*, towards which the Norwood Committee had been working, was published in 1944 to political acclaim (Simon, 1991), but it failed to achieve the original policies outlined in 1942 aimed at radicalising the education system. Barber (1994) argues that the changes were not radical enough to challenge the prevailing culture. In the decades following the publication of the Act, the public schools remained largely unchanged and were not brought into line with the state schools, which Simon (1991) argues reflected the Tory agenda in protecting the public schools. Cyril Norwood, Chair of the Committee, was himself the former Head of Harrow and, at the time, Master of a Cambridge College, which perhaps underlines the educational point of view through which the conditions of the 1944 Act were developed.

The voluntary schools also avoided any dramatic reform, which was a focus for some discord between those in the government who supported a complete educational reform and the defenders of the voluntary schools, in particular the Catholic Schools. While the Act gave the Local Education Authorities greater control than ever over voluntary schools, through the devolved control of curriculum and resources, Butler was criticised for paying too much attention to the issue of the Catholic Schools and their reluctance to be a party to the new

system (Barber, 1994). However, Butler did much to bring the Catholic Schools on side, though not in line, and it is possible that the Act would never have been passed without their negotiated agreement. Yet on the whole, the voluntary schools did not sit alongside the state schools and the dual system was certainly not abolished. The school leaving age was eventually raised to fifteen in 1947, but the original aim of raising it to sixteen was not achieved until 1972. The increased leaving age was a major success of the Act, but the decision to delay its implementation was affected by the election of the Labour party in 1945, which put Butler under pressure to delay for economic reasons (Barber, 1994).

While the introduction of the tripartite system did increase access to education in terms of attendance figures, it actually served to reinforce the social barriers which were a feature of the pre-Act system, and the previous hierarchical structure of education in Britain remained in place. The Grammar schools were still the domain of the middle classes, a small group of public schools remained dominant and the Modern schools served a majority of children from the manual working classes (Simon, 1991). The resultant system did not adequately serve the needs of children in terms of obtaining access to appropriate education, with class and other social factors playing a disproportionate role in determining which schools children attended and the education they received therein.

### **Economic and Political Constraints**

Barber (1994) describes the ‘failure’ of the Act as the result of a lack of political will as opposed to any shortcomings in the Act itself. There are, however, a

number of relevant contextual factors that account for this lack of political will. While the opposition Labour Party conference in 1942 had called for an Education Bill at a time when, due to the upheaval of the Second World War, the public were open to change (Simon, 1991), the country had been thrown into crisis and once Labour were elected to power in 1945 education had slipped down the list of national priorities and was superseded by the focus on housing and nationalisation (Barber, 1994). The main proponent of the Education Act, R.A. Butler, was now in the opposition party and momentum was lost since the Labour government favoured multi-lateral schools over the tripartite system (Simon, 1991). In addition, due to the specific time period of its publication, the implementation of the Act suffered from practical economic difficulties in putting the agreed changes in place. Raising the school leaving age and the post-war population boom meant more teachers were needed to meet the increased number of pupils, and an insufficient quantity of trained teachers was available. The delayed de-mobilisation of those serving in the forces limited numbers, and of the married or 'retired' women teachers who had been brought into service during wartime many had returned to the home. As well as more teachers, a greater number of school buildings were required. This was not only due to the increased school population but also as a result of neglect during the inter-war period and Britain's national debt after the war meant both funds and building materials were limited (Middleton and Weitzman, 1976).

In 1947 the issue of teacher supply was addressed by the introduction of an Emergency Training Scheme. The new, shortened courses lasting just one year

were offered in temporary colleges and the majority of the intake were ex-service personnel returning to Britain after the war. To combat the problem of insufficient school buildings, pre-fabricated huts were constructed, intended as a temporary measure. Neither of these solutions was a complete success. The training scheme provided more teachers and some married and retired women teachers chose to remain in employment, but there were still approximately 10,000 fewer teachers than required, which resulted in large class sizes and a subsequent drop in the quality of teaching (Middleton and Weitzman, 1976). This would have been exacerbated by the temporary classrooms with sub-standard facilities (Simon, 1991). When the government was again under the Conservative Party from 1951, Butler was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer and Education Minister Florence Horsburgh struggled to defend the schools against his decision to reduce spending to a minimum, focusing only on the essentials of buildings and teachers (Simon, 1991). This was a surprising move, given Butler's previous role in defining the Education Act. To add to the strain on resources, Government funds were further depleted in the early 1950s as money was directed towards re-armament in response to the mounting threat posed by the Cold War (Simon, 1991). At the same time, changes in the economy and job market towards greater emphasis on service industries led to an increased demand for higher levels in education, resulting in added pressure on the need for resources in education (Jones, 2003). These economic issues highlight the circumstances under which the implementation of the 1944 Education Act struggled to maintain momentum and achieve its objectives. Resources were stretched and political decisions served to shift focus from the radical intentions



of the Act and ‘secondary education for all’ suffered as a result. What emerged was an imperfect system of unequal provision.

### **The Binary Division of the Tripartite System**

Even taking into account the impact on the education system of the economic situation in Britain, the means by which the Education Act provided for secondary education was still flawed. The tripartite system was a rigid and ill-conceived mechanism for providing appropriate education for the increased numbers of secondary pupils and schools became, “instrument[s] of social stratification in a necessarily unequal society” (Jones, 2003, p.23). The National Union of Teachers (NUT) appointed a Consultative Committee to determine the secondary school curriculum and the Report, published in 1952, specifically stressed the Committee’s task of planning secondary education, as opposed to deciding whether the tripartite system was the appropriate means for its delivery (National Union of Teachers, 1952). In fact the Report directly contradicted the basis of the tripartite system by claiming that children’s achievements were not innate qualities and were instead affected by social factors (National Union of Teachers, 1952), bringing into question the assertion of the Education Act that children could be divided into three ‘main groups’ according to their given intellectual abilities. The NUT proposed an integrated curriculum, the content of which would be based on relevance to the child as an individual, to the child’s community and to the needs of society. The curriculum was divided into four broad areas – the Humanities; Science and Maths; Music, Art and Crafts; and Health and Physical Education, each of which were outlined in general terms.

The Report did not include a detailed syllabus, nor specific reference to teaching strategies and the authors argued against a single curriculum for all secondary education. Instead, the Report emphasised the importance of the teachers' ability to devise the course of study according to their assessment of the pupils' needs, and to ensure that the curriculum was integrated to such a degree that children would appreciate how each of the elements formed a whole, rounded knowledge (National Union of Teachers, 1952). The opinion and recommendations of the NUT at this time demonstrated the division between what the government believed to be the correct course of action in improving the education system, and what those who worked within the system felt to be the relevant approach to development.

One of the strengths of the Education Act of 1944 was its devolved organisation, with a balance between central and local control (Barber, 1994), but in terms of the curriculum this only served to increase variations across the schools, highlighting differences of tradition and opinion in what was appropriate education and for whom. The cursory attention paid to the curriculum and the lack of official policy from a national level can be seen as a failure of the education system (Jones, 2003) and one which impacted on the inequalities present across the schools. The lack of provision of technical schools nationally, at its height totalling just 4% of schools, reduced the tripartite system to an essentially binary system of education for the majority of secondary pupils (Jones, 2003). Children over the age of eleven across most of the country had two options, the Secondary Modern and the Grammar School, each with its own

distinct approach to educational provision, training of teachers, qualifications awarded, the future possibilities for children to attend further education and their prospects in the workplace.

The curriculum of the Secondary Modern school was very general and lacked traditional subject specialisation. Neither academically focused on passing examinations nor fully vocational, the new Modern schools were concerned with fulfilling the needs of the 'backward' pupil (Taylor, 1963). By contrast the Grammar School curriculum was more 'academic' and based on classical education, with emphasis on traditional subject divisions (Davis, 1967). Examinations, and therefore qualifications, were not even considered for the Secondary Modern until the late 1940s, and *Circular 103* issued by the government in 1946 prevented all but the Grammar schools from entering pupils under the age of seventeen for external exams, widening the divide between the schools and helping to create a negative public opinion of the Secondary Moderns (Simon, 1991). It wasn't until 1955 that the General Certificate of Education was introduced into the Modern schools to enable pupils to leave with a recognised qualification, which was becoming increasingly important to the job market (Taylor, 1963). As a result of exam entry and the specific subject orientation of the curriculum, Grammar School pupils were better placed to attend universities, Latin often being a pre-requisite for application, particularly to Oxbridge, and pupils would embark upon careers in the skilled and management sectors. As outlined in the Newsom Report, *Half Our Future*, published in 1963, Secondary Modern pupils were expected to become manual workers, while Grammar School

pupils would become managers (Middleton and Weitzman, 1976). Some 80% of Secondary Modern school teachers were college-trained, as opposed to university graduates who were considered to be more specialised in their subjects (Taylor, 1963). Grammar School Masters were university-educated and came from either the Grammar or Public schools and often held the opinion that Grammar School pupils differed from their Secondary Modern counterparts in their desire to learn (Davis, 1967). The binary system of teacher training which was established to meet the teacher shortage, reflected the binary division within the education system.

There were not enough Grammar School places available and the geographical spread did not match that of ability and competition for Grammar School entry was therefore high where they were provided and simply not possible where they were lacking (Douglas, 1964). By putting these barriers of facilities, educational provision and, most importantly, access to recognised examinations and qualifications between the Grammar and Secondary Modern Schools, both governments – the Conservative-led wartime coalition and the post-war Labour government – perpetuated the pre-war separation between the old system of elementary and secondary schools (Simon, 1991). In doing so, the education system became divided along social lines, with class divisions a major factor in determining the education of the child.

## **Social Selection**

A system of selection was established in order to assign children to the 'appropriate' education at secondary school. The '11 plus' examination was introduced based on IQ tests and used, along with teachers' reports and in some cases interviews with pupils, to determine which school children would attend after primary. The 1944 Education Act stated that selection should not be made on the examination alone, but this situation varied across the Local Authorities. Those who passed the 11 plus and were selected would progress to Grammar School while the rest, and majority, would transfer to Secondary Modern. Selection for a place at Grammar School was understood to represent 'success' for primary school children and their parents, which should not have been the case if places were truly awarded based on the relevance of the secondary school to the pupils' needs (Douglas, 1964). However, given that entry to Grammar School was competitive and the education provided offered greater possibilities in terms of further education and employment, it is understandable how this conclusion would have been reached. Selection was therefore an imperfect system and led to a perpetuation of class barriers between the 'elite' education provided by the Grammar Schools and the less respected Secondary Moderns.

Middle class pupils, defined as those children whose fathers had 'professional' or 'managerial' occupations, were under-represented in the Secondary Modern schools (Taylor, 1963). There are a number of explanations for this. In the first instance, the Secondary Modern schools were held in lower esteem. The parents of those children for whom there was even a possibility of progressing to

Grammar School did not opt for a Modern education (Taylor, 1963). The reputation of the Secondary Moderns had improved in the 15 years following their introduction, but this was largely due to external factors such as the stability of, and therefore increased esteem for, manual and semi-skilled occupations post-war and the new forms of employment available in the service industry, for which Secondary Modern pupils were aptly qualified. The status of the Modern schools was raised by their eventual success in introducing exams and enabling their pupils to compete in the workplace (Taylor, 1963); however, the Grammar Schools retained their higher status. A further reason middle class children were disproportionately fewer in the Secondary Moderns, was the realisation amongst the middle classes that they could use the Grammar school system to their advantage. The conservative middle classes defended the Grammar Schools against any kind of reform since they offered access to an education for which parents had previously paid (Jones, 2003). The discrepancy can also be explained by biases in the system of selection and the use of the 11 plus exam as a tool of social selection.

Entry for the 11 plus selection exam was determined in primary school and began at age seven through the introduction of classroom streaming. Children were assigned streams according to their projected academic ability and then taught accordingly. The selection exam was dominated by tests in 'intelligence', English and Maths, all considered to be 'objective' indicators of educational aptitude, and primary children were coached in these specific areas, particularly those children in the 'A' stream (Simon, 1991). A friend of this writer recalls the division in his

primary school class, as a pupil in the last year in his school district to take the 11 plus examination. Throughout the year, his form was divided into four lines of wooden desks. Two lines worked from one text book, the other two from another. When it came to the 11 plus, the test paper was filled with diagrams asking pupils to identify the ‘odd one out’. He was unable to do so and recalled seeing these diagrams over the shoulder of a classmate, working at a desk in one of the other lines. At that point he realised he would never pass the 11 plus, since he had not been working from the relevant text book all year. He failed, yet in later years went on to study for a PhD. From as early as seven years of age, the future education and employment prospects of children were already mapped out since the ‘A’ stream would receive more tuition in the relevant subjects and would have a greater chance of passing the exam and progressing onto Grammar School. The above anecdote illustrates the divisive and in some cases inappropriate nature of streaming, and the possibility that children were pre-selected for academic ‘success’, and not always correctly. In effect, the reliance on assumptions regarding innate intelligence upon which the concept of streaming was based led to a system in which children’s educational achievements were pre-determined, or what Simon refers to as the “hegemony of a form of educational fatalism” (Simon, 1991, p.159).

Britain in the 1950s experienced a number of social and cultural shifts, from the increase in health and leisure time brought about by new technologies to a relative prosperity in comparison to the war years. Also widespread across the country was a greater concern for social welfare, particularly with regards to the welfare

and education of children (Cunningham, 1988). Within some primary schools a new 'progressivism' took hold that represented a move away from the inevitability of streaming and selection. This progressivism was not evident in all primary schools, but was a significant initiative by Local Authorities and teachers that aimed to move away from the previously didactic approach to place the child at the centre of education through innovative classroom practice. Those teachers and educationalists engaged in promoting primary progressivism were considered pioneers. Three individuals were notable for promoting the ideals of progressivism and organisational change across schools (Cunningham, 1988). These individuals were Alec Clegg, Chief Education Officer in the West Riding of Yorkshire, HM Inspector Christian Schiller and HMI John Blackie. Though the three men approached progressivism in differing ways, they all focused on promoting a form of 'learning through doing', integration of the curriculum and in-service training for teachers. The objective was for teachers to fulfil their own potential and therefore recognise and encourage it in their pupils, rather than focus on the passing of exams (Cunningham, 1988). One of the unintentional outcomes of streaming had been that the majority of primary teachers believed that a large proportion of their pupils would achieve little, since only a minority progressed to the 'success' of the Grammar School. The effect was that teachers' aspirations for their pupils were lowered which, in turn, was passed onto the child who would begin to develop a negative self-image (Simon, 1991). Primary progressivism was established as a means to combat this downward spiral of aspiration and achievement. Whilst the effectiveness of the pedagogy of progressive teaching was never proven, there were claims for its success, particularly in relation to the incorporation of the Arts and children's opportunity



for self-expression. While the existence of primary progressivism shows there was some resistance to the inevitability of streaming, its very status as 'progressive' demonstrates this was a breakaway movement from the norm.

### **Class and 'Opportunity'**

The tripartite system had been intended to enable pupils the opportunity of progressing to an appropriate secondary education, yet streaming and selection for these schools was socially biased. The opportunities available were therefore influenced by the social background and class of pupils, rather than solely by their educational potential. There were those who argued that selection was required, maintaining the belief that intelligence was an innate, inherited quality and that it would enable the Grammar Schools to retain their elite status and serve a particular type of child with an 'academic' mind (Davis, 1967). However, in their study of the educational opportunities of boys in South West Hertfordshire and Middlesbrough carried out in 1952, Floud et al (1958) argued that while the lower proportion of working class boys attending Grammar Schools could be explained by the correlation between social class and measured intelligence, this intelligence was in fact acquired, not inherited. The research also found that 'environmental factors' such as the size of the family and the education, attitudes and ambitions of parents influenced children's success rate at the selection examination. Boys in families with fewer siblings and parents whose educational ambition for their sons was to attend Grammar School were more likely to pass the 11 plus examination, and these families were on the whole middle class, as defined by the fathers' occupations. The research demonstrated that middle class boys were likely to

outperform boys from the working classes in the examination and progress onto Grammar School because of external factors, rather than their intellectual ability.

Further research carried out by Douglas (1964) supported this argument. Published in a report commissioned by the Population Investigation Committee, Douglas' research sought to establish which environmental factors were the most significant in influencing the allocation of children to either Grammar or Secondary Modern Schools. The research focused on a sample of children born in the first week of March 1946 and tracked their performance in primary school, at the 11 plus examination and their subsequent secondary school allocation. Douglas found that children in larger families achieved lower 'intelligence' scores from a young age, and that these larger families were predominantly working class. The likely cause of this he explained as, again, due to environmental factors such as parental care and housing conditions; for example less parental time spent with individual children, space for quiet study and health problems associated with poor housing, as opposed to any direct correlation between working classes and lower intelligence.

Douglas also found that the impact of parents' interest and encouragement, and signs of "emotional instability" in children, such as bed-wetting, thumb-sucking or recurrence of nightmares, were greater than any other factors in determining the children's "application" to primary school work and therefore their levels of attainment (Douglas, 1964, p. 97). Douglas asserted the relationship between symptoms of 'emotional instability' and a lack of concentration and explained

that these factors disadvantaged children at primary school. However, he did not consider the reverse correlation, in that difficulties in school, such as learning disabilities or other educational and social factors, may have actually caused the 'emotional instability'. Nevertheless, the research demonstrated that external factors based in and around the home had greater influence on children's performance at the selection examination and therefore their progression onto secondary schools than the 'intelligence' of the child. Working class children from larger families in poorer housing conditions performed less well at the 11 plus and were more likely to attend Secondary Modern Schools. Streaming by 'ability', as defined by test scores and classroom performance, was biased against the working classes and reinforced social selection.

Despite the evidence gathered by Floud et al (1958) and Douglas (1964), it is not true to say that the schools were entirely divided along class lines with only middle class children at Grammar and working class children at Secondary Modern Schools. However, where working class children did gain access to Grammar School education, inequalities were still felt. Jackson and Marsden (1966) researched the experiences of working class children attending Grammar Schools in order to discover why so few completed their Grammar School education. Like Floud et al (1958) and Douglas (1964), Jackson and Marsden found that the home life of children impacted strongly on Grammar School 'success', defined as completing the Grammar School course at the end of sixth form. The research was carried out through interviews with 88 children, then adults, who had attended Grammar Schools in Huddersfield during the years

1949-1952 and their parents, to analyse their experiences of attending Grammar School and how it had impacted on their lives. A key theme raised by the research was the notion of ‘success’ and how it was applied to education. Not all of the parents who were interviewed judged a Grammar School education to constitute ‘success’, though this was the criterion applied by both Jackson and Marsden and the wider understanding of the education system, which denoted the Grammar schools as elite. In the parents’ experience, passing the Labour Exam and progressing into employment at the age of 13 was associated with success, rather than staying on in education for longer than strictly necessary to gain employment. The attitude of these parents throws into question the assumptions inherent in the 11 plus examination in determining whether pupils were ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ according to the type of school for which they were selected.

Those working class children who Jackson and Marsden found to be ‘successful’ in completing the Grammar School education came from smaller families than usual, and a large proportion came from within the geographical areas of Huddersfield that were socially mixed. These communities included middle and working class families, with equal access to amenities and schools (Jackson and Marsden, 1966). In addition to standards of the home and access to facilities, the parents’ choice of primary school also affected their children’s selection for secondary schools and therefore future education and employment. Primary schools with little history or culture of pupils passing the 11 plus exam offered fewer opportunities for children to progress onto Grammar School. Jackson and

Marsden's research showed that only very few of the thirty primary schools in Huddersfield had taught the girls who later went to college or university, highlighting the relationship between streaming and educational 'success'. Furthermore, for those working class pupils who had been selected, the choice of Grammar School was often based on a lack of knowledge about suitability or which were considered 'good' schools, and instead based on proximity to the home, whether friends would go there and other practical considerations such as transport routes. Those working class families living in mixed areas were at an advantage as they could enquire of middle class neighbours where they had sent their children. However the overall result was that many working class pupils who had demonstrated high levels of educational ability could have enrolled in far better Grammar Schools than those they actually attended, but instead settled for a less well-regarded Grammar School which provided an education below their ability (Jackson and Marsden, 1966).

The research also found that while at Grammar School, working class children often negotiated their own education. This was not a deliberate lack of support on the part of parents, but rather a distancing from the culture. Parents interviewed by Jackson and Marsden (1966) often described feeling removed from the school, as though they did not belong there, and felt intimidated by the building itself as well as the teachers. In such cases the children were left to form their own relationship with the school and with their friends and classmates, the majority of who came from very different backgrounds. Those interviewed described divergent opinions on the clash of their own working class cultures with the

middle class mainstay of the Grammar School. There were those who embraced the school and all it stood for, and those who felt alienated by the system. These two very different responses to Grammar School life translated into the pupils' educational experiences and eventual academic achievements. The children who assumed the middle class values expounded by the schools were 'successful' in progressing through Grammar School in that they completed the course; those who maintained their working class values became distanced from school and did not stay beyond the minimum requirement. However, for those children who 'successfully' completed Grammar School education, there were further ramifications. They often became distanced instead from their families and communities, and relationships broke down due to a lack of understanding on either side, or a deliberate ejection or removal from the community to which they no longer belonged (Jackson and Marsden, 1966).

The experiences of working class children in accessing and negotiating Grammar School education highlight the class divide which beset the tripartite system. 'Opportunity', in terms of education, was a loaded descriptor. All children may have had access to a Grammar School education in theory, but in practice this was less likely for the children of the working classes due to the bias of selection and external factors relating to social background. When this 'opportunity' did arise, there were further difficulties. The education system established a hierarchy in which Grammar School education was considered as an aspiration, yet on reaching this elite education, the working classes were expected to assimilate the

culture, sometimes losing their own identity in the process of achieving educational ‘success’.

### **Social Division and the 1944 Education Act**

The previous discussion of contemporary research demonstrates that the post-war education system set in place was an unequal terrain with irreconcilable variation across the schools. The tripartite secondary school system was largely a two school system due to the lack of provision of technical schools which enforced a binary division between the ‘successful’ and the ‘unsuccessful’, marked most pointedly by pass or failure at the 11 plus. Accordingly the Secondary Modern and Grammar Schools had markedly different pupils, teachers, curricula, buildings, exams (if at all), access to Higher Education, expectations of their pupils, employment opportunities, leaving age and reputations publicly and amongst children and their parents. Furthermore, they were distinguished according to class. These differences graphically reflect the values of the society within which they were developed; values which were, in turn, perpetuated by the cultures of the schools themselves. From the introduction of streaming at age 7, children were categorised according to their ‘ability’; this categorisation largely determined potential ‘opportunity’ and defined future ‘success’. The concepts of ‘opportunity’, ‘ability’ and ‘success’ were imbued with elitist opinion and referred to Grammar School traditions of education. Streaming and selection proved socially biased and were affected by the social background of pupils, thereby maintaining a class distinction between those attending Grammar and Secondary Modern Schools. The proportion of working class children able to

enjoy access to the ‘opportunity’ of Grammar School education was well below the number for whom such education was deemed appropriate in terms of intellectual and academic ‘ability’. ‘Success’ for pupils was still asserted as the completion of Grammar School education so that the tripartite system forced and maintained an elite, both educationally and socially, and did not adequately serve the majority of the population. Equality of opportunity and ‘secondary education for all’ were therefore concerned primarily with increasing opportunities of access, not with offering all children an equal education. Social barriers in British society proved more powerful than the education system (Taylor, 1963). As a result, the education system in the years following the introduction of the 1944 Education Act did not challenge the previous power structures inherent in education, but reflected and enforced the hierarchical society within which it had been developed.

## **Part B: The Struggle for the Curriculum**

While the 1944 Education Act may have perpetuated inequalities in education by dividing access to the three or, in effect, two distinct types of secondary school along class lines, the Act itself and the tripartite system which resulted did at least confront one of the central contentions which had beset British secondary education, and which continues to be at the centre of educational debate; namely the curriculum. Discussions over implementing ‘appropriate’ and ‘relevant’ curricula according to the ‘type’ of pupil represented one of the driving forces behind the three-tiered system of education of the 1944 Act, and in defining the future prospects of those pupils according to their presumed adult status as



‘managerial’, ‘manual’ or ‘artisanal’. This labelling, along with subsequent sociological research based on the experiences of teachers and pupils, such as that carried out by Douglas (1964), Floud, Halsey and Martin (1958), and Jackson and Marsden (1966) served to highlight the tensions between government advisories and education practitioners in creating a curriculum for the masses, and the divergence of opinions over its structure, content and implementation. In the years since the Act, terms such as ‘vocational’, ‘academic’, ‘traditional’ and ‘progressive’ have been used variously to promote political and social ideals and to castigate the decisions of previous regimes in establishing definitions of curricula, and in those 70-plus years the curriculum has remained in conflict. A range of groups and individuals have impacted on the secondary curriculum, including subject associations, universities, teachers and their unions, political parties and parents, and evolution has been motivated by the conflicting demands of these interested groups (Goodson, 1988). The 1944 Education Act marks a point of significance in curriculum history, since its social impact instigated successive attempts to redress the inequities felt by its application. These attempts cannot be understood as linear responses to previous curriculum change enforced by any one agency, but as sites of on-going struggle with a multitude of influences. Goodson argues that, “the [1944] Act marks the beginning of the modern era of curriculum conflict, not so much because of its details, but because from this date onwards curriculum conflict becomes more visible, public and national” (Goodson, 1988, p.99). Exploring the ‘public and national’ nature of the struggle to define the curriculum offers an insight into what Carr and Hartnett define as the “ideological tensions” (1996, p.25) occurring in society which have underpinned the decisions regarding what should be taught, by whom and why

this has been considered ‘appropriate’ and ‘relevant’ for pupils and British society as a whole.

### **Tripartite Curricula**

The outbreak of the Second World War inevitably brought a period of social disruption and upheaval to Britain and the government was forced into direct control of national affairs through its newly established Ministries. The post-war government under Clement Attlee worked to invest in social services through the creation of a welfare state, and education was assigned an important role in the reconstruction of society (Lowe, 1988). Secondary education was therefore recognised as a fundamental element which would bring about social reform as well as economic growth (Richmond, 1978). The tripartite system resulting from the 1944 Education Act aimed to increase access to secondary education for British children, however, little attention was paid to the detail of the curricula that would be taught in each of the three designated types of school, other than to require that the education provided was appropriate to “the abilities and aptitudes of all pupils” (Ministry of Education, 1947b, p.7). Local Education Authorities were required to submit plans outlining their intended development of secondary education on a local scale. The lack of specific instruction within the wording of the Act meant that teachers had some control over the design and implementation of the curriculum, yet the Ministry of Education retained powers to prohibit Local Authority plans according to national policy so that from the outset there existed tensions between local opinion and national directives (Jones, 2003).

Having initially determined to delegate responsibility for pedagogy and curriculum locally, the Ministry became concerned over the amount of time some areas were taking to submit development plans and in 1947 published *Pamphlet No. 9, The New Secondary Education*. The pamphlet was intended to give guidance to teachers and to help parents understand the purpose of the new schools (Ministry of Education, 1947b). Its publication thereby represented a certain level of interference from the government, albeit under the guise of assistance. *The New Secondary Education* ran to over 60 pages and included photographs and diagrams of the classrooms and activities already taking place in a number of Secondary Modern and Technical Schools, showing the variety of lessons such as laboratory work, drama, handicrafts, gardening and animal husbandry which were intended to offer an alternative to the Grammar School curriculum. Alongside the illustrations, there was also a far more detailed outline of the possible curriculum that would form the basis of a Modern School education, with the proviso that these were suggestions rather than prescriptive instructions. By contrast the pamphlet included only limited descriptions of the proposed curricula of the Technical and Grammar Schools. The Technical Schools were only afforded some broad advice, since the Ministry believed it was not possible to define a curriculum which was intended to be based around local industry. The emphasis was on the Technical curriculum's relation to the 'real world' experienced by the pupils and other than some suggestions of, for example, the inclusion of "project work" and "expeditions", there were no detailed guidelines from the Ministry (Ministry of Education, 1947b, p.38). The curriculum of the Grammar Schools was even less attended to by *Pamphlet No. 9*. The Ministry explained this lack as due to the schools' long history, tradition and

proven standards so that there was “comparatively little that need be said about them in [the] pamphlet” (Ministry of Education, 1947b, p.25). The assertion appeared to be slightly misplaced since, although *The New Secondary Education* was aimed at teachers, there was also an explicit focus on the public more generally and parents in particular, who could consult its pages for information on the ‘appropriate’ school and therefore curriculum for their children. In addition, the pamphlet was available directly from HM Stationery Offices at identified locations, at a cost of two shillings, or by post at a price of 2s 3d so that even if parents were aware of its publication and interested in its contents, the cost of the pamphlet itself may have been sufficient barrier to its purchase. Regardless of who were the intended or actual readers of the pamphlet, the implication was that the Grammar Schools required no guidance from government and should continue along the same curriculum lines as before the reform was announced.

The Secondary Modern Schools on the other hand, were dealt with at greater length. The Ministry took care to explain that these schools were designed for pupils who needed a “different kind of approach”, and advocated for cross-curricular education through project work that should develop out of the pupils’ interests (Ministry of Education, 1947b, p.26). A number of subjects were suggested for inclusion in the Modern curriculum, such as English, Maths, Geography, History, Science and ‘practical’ subjects including “housecraft”, but there was little detail regarding exactly what the study of these subjects should comprise, nor the pedagogies (Ministry of Education, 1947b, p.34). In addition to the ‘traditional’ subjects listed, there was repeated emphasis on the need for

‘Civics’ and Religious Education to form a part of the curriculum and on the role education ought to play within the new industrial society, which again reflected the Ministry’s aim for education to contribute to the wider, social development of Britain in the post-war years. Whether the comparatively greater emphasis on the Secondary Modern curriculum was due to a perceived lack of understanding within Local Authorities regarding the planning of such schools, or to assuage concerns on the part of the public over whether the Modern Schools offered a genuine and educationally sound alternative to Grammar School education was not clear, however the amount of focus on the ideological principles behind the inclusion of various potential subjects suggested a certain justification of the Secondary Modern education and its role in rebuilding society.

Since the 1944 Education Act gave no specific instructions regarding the curriculum, and the information outlined in *The New Secondary Education* continued to function as guidance rather than direct, detailed instruction, schools were ostensibly able to develop according to the expertise and experience of the teachers. However, the level of control the government actually had over the curriculum through the centralised powers to confirm or deny Local Authority plans was considerable, despite the inclusion of the statement that “neither the subjects of the curriculum, nor the time spent on each, nor the way they are taught is laid down by the Ministry of Education” (Ministry of Education, 1947b, p.34). The division between the ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ curricula in secondary schools which lay at the centre of the tripartite system was to become the focus of conflict in the following decades (Lowe, 1988; Jones, 2003).

### **Labour Attempts at Reform and the Move to Comprehensivisation**

There was a vast increase in numbers attending secondary schools during the 1950s and early 1960s. The number of pupils attending Grammar Schools increased from 500,000 to 726,000 and those attending Secondary Moderns rose from 1,127,000 to 1,641,000 (Lowe, 1988). However, the division of pupils according to curricula designated as ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ was not a complete success and enthusiasm for the tripartite system was short-lived. In 1951 the Labour Party National Executive Committee produced a report, entitled *A Policy for Secondary Education* which questioned the need for tripartism and drew up plans for a replacement, comprehensive system with the aim of establishing a ‘common curriculum’ that all secondary pupils would follow (Lowe, 1988). It was hoped that the common curriculum would alleviate some of the inequalities of the tripartite system but tensions built between political and educational organisations that were either for or against comprehensive reform (Simon, 1991). The response from the Conservative government was to champion the Secondary Modern Schools in a thinly veiled attempt to defend the Grammar and public schools from the perceived ‘threat’ of a comprehensive system (Jones, 2003; Lowe, 1988; McCulloch, 1998).

The Conservative government may have been the most vocal defenders of the Grammar Schools, yet the debate cannot simply be explained along party lines. Both the Conservative and Labour Parties had previously agreed on the need to defend Grammar school education and it was only from opposition that the

Labour Party reversed its argument (Richmond, 1978). The debate surrounding the introduction of a common curriculum was not confined to the leading political parties, nor was it split according to class, but instead circulated across individuals and organisations involved in education, from teachers and the unions, parents and newly-established pressure groups, such as the Confederation for the Advancement of State Education (CASE) which largely comprised middle class parents who supported comprehensive reform (Simon, 1991). Partly in response to the pressure exerted by groups such as CASE, the government established the Newsom Committee to discuss the curriculum and propose changes, discussions which eventually led to the publication of the Newsom Report, *Half Our Future*, in 1963 (Richmond, 1978; McCulloch, 1998). The Report focused to some extent on the education of working class children for whom it aimed to establish a relevant curriculum. However, the views expressed in the Report regarding ‘appropriate’ education were influenced by the Committee members’ own preconceptions of society and exposed some prejudices about the role of women in society, alongside the class bias which assumed a different ‘type’ of education for the working classes. The result was that *Half Our Future* promoted the study of ‘crafts’ for Secondary Modern boys, while the girls were destined to enjoy ‘domestic’ subjects, before settling down into the expected vocation of marriage (McCulloch, 1998). The Newsom Report may have been published with the aim of addressing the lack of inclusion of working class pupils, but its prejudiced approach and recommendations did little to aid the cause. What was required was a curriculum that did not make distinctions based on class or social background for equality of educational provision to be realised. Concern over the implications of the 11-plus testing, potential for pupils to be incorrectly assigned

to a particular type of school and the impact of social background and home life on achievement, along with union support, all influenced Local Authority support for educational change. There were still some objections from those who wanted to defend the Grammar Schools, such as the National Education Association, however, of the 163 Local Authorities in the country, only six directly and openly opposed comprehensive reform (Simon, 1991).

### **Comprehensivisation**

The Labour Party was back in government in 1964, and intent on implementing sweeping reform that would regenerate the country through economic, technological and industrial change. Education was a priority for this regeneration and would therefore receive further investment in order to ensure reform. While it may have been considered ‘revolutionary’ since there was no history of such an ostensibly egalitarian system in British education, the majority of teachers now advocated the common curriculum (Simon, 1991). In 1964 the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations was established by the government in order to disseminate ideas and discuss curriculum change in England and Wales. The Schools Council was an advisory group, dominated by representatives of teachers that argued for the continuation and development of teacher control over the curriculum (Jones, 2003; Simon, 1991). The move towards comprehensive education was picking up pace and the working party that advised the Secretary of State for Education outlined the objectives of comprehensive schools. These were to eradicate social divisions in secondary education by ensuring that each school comprised pupils from a cross-section of



society in the hope that this integration would spill over into the wider community; and to focus teachers, equipment and buildings on one site so that the schools would be able to offer a wider variety of opportunity for all educational abilities (Richmond, 1978). It was clear from these objectives that factors other than pedagogy exerted an influence over the introduction of comprehensives. Not only were the schools intended to reduce social divisions within education, but also to challenge social hierarchies and effect the re-ordering of society more generally. The other notable feature of the objectives laid down by the working party was the lack of discussion regarding the curriculum of the comprehensives, despite the presence of the Schools Council, and nor was any attention paid to developing an appropriate examination that would reflect the new structure (Simon, 1991). Nevertheless, the pressure exerted by education practitioners, as well as the Labour government's commitment to comprehensive ideals, meant that educational reform was now underway.

In 1965 Circular 10/65 was issued by the Department of Education and Science (DES), spelling out the government's requirement of Local Authorities to implement comprehensive schooling. The Authorities were requested to develop schemes that would provide comprehensive education, but were to select from one of six options recommended by the DES (Jones, 2003). The result was a disparate system of schooling since some continued with Grammar traditions, while some essentially functioned as Secondary Moderns, and not all schools offered education post-16 (Jones, 2003; Richmond, 1978; Lowe, 1988). Furthermore, not all pupils in Britain had access to comprehensives. By 1970,

129 of the 163 Local Authorities had implemented comprehensive reform, but it would take 6 years for pupils to progress through the system so that 74% of secondary pupils were still enrolled in Secondary Modern, Grammar or Technical Schools (Richmond, 1978). Even in 1976, taking the progression through education into account, the number of pupils in comprehensive schools still only reached 76% (Jones, 2003). The move to what had been considered a less socially, as well as educationally, divisive form of education took over a decade to achieve and provision at a local level was still unequal.

Furthermore, the two-tiered system delineated according to social class which had been a feature of tripartite education re-emerged, only now it existed *within* the comprehensive schools (Richmond, 1978; McCulloch, 1998; Simon, 1991). The introduction of the Certificate in Secondary Education (CSE) in 1965 which had appeared to strengthen the status of the Secondary Moderns by offering qualifications for the pupils actually worked to heighten the distinction between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ students, since pupils were streamed according to which examination they would take, even within the comprehensives (Jones, 2003). The division within comprehensives was further enhanced by increasing suburbanisation. The middle classes had moved to the suburbs and their children attended the new comprehensives that were built there. The internal streaming used by the schools was partly due to pressure exerted by the middle class parents, so that the new middle class became the ‘elite’ within the comprehensive system. Contemporary theorists argued that this proved the comprehensive schools actually functioned to increase and clarify the stratification of society,

rather than diminishing its effects (Lowe, 1988). Whether this was the case in every Local Authority is immaterial, since the very presence of such an accusation demonstrated the failure of the Labour governments' objectives in providing equality of educational opportunity for all pupils and the subsequent re-ordering of wider society.

The educational changes which the Labour government aimed to bring about through the introduction of comprehensive schools did not, in the end, equate to full reform. Although the government legislated for provision of comprehensives, they were not able to force Local Authorities to restructure the system, and the schools which were provided proved disparate and insufficiently resourced. The influence of teachers and control that was delegated to Local Authorities did enable some curricular developments in relation to Britain's evolving society that paid more attention to issues of gender, ethnicity and to some extent class, but these advances towards eradicating social divisions in education were attenuated by the continuation of streaming (Jones, 2003). Furthermore, the wording of Circular 10/65, far from indicating the removal of separate education for socially diverse pupils, instead implied that segregation could be overcome through architecture. By housing a diverse demographic in one building, it was hoped that the comprehensive would function to instigate cohesive communities which, in the event, did not prove to be the case. Despite the best of intentions on the part of the government, Circular 10/65 transpired to be what educational historian W. Kenneth Richmond termed a "turning point" rather than a breakthrough in school

reform and its objectives were overcome by the stronger political will of the Conservative government that returned to power in 1970 (Richmond, 1978, p.96).

Margaret Thatcher was appointed Secretary of State for Education in the 1970 Conservative government, marking a new era for educational reform. Circular 10/70 was issued immediately and included a pledge to withdraw Circular 10/65 and end comprehensive reorganisation. In the event, this never happened, but legislation contained in the Circular specified that Local Authorities were no longer obliged to draw up plans for comprehensive reform and instead the plans must be made for individual schools (Simon, 1991). By this means, the Secretary of State had effectively used bureaucracy to slow the reform process and defend the Grammar Schools from the 'threat' of the comprehensives. At the time, Britain was experiencing an economic downturn, partly in response to the 1973 oil crisis, and a decrease in revenue, high inflation and a decline in heavy industry led to massive cuts in public spending (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Jones, 2003; Simon, 1991). During this period of rising unemployment, the Conservative Party's promotion of 'traditional values' and attack on school 'standards' gathered momentum. The economic crisis also instigated political debate surrounding the need for education to respond to the requirements of industry as a means of strengthening the economy (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). The Tory educational policies for the 1974 election campaign centred on highlighting what they described as falling standards and values, alongside the reassertion of national identity in the wake of 1960s immigration (Jones, 2003). Although Labour won the election, the campaign brought the Conservative ideals of a return

to a 'traditional' society back into the public consciousness during an economic crisis that had affected the country as a whole. It was these 'traditional' ideals that would dominate Conservative education policy from their return to power in 1979.

### **Thatcherism, Conservative Marketisation and the 'Crisis' In Schooling**

Educational policies aided the re-election of the Conservative Party at the end of the 1970s and one of the first Education Bills to be passed, in July of 1979, finally put an end to compulsory comprehensive reform (Simon, 1991). Three distinct yet overlapping elements of Conservative policy subsequently impacted on education over the coming decades. These were marketisation, modernisation, centred around technological and economic requirements which it was argued would enable Britain to compete on a global scale, and a focus on 'tradition' (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Jones, 2003). In order to change the dominant ideologies, which had previously been socially democratic, the government needed to transform institutions so that Conservative values would exist at an organisational and structural level. Within education, this meant changing the DES, the inspectorate, universities and teacher trainers, and teachers themselves. 'Think Tanks' were established and continually published opinion-forming rhetoric which cross-referred so that they appeared coherent, while the policies of the opposition did not (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). In addition the mass media, and in particular the press, was used to transmit the ideologies of the 'New Right' so that public opinion was swayed towards Conservative ideals (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). The message conveyed was that education was in 'crisis' as a direct result

of previous pedagogical approaches, and that the only recourse was to co-ordinate a restructuring of the curriculum and examination systems. Exam reform was announced in 1980 and the DES took control, with the introduction of a new, core curriculum and exam boards setting national criteria (Simon, 1991). The implementation of criteria which would apply to all secondary pupils might have appeared to imply a move towards an inclusive approach. However, each curriculum subject would include a number of different papers set at differing levels so that in effect, streaming was continued but had now been elevated to national level.

Keith Joseph was appointed Secretary of State for Education in 1981 and over the next several years he launched a series of plans to establish selection, control and notions of 'quality' at the centre of secondary education, all based on the principles of marketisation and modernisation in response to industry. Joseph disbanded the teacher-dominated Schools Council and in its place established the Secondary Examinations Council and the School Curriculum Development Committee in 1983, both of which were under central, government control (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Simon, 1991). The Technical and Vocational Initiative was also announced in that year, controlled by the Manpower Services Commission and with the aim of developing new forms of curriculum for ages 14-18 that would function to provide labour for industry and aid economic recovery. Another initiative, the Lower Achieving Pupils Project was also introduced as a means to shift sectors of secondary education away from the 'academic' subjects. The Project was aimed at the bottom 40% of pupils, those considered 'less able'

in terms of traditional examination success (Simon, 1991). The split between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ pupils was thereby re-asserted and the government invested fully in the mechanisms that would ensure the division. By the mid-1980s, teachers and Local Authorities were no longer viewed as partners in education provision, and the government had moved to quell any organisations or individuals who represented dissent. Proposals were launched in 1987 to allow schools to ‘opt out’ of Local Authority control, leaving head teachers in charge of budgets. Local government, education practitioners and some of the larger parents’ organisations protested at this move, but were dismissed and the proposal went ahead, allowing for the development of a variety of secondary schools. The rationale behind this decision was based on the Conservative ideal of marketisation. With annual budgets based on performance (of pupils in exams and of teachers) and pupil numbers, schools were forced into the position of competitors, vying for students and receiving monetary reward for the ‘success’ (Simon, 1991). Examinations were also overhauled under the Tory government and in 1987 the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) replaced the separate two-tier system of GCE and CSE, and in 1988 the new, National Curriculum was introduced (Jones, 2003).

In a short space of time, the government had implemented changes to the curriculum that ensured secondary education returned to the divisions of the tripartite system and lessened the influence of Local Authorities and teachers over schools. While promoting a ‘core’ curriculum, any unity of purpose was directly threatened by the introduction of alternative curricula for ‘vocational’ or ‘less

able' pupils. The standard curriculum was controlled by the government and while it may have remained a 'national' concern, the wealth of other initiatives ensured that those children considered more 'academic' received a different, and higher status, type of education. The Conservative government had achieved its aim and the policies of modernisation and marketisation underpinned the educational reform which took place, bringing about new curricula, examinations and structures to secondary education that functioned to contradict the previous years of struggle to ensure democratic access to schooling for all pupils, regardless of social background.

### **Conservative Tradition and the 'National' Curriculum**

The National Curriculum was established by the Education Reform Act of 1988, and on the surface it may have appeared to offer a system built on equality so that all secondary pupils would have access to the same education, measured by identical means. However, its establishment, structure and content was influenced by a number of factors so that equality of access masked a more complex system of examinations, values and objectives that worked to further promote inequality. Access to the curriculum was increased, particularly in terms of girls' access to technical and scientific education, which can be directly linked to the Conservative, and particularly Thatcher's, policy of economic regeneration based on the requirements of industry (Jones, 2003). The curriculum had originated as part of the government's economic regeneration however, Carr and Hartnett (1996) argue that two other 'projects' existed behind this public-facing objective. They assert that the structure of the curriculum constituted 'traditional'



subjects reminiscent of older systems of class-based education, and that the ideological principles governing its organisation represented the application of state control (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). All pupils from age five to 16 followed the same subject-based curriculum, which was specified by government-appointed committees and approved by the Secretary of State (Jones, 2003). The core subjects, around which the structure was organised, were almost identical to those included in the Secondary Regulations of 1904 and, while the intention was ostensibly to increase commercial competition, subjects such as Information Technology were omitted while 'traditional' courses such as History were included (Goodson, Anstead and Marshall Mangan, 1998). This may appear only as anecdotal evidence of the Conservatives' focus on 'tradition', but it is indicative of a wider issue at the centre of the National Curriculum. The inclusion of, predominantly British, History as a 'core' subject, over and above those which may have increased the chances of secondary-educated children to contribute to industry in the global market, demonstrated the government's assertion of national identity and a promotion of traditional values as the 'core' of education (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Goodson, Anstead and Marshall Mangan, 1998). The issue here is not one of whether History should itself be considered worthy of study, but what these 'traditional values' actually comprised and whether they truly reflected the culture and society of Britain at the time. The 'tradition' towards which the Conservative Party aimed to co-ordinate a return harked back to Anglo-centric, pre-war concepts of privilege and excellence which had characterised both education and society as a whole.

Alongside the strict definitions of curriculum content, the government also asserted increasingly rigid control over schools and teacher practice. The Secretary of State for Education maintained powers over curriculum decisions and the 1988 Education Act finally removed the rights of Local Authorities to appoint representatives on the curriculum committee (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Simon, 1991). The official standpoint was that power had been moved from the centre, but the 'centre' had also been moved. A new system of regulations was introduced in 1992, through the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted), whose remit it was to measure and lead on the internal process of schooling, and the role of HM Inspectors was decreased so that there was even less influence on secondary education from any organisations external to the government (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Jones, 2003). The centre of control now existed in the regulating bodies established by the government, and Local Authorities, education practitioners and pupils had little say in what went on in their schools.

The introduction of the National Curriculum can be seen as a positive force, enabling access to a common curriculum for all pupils that, as argued by Jones (2003), offered a solution to the post-war problem of developing 'secondary education for all'. Nevertheless, other educational historians have argued that the political undercurrents of such a move cannot be ignored and that what the National Curriculum actually achieved was a re-assertion of government control that manipulated the curriculum and its organisation in order to reinstate 'traditional' values and a hierarchical society; a system of social control ill-fitting Britain's status as a democracy (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Goodson, Anstead and

Marshall Mangan, 1998; Simon, 1991). However, the power did not rest solely with the government, and conflict still surrounded the curriculum. In 1993 and 1994, teachers staged a boycott of the Standard Attainment Tests (SATs), which had been the primary means for judging school 'performance' and assigning budgets. The boycott was supported by the unions and eventually brought an end to the SAT system, in the process forcing the government to redesign the National Curriculum and remove the more fervent traditionalist and ethnocentric features (Jones, 2003). The re-worked 1995 version therefore halted the influence of the right-leaning government agencies on the National Curriculum, but it came at a price. Since the teachers had fought for and won the changes, the new curriculum was now embedded in schools, along with the new testing regime. The National Curriculum in its original and re-written forms had effectively put paid to the public struggle for control over pedagogy and schooling, and internalised that struggle so that it existed within and between schools competing for recognition and funding, thereby ensuring the dominance of the 'market', even in education.

### **New Labour, the Knowledge Economy and Managerialism**

The state's grip on schools tightened under 'New Labour', as education became essential to the government's drive for global leadership. Two central developments, the 'knowledge economy' and globalisation, which had begun as campaign manifestos, combined to shape the nature of education during Tony Blair's first term in parliament. It was argued that creating a highly skilled workforce was the primary means to establishing Britain's global power-base. The knowledge economy which was created encompassed both the Higher

Education Institutions, through greater access to universities, and the schools, through an advancement of the rigid structure of regulations initiated by the previous, Conservative government. Although represented as a change from the Tory ideals, the result was a school system which still relied heavily on the concept of marketisation and control, only this time the organisation of secondary education was more managerial in outlook (Jones, 2003).

New Labour swept to victory in the 1997 general election on a wave of national optimism for a break from the economic and social downturn associated with the years of Conservative power. However, in terms of education, the 'New' of Labour indicated a shift from the socialist traditions of the Labour Party in the 1960s and 1970s. This was particularly evident in the means by which the government aimed to change the education system. New Labour asserted two central concepts in order to ensure its education reform was a success. The first was to instil the belief that comprehensive reform had been a failure, and the second was that this was the fault of teachers, in an echo of the ideological project of the 1980s Tory government. The only course of action, therefore, was to take control of managing teachers in order to reverse the 'failed' school system (Jones, 2003). The public adoption of these two, combined arguments gave the government license to bring about further mechanisms of control, building on the Conservative implementation of regulatory bodies, and the surveillance of 'standards' and 'performance'. There was some suggestion that New Labour might effect a return to the more democratic, pre-National Curriculum days of delegating power to Local Authorities through a policy of local schools

management however, the introduction of the School Standards and Frameworks Act in 1998 ensured the National Curriculum, testing and league tables were retained and setting pupils by 'ability' received continued support. Significantly, in addition to the 1998 Act, government control over the curriculum was maintained through a number of organisations and agencies, such as Ofsted, the Standards and Effectiveness Unit of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (Jones, 2003). While New Labour heralded its 'partnership' approach to education, this partnership did not extend to the unions or to the Local Authorities and relied solely on these government-appointed organisations. What had begun with the Conservative initiative to wrest power from the unions and education practitioners, continued unabated under New Labour and was even strengthened by further agencies of control.

In addition to the stringent management of teacher activity through regulators, the government also introduced a range of important national initiatives, such as the Numeracy and Literacy Strategies (Jones, 2003). These strategies were important in the sense that few people would argue that literacy and numeracy should not form a central element to education, but also important in their impact on teaching. Introducing further aspects to the National Curriculum which existed across subject boundaries, and which were irrefutable in their educational benefits, also ensured that teachers were kept in line with government policy and, once introduced, added a further layer of management. The new initiatives required new forms of pedagogy in which teachers were required to become

proficient in order to maintain the standards laid down by the regulators. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) thereby became an intrinsic part of teacher practice. Again, there is little to argue about continuing to learn throughout the course of a career, particularly from an educationalist's point of view since this belief exists at the centre of the concept of learning. However, these initiatives were instigated and designed by government in order to fulfil its aim of developing the national economy through education, bringing the rationale behind their introduction into question, since the motivation sometimes appears to have been economic rather than pedagogical. Establishing new targets and monitoring performance, and keeping teachers in permanent training, reduced the opportunity to question the new initiatives and raise any form of co-ordinated resistance to the government's economic drive. Jones (2003) has argued that the education programme under New Labour was the most coherent since 1944 through the systematic manner in which the government altered the educational landscape in order to achieve its sought after 'knowledge economy'. This coherence must be recognised as a positive step away from the, at times, chaotic developments in education and attempts at reform which can be identified in British education history since the Second World War. However, it is perhaps also true to say that some of the more democratic developments towards social inclusion in education, such as the introduction of comprehensive schooling, stemmed from the dispersal of power across a range of organisations, institutions and individuals within the sector, rather than through a 'coherent' state legislation that maintained power at the centre. The 'struggle' over the curriculum in Britain may have appeared to have been an uncoordinated miasma of conflicting opinion, but it was the conflict which generated discussion and enabled some progression

away from a hierarchical system of education only accessible to the elite in society.





## **Chapter Two: Film and Education**

### **Introduction**

This chapter traces the development of key concepts in film and education from the Report of the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films that led to the establishment of the British Film Institute in 1933 through to the early 1950s. In particular, I explore the context of the Ministry of Education's 1944 experiment into the sponsored production of classroom films. While issues of organisational responsibility are discussed alongside developments in production, distribution and access to the medium, this is not intended as a history of the organisations involved. The aim is to trace the evolution of a range of different and in some instances conflicting views on film and education asserted by the main organisations and individuals involved in its development. The title 'film and education' is applied as this period of development culminated in the parallel concepts of teaching about film and teaching through film. These two lines of thought regarding film and education remain at the centre of debates surrounding its pedagogical application and implications, and the form and style of the medium itself.

### **Pre-War: The 'Educational' film**

The assumption that film was in some way inherently educational was articulated in a 1925 Report published by the Cinema Commission of Enquiry at a time when

the medium was still in the relatively early stages of development (Low, 1971). The Enquiry was set up by the National Council of Public Morals amidst fears about the possibly damaging effects to society of the public's cinema-going. The Report referenced the medium's potential for educational purposes, although there was little discussion or definition of this potential and how it might be tapped. In the same year the production company British Instructional Pictures established an Education Department, headed by Mary Field, and began production of a series of films comprising montages of material from previous productions, which were intended for general exhibition. Although these films were considered broadly educative, Low maintains that no one at this time was certain how to make use of moving pictures for the purposes of formal education (Low, 1971) and film was considered too expensive and too difficult to relate to the syllabus to become a part of everyday classroom instruction (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). However, progress in exploring these possibilities did not take long. In 1929 the British Institute of Adult Education launched a campaign to encourage the use of film as a 'visual aid' and raise the standards of 'film appreciation' (Dupin, 2006). The Institute's campaign led to the formation of the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films which was established on a unanimous vote of around 100 Scientific and Educational organisations. Although the Commission was an unofficial organisation, in 1930 the President of the Board of Education publicly recognised the influence of film on society and underlined the importance of the anticipated findings in the Commission's Report and recommendations (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932).

The Commission's Report marked a change of opinion regarding film and education. The Commission used the term “educational film” broadly to describe “teaching films” which were to be used as visual aids in the classroom, and “generally educative” films which would be shown to large audiences of children, adolescents or even adults (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.13). The ‘teaching film’ was divided into three main forms: films which taught a specific lesson, topic-based films that would link lessons, and films that would associate school work with industry, relating the syllabus to the adult world. Beyond this there was limited description of the categories or the content of the films (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). However although the definitions are not precise, the Commission made it clear that they saw a future and valued place for film within the education system and in wider society.

### **Organisational Responsibility**

The Report made a number of radical recommendations with the aim of recognising and acting on the social and cultural impact of film and ensuring its place within education. The central recommendation was for the establishment of a Film Institute that would function as an advisory body and take responsibility for the nation’s film output by archiving films and associated records, liaising with the industry on behalf of cultural and educational organisations and working to influence public opinion and encourage a greater demand for and appreciation of film. The Institute would also take direct responsibility for the development of film and education by undertaking research into the various uses of film, acting as a source of information for teachers on appropriate films, projectors and

classroom technique and, crucially, advising the film industry on the production of films for schools. The Commission recommended that the Institute should be constituted as an independent organisation that would be state-aided but not controlled. It was hoped that the formation of a Film Institute would create a leading body which would realise the potential of film, enabling schools to benefit from the medium's educational 'value'.

The British Film Institute (BFI) was founded in October 1933 and the organisation's *Aims and Objects* described the Institute as a "non-profit making corporate body", with a Chairman, nine Governors and an Advisory Council of over 100 representatives (British Film Institute, 1933). The Institute's establishment became feasible when the government announced the introduction of the Cinematograph Fund (British Film Institute, 1934). The Fund, which was the result of clauses 1 and 2 of the Sunday Entertainments Act of 1932, comprised a proportion of proceeds from the opening of cinemas on Sundays and was awarded by the Privy Council, "for the purpose of encouraging the use and development of the cinematograph as a means of entertainment and instruction" (Wood, 1933). The BFI had initially been funded through private means and membership (Wood, 1933). However, in February of 1934, the BFI announced it was to receive a grant via the Cinematograph Fund of £5,000 (British Film Institute, 1934; Wood, 1934). The award of the grant convinced the Board of Education to become involved in the Film Institute and to offer its support by appointing a permanent representative on the BFI Advisory Council. S.H. Wood of the Board volunteered himself and duly attended the inaugural meeting of the

Council (Wood, 1934). The involvement of the Board represented the strength of commitment from the government and established a direct relationship between film and formal education.

The overall aim of the BFI was, “to encourage the use and development of the cinematograph as a means of entertainment and instruction”, and its objectives were taken directly from the recommended functions outlined in the Commission’s Report (British Film Institute, 1933). These were broad and far-reaching and with just two members of staff, the Institute was faced with a difficult challenge in order to fulfil its remit. At the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Council in February 1934, it was agreed that nine panels should be appointed that would assist the BFI by making recommendations on films required for scientific, social, cultural and educational purposes and to give technical advice, amongst other responsibilities. One such panel was dedicated to education and would focus specifically on educational films for schools, children and young people. At the meeting Mr Ormiston, a member of both parliament and of the Cinematograph Exhibitor’s Association, claimed there was, “great scope for the manufacture of ‘educational’ films in the broadest sense of the term” underlining the BFI’s task of encouraging the production of films for schools (The British Film Institute Advisory Council, 1934). The involvement of the Education Panel and support from the Board of Education aimed to ensure that the BFI’s organisational role in developing the use of film in education was a tangible success.

R.S. Lambert from the British Institute of Adult Education, one of the BFI Governors responsible for educational and cultural interests, outlined the Film Institute's activities in the first year in a memorandum sent to the Board of Education. The BFI's work included fielding educational enquiries regarding films and equipment, plans to compile a catalogue of projectors for non-theatrical use and the intention to publish a list of films of 'educational value' in the newly acquired journal, *Monthly Film Bulletin* (Lambert, 1934). The BFI Education Panel also appointed specialist subject groups to advise on the production of educational films for Science, Geography, History and Arts, as well as Language and Literature and to encourage the use of film in education. The recommendations from these groups comprised re-classification of films already produced, mainly by commercial companies, for cinema exhibition to general audiences, and some broad suggestions for future productions based on the new Board of Education syllabus. There was little discussion of the treatment of the films or their specific pedagogical application.

### **Film and Pedagogy**

On publication in 1932, the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films reported on two research enquiries that claimed to establish the 'value' of film to education. The first was produced by the Historical Association and financed by the Carnegie Trustees. It aimed to ascertain the types of films required for the teaching of History, and the manner in which they should be used. The Association had just four films for their enquiry, two of which were made by a schoolmaster. The other two were commercial films that had been re-edited for

education users. The teachers surveyed were initially critical and needed to be convinced of the value of film to History teaching, but they were eventually won over. The Commission's Report claimed this as a victory for film as a teaching resource, since despite the lack of available and relevant material, the teachers' response was positive. A second research enquiry was undertaken by the National Union of Teachers in association with the Local Education Authority for Middlesex, the Borough Authorities and three film industry companies. The intention was to establish how sound films might be used in schools and a travelling projection unit was loaned to the researchers to carry out experiments in the classroom. The report stated that feedback from teachers using the equipment was entirely positive and suggestions were made regarding how sound film could contribute to education. These included the film as a preparatory exercise, as revision of knowledge and as an "actual teaching medium" (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.64).

In conclusion the Commission defined the qualities of film which gave educational 'value' as its capacity to stimulate and the noted improvement in "quality of recollection" displayed by children viewing films on topics of which they had no prior knowledge (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.66). The projection of films as part of a classroom lesson was considered an excellent stimulus for "dull and backward children" in particular (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.68). This is one of the first quoted instances of this problematic assertion within the history of film and education and the Report included no definitions of the terms used, nor analysis of the

pedagogical approach. The example given was of a “deaf and dumb” boy who was considered “mentally defective” and who, after being shown a film in the classroom went home and spent all night making drawings based on his response to the film (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.68). Later he attended a Special School and was found to be highly intelligent. From this, the Commission claimed the specific value of film to ‘backward’ children, drawing a direct correlation between film viewing and the children’s educational advancement (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). Based partly on these research enquiries, the Commission asserted that the value of the ‘classroom film’ had been proved, yet there included little expansion on what this value comprised, who the audience of learners might be in terms of age group or educational setting, and what actually constituted a ‘classroom’ or ‘educational’ film in formal or stylistic terms.

In the following years, the British Film Institute and Board of Education added little to the Commission’s assertions regarding the pedagogy of films in school and the concept of educational ‘value’ continued to carry weight as a broad assumption rather than a defined process. W.R. Richardson of the Board of Education’s Office of Special Inquiries and Reports drafted an agenda for a meeting with the BFI to discuss how the two organisations would work together. In his notes, Richardson stressed the value of film to education as “an agency of ‘illumination’ ... a means rather of awakening curiosity, stimulating interest and developing taste than of giving lessons” (Richardson, 1935, agenda note 1). The approach of the Board was broadly supportive, yet there existed a conflict



between the enthusiasm for film in education, and the Board's belief that it should not form a part of "normal" lessons (Richardson, 1935, agenda note 1). In addition the assertion that film should be used to develop 'taste' articulated one of the central themes which originated from the Commission's 1932 Report and continued to exist at the centre of the BFI's role in developing film and education. The Commission had described how film should be used to raise standards of public 'taste' and that teaching the public to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' films screened at cinemas would impact on the industry by raising the standard of production, and thereby enable audiences to watch films of greater 'quality' (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). The concept of quality was never defined specifically, but referred instead to technical proficiency in terms of the films' narrative form and editing, and to a reaction against the 'sensationalism' and lack of 'real life' of fiction films. Hollywood productions were considered a particular threat. By training teachers in 'discrimination', the intention was that they would pass this on to their pupils who would become the discriminating audiences of the future. There was no analysis of the educational benefits of becoming discriminating, nor of what this might entail either practically or pedagogically.

The BFI maintained this same line of argument with some adjustment, in that the focus was on the medium itself, rather than on film as a means to influence the industry as a whole. One of the BFI's objectives was to "influence public opinion to appreciate the value of films as entertainment and instruction" (British Film Institute, 1933, p.4). The implication was that the public needed a

responsible organisation that would ensure they were protected from the social and cultural impact of their previously indiscriminate film viewing and that this must begin with the education of children. The teaching of discrimination was considered a separate issue from the use of educational films in the classroom and there was little overlap or cohesion between the two concepts. However, there was some discussion in the 1930s as to what comprised a ‘good’ educational film in terms of its form and style (British Film Institute, 1937; Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). This was limited but showed a definite trend towards developing a sub-genre of film exclusively for the classroom.

### **Film Form and Style**

Although the educational value of film was apparently widely accepted by 1925, there was one important proviso: the films considered ‘educational’ were exclusively non-fiction. The Commission on Educational and Cultural Films stated unequivocally that fiction film belonged in the Saturday matinee, not the classroom, and even the matinees ought to be “of the right kind” (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.73). The Commission held the belief that the essential function of film in education was its ability to teach children about real life and the documentary could effectively bring this ‘reality’ into the classroom. In determining what classroom or ‘teaching’ films should comprise stylistically, the Commission made few comments other than to assert the medium’s unique capacity to show movement on a static screen, which was seen as a useful tool in recreating processes, in Science for example. One debate which was much discussed throughout the 1930s was the issue of sound versus

silent film. Film had actually rarely been a silent medium, since sound in the form of musical accompaniment or narrated commentary had accompanied exhibition from as early as 1907 (Altman, 1992). The recording and exhibition of synchronised sound, however, was not developed until the late 1920s, and its widespread use in feature length films is generally marked by the release of *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 (Cook and Bernink, 1999). Just five years after this landmark release, the Commission's Report claimed that sound was essential in teaching films, particularly if the film was to be used for direct instruction, through such means as the inclusion of the voice of an expert (Commission for Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). Yet in the first year of activity, the British Film Institute was still trying to ascertain the relative merits of sound and silent films for educational purposes (British Film Institute, 1934).

Three years later, in 1937, after working with Local Education Authorities to research the use of educational films in the classroom, the BFI had determined that sound and silent films each had their own relative merits and there was no conflict between the two forms (British Film Institute, 1937). In a meeting with the Board of Education in the same year, members of the BFI explained that they considered silent to be better for classroom use and sound for use as background films to be screened in the school hall (Board of Education, 1937). The deliberation over whether sound or silent was the correct form for educational films was based partly on the cost of producing films with synchronised sound, but also on the perceived effects of children's experience of going to the cinema. The Board and the BFI both made the deliberate distinction between

entertainment and educational films, and did not believe there should be overlap between the two (Bolas, 2009). However concern raised at the meeting over whether ‘teaching’ films that would be used solely in the classroom should be silent was based on the assumption that children who enjoyed the sound films they saw at the cinema would form a negative opinion of the classroom films purely because they were silent. Despite this conflict of opinion, the BFI recognised that sound could contribute more to the educational film than solely providing information and stressed the value of sound films in “creating atmosphere and general impressions” (British Film Institute, 1937, p.3). Neither the Board nor the BFI made any definitive policy statements regarding the inclusion of sound in educational films and the factor which occurred most frequently in the sound/silent debate was cost, both in terms of the production and of projection equipment (Board of Education, 1937; Commission for Educational and Cultural Films, 1932; Manchester Guardian, 1937). Beyond the discussion of the merits of sound, the BFI made one further suggestion regarding film form, which was that films used in the classroom should be no longer than ten minutes. There was no explanation or justification for this figure, although it was explained that the desired length of the film was dependent on the subject being taught (British Film Institute, 1937). No one had yet made inroads into determining the subjects which would lend themselves to the introduction of film, so while form and style were under discussion, there remained the issue of content and which films should be screened in the classroom.

## **Technologies and Access**

The major difficulty highlighted by the two research enquiries outlined in the 1932 Report of the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films was seen as access for teachers to appropriate films for use in schools. Those schools already incorporating film into the syllabus were making do with material produced for other purposes, such as documentaries made for a general cinema audience (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). In response to this difficulty the Commission's Report advocated a partnership between the film trade and education in order to overcome what the authors described as a "vicious circle" of supply and demand (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.8). Film considered relevant was in short supply and projectors were prohibitively expensive, so teachers would not request them for their classrooms without knowing whether they would be useful. At the same time, producers were reticent to make films specifically for the classroom when there were no guarantees that enough schools could either afford to purchase the projection equipment or the films themselves. Aside from cost, technical issues hindered the progress of educational film production. The standard gauge for producers was 35mm printed on nitrate film stock, which raised safety fears for classroom projection. 16mm 'safety' or 'non-flammable' film stock had been developed by Kodak in 1923, but producers were rarely set up to make films in this format as it was not the standard for cinema projection. The results of a questionnaire issued by the Commission in 1930 found that just 300 schools in Britain used film in the classroom, of which only 100 incorporated films into lessons on a regular basis. Those that did required a greater number, recommendations as to which films were suitable and technical training in the operation of equipment (Commission

on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). The partnership between education and the 'trade' was intended to bring teachers, subject specialists and producers together to undertake large-scale production programmes that would be mutually beneficial.

The British Film Institute made some headway with regards the technical issue of projection soon after the organisation was established. The British Kinematograph Society had advised that 16mm should be the standard format for sound films in non-theatric exhibition, i.e. in venues other than cinemas, and the BFI planned to pass this information on to all educational institutions (British Film Institute, 1934). The previous lack of standardisation had caused difficulties for teachers as they had no information regarding appropriate equipment for the classroom, which the BFI's publication of a catalogue of projectors aimed to overcome (British Film Institute, 1934). Information was not the only difficulty however. In 1937 the Board of Education issued a press release demonstrating the government support for the BFI in their efforts to ensure all schools had the use of projectors. The Manchester Guardian published a response from Mr Henshall of the National Union of Teachers who commented that while the teaching profession recognised that film was an excellent aid to classroom practice, the biggest problem was still the lack of equipment and associated costs, which was a disadvantage to poorer areas where Local Authorities were unable to afford projectors for their schools (Manchester Guardian, 1937). The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education suggested that the government could offer a 50% grant for purchase of cinematograph equipment to ease the

burden of cost, but while information may have been forthcoming, progress in provision of equipment was slow (Board of Education, 1937).

In an effort to research the use of films, the British Film Institute sent 315 questionnaires to schools and out of 141 replies just 88 schools were making regular use of projectors. The responses from schools also highlighted the teachers' and Local Education Authorities' lack of knowledge of available films and the unsatisfactory supply of suitable films for the classroom as major factors preventing widespread use of the medium (Board of Education, 1937). In 1934 the commercial company Gaumont-British Instructional (GBI) had begun a five year programme of production of educational films. In total the company produced 239 films, mainly intended for secondary schools, of which 199 had sound. The venture was not commercially viable since the majority of schools did not have sound projectors at that time and although 132 of the films were re-issued as silent versions and 40 additional silent films were later produced, GBI were unable to continue the production programme as there were not enough sales to generate profit and costs were barely covered (Buchanan, 1951). The GBI programme demonstrated that there was some film material available to schools but the lack of commercial viability meant production was limited and while commercial producers had made films that were broadly educational, schools still struggled to find material that was directly appropriate to the syllabus. The 'vicious circle' described by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films was still in evidence in the late 1930s and although the BFI and Board of Education were working towards generating greater use of film in schools and

there was enthusiasm within the education sector for film as a classroom resource, this was simply not possible if the films were neither produced nor easily accessible to teachers. Teachers required a sufficient quantity of relevant films at reasonable cost as well as information on their availability and suitability, if film was to fulfil its potential educational ‘value’.

### **Wartime: Production, Distribution and Technologies**

In the 1930s many large companies had developed their own film production units. The films produced acted as both marketing for the corporations and social commentary on peripheral subjects, such as the documentaries made by the Shell Film Unit on health and hygiene issues in Empire countries. Many of the filmmakers had emerged from or were a part of the Documentary Movement, the start of which was marked by the release of John Grierson’s film *The Drifters*, produced for the Empire Marketing Board in 1929. The Documentary Movement was concerned with the role of film as an agency of communication to make the public aware of civic and social issues and in the struggle against the profit-seeking cinemas to get their films exhibited the Movement had established an effective distribution network which reached large public audiences (Aitken, 2009). The outbreak of the Second World War brought an end to industrial sponsorship for non-theatric films but the distribution network proved to be an invaluable resource for the government during wartime. The end of this sponsorship also halted the production of educational films, which fuelled the difficulties felt by teachers in accessing appropriate material. The largest sponsor had been Gaumont-British Instructional and their five year educational film



production programme ended in 1939 when they had finally recovered costs. While the lack of educational film production was detrimental to the progress which had been made before the war, the work of the Documentary Movement provided a valuable model for the development of the educational use of film (The Arts Enquiry, 1947).

Grierson had joined the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) in 1927 to oversee the development of publicity films for Britain's trade links with Empire countries, where he established the EMB Film Unit. The EMB was abolished by Act of Parliament in 1933 and the Film Unit moved to the Post Office where it became the GPO Film Unit. With the outbreak of war the GPO Film Unit was itself moved to the Ministry of Information and became the Crown Film Unit. Grierson had since taken up post with the National Film Board of Canada but some of the filmmakers he trained while at EMB stayed with Crown (Aitken, 2009). In 1940 the Ministry of Information (MOI) began to sponsor documentaries which enabled the production of 'public service' films on a greater scale than had previously been possible and many of the Documentary Movement production companies and filmmakers were brought into the service of the Ministry. The MOI recognised that the public would not respond to orders from the government, even during a time of war, and decided the best way to convey information to the public regarding civic duties and responsibilities was to explain to people why their cooperation was required and the significance of their role within the community (de Mouilpied, 1944b). The MOI believed that film was the most effective means of conveying this information to the public, based partly on the

impact of the Documentary Movement's films on social issues (de Moulpiéd, 1944b). Between 1940 and 1944 the MOI produced approximately 500 films of which a significant proportion was documentary. The films were produced for publicity overseas, or what might better be referred to as counter-propaganda, public information at home and training films for the new industries required. The distribution network was based entirely on that developed by the Movement before the war and comprised mobile units which used the GPO vans to take projection equipment and technicians around the country, film shows in the workplace and rural locations, and the loan of films to organisations through a Central Film Library. The Arts Enquiry claimed that in just one year, from 1944 to 1945, the non-theatric distribution of MOI-produced films reached an audience of 16,000,000 members of the public (The Arts Enquiry, 1947). However, Brian Winston disputes this figure in his book, *Claiming the Real*, on the basis that the amount of equipment and personnel available could never have reached such a large number of spectators in the given time and argues that Grierson inflated the figures in his reports to the MOI. Nevertheless, the figure is still significant, perhaps more so, since the government believed that such vast audiences were being reached through the non-theatric distribution network (Winston, 1995). This distribution model had apparently enabled substantial audiences to view informational and training films and its 'success' influenced the resurgence in the development of film and education.

The Board of Education was influenced by the work of the MOI Films Division as it demonstrated that some of the pre-war difficulties in production and

distribution for the use of films in formal, classroom education could be overcome. This encouraged the Board to take a proactive stance towards promoting the use of film. The Board had expressed interest in using the travelling film van service soon after the outbreak of war, mainly in response to the challenges faced by rural schools as a result of the government evacuation scheme. It was believed that the increased class sizes and possibility that teachers would have to give lessons in village halls and other venues outside the school would greatly benefit from access to projection equipment to aid teaching on such a scale (Savage, 1939). However the mobile projection units were required for MOI exhibition and could not be spared for the purpose, which forced the Board to investigate alternative solutions. In 1942 the Board of Education contacted the BFI for advice on the organisation of “optical aids” for education after the war, stressing that they were not interested in discussing the usefulness of projectors as this was accepted as fact, but sought information on the practicalities of enabling schools to have access to sufficient quantities (Wood, 1942). The response from the BFI recommended that each primary school in Britain should have a silent projector, and a sound projector should be supplied for every ten primary schools. In addition secondary schools and technical colleges should each have a silent and a sound projector. The BFI also recommended the establishment of a Central Film Library with associated Regional Film Libraries, along the lines used by the MOI, to aid the distribution of films which had been classified as ‘educational’ (British Film Institute, 1942).

The discussions between the Board and the BFI demonstrated the commitment to meeting the requirements of schools. However, any projectors owned by the government were needed for the war effort and funds could not be sourced to buy additional equipment for education even on a small scale, so the BFI's recommended quantities were not remotely possible to achieve. Developments by the Board and BFI amounted at this stage to information and recommendations rather than any practical assistance for schools wishing to use film in the classroom. Furthermore the approach taken by the Board, while attempting to combat the identified barriers to access for teachers, had moved away from the pedagogical applications of film and its potential to contribute to children's education to a less directed purpose. The suggestion that film should be screened to large numbers of pupils as a means to deal with the problem of class size, rather than relating films to the syllabus, showed that the Board had reverted to the earlier position that approached the medium as merely broadly educative without recognising any significant value in its use as a specific tool for learning. Furthermore there were still few films fit for purpose so even if projectors could be supplied, teachers would still have struggled to find appropriate material.

### **The Ministry of Education Production Experiment**

Of the 2,800 films the BFI Education Panel and associated subject groups had classified as educational, the majority were not made for education and relatively few were suitable to use as teaching films (The Arts Enquiry, 1947). This lack of suitable material, combined with the end of industrial sponsorship for any kind of non-theatrical film, meant that a significant course of action was required that

would address the problem of production in order for any progress to be made in establishing the link between film and education. Towards the end of 1943 Jacquetta Hawkes of the Department of Intelligence and Public Relations at the Board of Education expressed the opinion that the public interest which would result from the publication of the new Education Bill offered a timely opportunity to use the MOI Film Unit to provide film for schools (Hawkes, 1943). Members of the Board met with the Ministry of Information to discuss the details and production was agreed upon as an 'allied service' which would enable the MOI to apply for Treasury Sanction to carry the cost (Richardson, 1943). The Board decided these funds should be used to make new prints of relevant Gaumont-British Instructional films for schools as well as to produce new films to the Board's specifications (Hawkes, 1943). In 1944 the Ministry of Education, as the Board was renamed under the Education Act, began to research and develop an experimental programme of film production specifically for schools. The Ministry took the decision to sponsor the production of a number of 'visual units' that would incorporate films and associated visual aids such as filmstrips, charts and handbooks for teachers, covering a range of subjects that would be specified after research and consultation with film and education experts. The aim of the experiment was to train teachers in the use of films in the classroom and to evaluate the effects on children of using film as a classroom resource, with particular focus on Secondary Modern School pupils (Crossley, 1946).

The British Film Institute had been excluded from the government's information and propaganda production because the MOI believed the organisation to be

incompetent and conservative in its outlook (Dupin, 2006). However the Ministry of Education held meetings and carried out consultation with the BFI to discuss the demand for films from teachers and the specific content of the planned production experiment. The BFI offered the opinion that some 90% of Local Education Authorities would like to run their own film libraries from which the films should be distributed to schools free of charge. The production of the Ministry's experiment films would be carried out by commissioned companies who would sell prints to the Local Education Authority libraries, which would make the venture profitable for the producers, encourage high quality productions and ensure widespread distribution (Ministry of Education, 1944a). Alongside taking advice from the BFI, the Ministry of Education consulted and worked with producers, teachers, subject specialists and Advisory Groups such as the Scientific Film Association and the Historical Association, and appointed HM Inspectors to advise in order to ascertain teachers' and pupils' requirements and thereby sponsor relevant material.

The production programme took over seven years to complete, with mixed success, but the action of the Ministry of Education in sponsoring film production represented a significant change of direction and was the first time the government had intervened in developing film as a classroom resource on a practical level. The Ministry's consultations with a wide range of organisations and individuals with both educational and film expertise demonstrated a shift towards a more directed pedagogical approach. The consideration of the production of films specifically for the classroom, in terms of form and style, also

showed recognition of the value of the medium as a teaching resource in its own right, rather than as an extension of visual aids or an adjunct to traditional teaching methods. The decision to invest in the experimental production programme indicated a clear step towards developing film production that would respond to the requirements of education, as opposed to the earlier attempts to fit education around the medium as it existed. The development of film and education through the Ministry's sponsorship ensured that active progress was made which had the enthusiastic backing of government and other influential organisations and, importantly, funding for the production had been secured.

### **Towards a Pedagogy of Film**

Alongside the Ministry of Education's progress in the production of education films, there was increased interest in film and education towards the end of the war from across the production and education sectors and further elaboration on the pedagogies of film as a classroom resource. The British Film Institute organised a Summer School in 1944 entitled *Film Appreciation and Visual Education* which took the form of a conference with speakers from the production industry, Higher Education departments, Education Authorities, the BFI and Youth Services engaged in using film for educational purposes outside of the classroom. The BFI had previously organised summer schools before the war, but these were focused on practical issues. The first, the 'Scarborough Film School' in 1935 dealt with filmmaking and the 1939 Summer School, organised in partnership with the Board of Education, focused on 'optical aids' for the classroom (Bolas, 2009). The 1944 event had a wider remit that included the

educational implications of the medium as well as the specifics of its production, and incorporated the expertise and opinion of educationalists who had worked with film as a teaching resource (British Film Institute, 1944).

The conference speakers addressed the audience on a range of topics from the technicalities of sound production to the theoretical implications of ‘visual education’. There was actually little discussion of the content or style of educational films, beyond a brief reference to the usefulness of silent films, due to the fact that the projectors were easier to stop and start to accommodate discussion and explanation (Scarfe, 1944). However, the speeches reflected a wide spectrum of opinion regarding film and education in relation to the pedagogical application and the educational ‘value’ of the medium. In his speech entitled *The Use of Films in Teaching Geography* N.V. Scarfe from the London County Council made the case for film as the focus of lessons, rather than as an additional resource or background illustration of a subject. Scarfe (1944) outlined the application of the ‘teaching film’ to the Geography syllabus and argued that it formed an integral part of the lesson and should be framed by questions, discussion and revision to stimulate enquiry. He also claimed that film should be treated as any other source of geographical data and was an essential means of bringing the conditions and activities of other places into the classroom that would not be possible using other teaching methods. Further support for this argument came from Geoffrey Bell of the Shell Film Unit. Although he was not a teacher Bell (1944) argued for the place of film in scientific study and research, stating that the ‘instructional’ film was a useful means of demonstrating processes



in Science while ‘interpretive’ films showed how Science affected people. Scarfe and Bell both argued for a distinct pedagogy of film which showed a consideration of the medium as a core element of education. In opposition, R.K. Neilson-Baxter of Basic Films, one of the companies associated with the Documentary Movement, and J.A. Lauwerys, Reader in Education at the University of London, argued that film should not be understood as a stand-alone resource but should instead form part of an integrated group of visual material which would include filmstrips, wall displays and teachers’ notes (Lauwerys, 1944; Neilson-Baxter, 1944). Lauwerys also argued that the term ‘visual education’ ought to be expanded to include this additional visual material and should not refer solely to film (Lauwerys, 1944). The two speakers clearly did not consider films to contain educational ‘value’ in their own right, since they believed supporting materials were required to achieve educational objectives, and the expansion of the concept of ‘visual education’ challenged the view that film offered a form of classroom practice that would not be possible using other teaching methods. However, given that Nielson-Baxter was one of the filmmakers commissioned by the Ministry of Education to produce films as part of the experimental programme of visual units, it is possible his speech reflected the aims of the experiment and functioned to promote the Ministry’s endeavour, as well as his own.

The classroom activities which film could encourage and promote were also thrown into question during the conference. In his speech, Geoffrey Bell asserted that the ‘interpretive’ use of film should be used to promote discussion and should

not simply be treated as a visual statement of fact. However, unlike the argument Scarfe had made for discussion as an educational activity in itself, Bell claimed that discussion was essential because of the nature of documentary film. He argued that the “defect” of documentary film was that the arguments put forward were accepted as true by the audience and therefore discussion was required in an educational setting in order to guard against this eventuality (Bell, 1944, p.61). Bell’s standpoint is particularly interesting, given that he worked for the Shell Film Unit, which produced corporate films that presumably required a certain level of acceptance of ‘truth’ from their audience. C.H. Clarke, a Youth Organiser from Barnsley, underlined this note of caution by arguing for the need for young people to discuss their responses to any films they had viewed, and in particular those films made through industrial sponsorship, since these contained elements of propaganda (Clarke, 1944). Clarke did not adequately explain the form this discussion should take and, since his main concern was the potentially propagandist opinion conveyed by the films, it seems that the discussion itself was of less educational ‘value’ than the process of teaching young people how to recognise and defend themselves against its powers of persuasion. While discussion was agreed upon as a distinct element which should be incorporated within any teaching using film, there was not an agreed strategy regarding its educational objective. A counter-argument on the issue of whether documentary films were propagandist came from another film producer. Neilson-Baxter claimed that the documentary ideal had always been “realism and truth”, implying that there was an inherent ‘truth’ within non-fiction films which was an asset to education as a means for passing on information and instruction (Neilson-Baxter, 1944, p.67). The differing opinions on this subject demonstrated a progression

towards the study of film as an agency of communication, which would contain elements of point of view, whether impressionistic or deliberately persuasive. While there was no agreement on the subject, the mere fact of discussion showed the development of a critical approach to the use of films in education as opposed to the early 1930s assumption that educational films could objectively convey information to a passive audience.

The opinions expressed by the educationalists and film producers represented a number of contradictory approaches to film and education. In the first instance there was division between the belief that film constituted an instrumental educational resource to be used as the focus for classroom activity, and the opinion that film should be incorporated within a wider group of visual materials in order to effectively achieve education. There was also debate in relation to the properties of the documentary form, with some speakers believing documentary brought realism into the classroom and others arguing that it actually brought propaganda. There were no definitions of either term, yet the manner in which they were discussed implied a positive, realist effect and a conversely negative, propaganda effect. None of the speakers suggested that the two concepts co-existed; realism was to be used to the teachers' advantage, while propaganda should be resisted. Although the Summer School was held during wartime when the issue of propaganda would have been at the forefront of people's concerns regarding any assertions of 'truth' and information, the term appeared to refer also to the concept of 'taste' which had concerned educationalists and producers alike in the years before the war. W.O. Lester Smith, Director of Education in

Manchester, argued that ‘visual study’ could raise standards of taste and move children away from the “cheap and sensational”, in an echo of the viewpoint expressed by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films in 1932 (Lester Smith, 1944, p.58). The argument for developing ‘taste’ and a discriminating audience had persisted, regardless of any reference to its impact on the film industry, yet it still remained relatively undefined and it was never articulated how the parameters between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ films would be decided, nor who would make this distinction. The divergence of opinion regarding realism and propaganda was extended beyond the ill-effects of exposure to such influential material, to include the specific application of film as a teaching resource. While some practitioners believed that film should encourage discussion and that this constituted part of its educational value, others considered that, though necessary, discussion was an essential means of guarding children against the potentially damaging effects of propaganda. The divisions between how the speakers articulated their opinions regarding film and its relation to education highlighted a separation between two distinct schools of thought which had begun to develop. One element looked to the medium as a tool for teaching, a means of learning *through* film, the other promoted learning *about* film in order to better understand its influence. These two theoretical standpoints existed in isolation and there were no proponents arguing for a combined approach.

The speeches given at the BFI-organised conference showed that the pedagogy of film had become a focus for discussion which demonstrated significant progress in defining the educational ‘value’ of film, yet there was no overall consensus.

The opinions expressed were borne out of individual practice and no steps had been taken towards developing a theoretical model. As a result there was no strategy regarding the practice or development of film in education, nor education about film (Bolas, 2009). A number of the speakers recognised this lack and advocated research into both the practicalities of projecting films and the specific pedagogies of viewing (Lester Smith, 1944). G. Patrick Meredith, Lecturer in Visual Education at University College of the South West, whose post was established in collaboration with the BFI, questioned the pedagogies surrounding film and education and made the deliberate distinction between this concept and the 'educational film'. Meredith called for 'linguistic' standards to ensure a cohesive approach to the production of films to be used in the classroom and a coherent policy for 'visual education' (Meredith, 1944). This appeal provided a useful summary of the wartime position of film and education. While progress had been made towards a pedagogy of film, an organised approach was required if schools were to develop effective and meaningful use of the medium.

### **Post-war: Organisational Change**

The situation changed in November 1946 with the establishment of an organisation intended to deal with the requirements of teachers, training colleges and education departments in universities and to plan a long-term policy on 'visual education'. The term 'visual education' referred to any and all use of film as a teaching aid within schools. The National Committee for Visual Aids in Education (NCVAE) was set up by the Ministry of Education in response to calls from teachers and Local Education Authorities for the government to take

responsibility for co-ordinating the production of films for education. The NCVAE comprised expertise from a range of organisations including the National Union of Teachers, London County Council, the County Councils Association, the Welsh Federation of Education Committees and five Ministry-appointed assessors. While some consideration was given to the range of visual aids which could be used in the classroom, such as wall charts and filmstrips, the main focus of the organisation was on film. The functions of the NCVAE were comprehensive and included gathering the views of LEAs, teachers and all other educational organisations involved in ‘visual education’; assessing the value of all educational films produced; developing regional film libraries; encouraging LEAs to purchase suitable films; determining the production of films for schools; researching methods of visual education in consultation with the National Foundation for Educational Research and encouraging the provision of training in visual education for teachers (Buchanan, 1951). In short, its functions were almost identical to the objectives of the BFI, and it was established to meet the needs identified by education practitioners which the BFI had originally been intended to fulfil. The Film Institute was perceived by The Arts Enquiry as ineffective, lacking in initiative and the 1947 Report claimed the majority of the BFI’s activities were “unsatisfactory” (The Arts Enquiry, 1947, p.174). The BFI training programme had reached few education practitioners, the organisation failed to win the support of Local Education Authorities and teachers, did not undertake significant research into film and education and nor did it build the comprehensive catalogue of films which had been promised (The Arts Enquiry, 1947). Much of the BFI’s failure to achieve its aims could be attributed to its unwieldy constitution and minimal funding but these factors would not be easily

overcome and the authorities needed to maintain the momentum of the work already carried out in encouraging the use of film in schools. The result was that the work continued, but without the BFI.

In 1947 five panels of teachers were formed to produce a list of recommendations for the Ministry of Education Preparation and Production Committee that would guide the production of the next phase of films for schools. The recommendations made by the teachers were endorsed by the NCVAE yet, as in the previous years, distribution caused concern for the NCVAE since the production companies employed to make the films had no networks for reaching schools. However, contrary to earlier situations which had resulted only in information and recommendations from the BFI, the Ministry of Education took immediate action and established the Educational Foundation for Visual Aids in 1948. The Foundation was an independent body, funded by a loan of public money which would be repaid from the income generated by sales of films and equipment to Local Authorities. Within a short space of time, the Ministry of Education's actions had established a system of production and distribution that incorporated the requirements of teachers and the expertise of professional production companies. Teachers made requests to the Committee Panels, who drew up a list of films which they passed on to the NCVAE. The National Committee then prioritised the production list and handed this to the Educational Foundation who circulated the production requirements. Production companies would pitch their services and, on awarding the contract, the Foundation would appoint an educational advisor to assist with the production. On receiving the

completed film, the Educational Foundation would only distribute the film if it was deemed acceptable (Buchanan, 1951). This system represented a definite progression towards fulfilling the needs of education in accessing appropriate film material for use in the classroom.

### **Form, Style and Pedagogy**

The panels of teachers were divided according to age group rather than subject in order to ensure an integrated approach to the curriculum at each level of education. The Nursery-Infant Panel represented children up to the age of seven, while the Junior School Panel included ages 7-11 and the three Secondary School Panels covered the age ranges 11-13, 13-15 and over 15. In just a few months the panels submitted an interim report which included detailed recommendations on the specific requirements of the different age groups in terms of film content relating to the syllabus, and some broad policy statements regarding the production. The policies recommended were tentative, perhaps reflecting the inevitable compromise of a panel, but gave some indication of the requirements of school teachers. Both 'long' and 'short' films were required, although there was no stipulation regarding the exact length. Similarly sound and silent films were both required, with the specification that sound films should not be projected as silent, and any sound included should be 'natural' and used sparingly. Colour film was preferred, but it was understood that colour production might follow in later years due to the technical difficulties involved, which would have been access to appropriate production equipment and the associated cost. The Panels



also recommended that films should be produced for the specific age groups defined and accompanied by teachers' notes (Buchanan, 1951).

While the recommendations were fairly general, they did contribute to the formulation of a national policy on 'visual education' which had been lacking in the previous years of development and therefore constituted a significant achievement in the progress of film and education. The policy also addressed some of the issues which had been absent from prior discussions regarding the 'educational', 'teaching' and 'instructional' film, namely the form and style of the films themselves. Although the precise length and the application of sound and silent material lacked definition, a national approach to film in formal education had begun to take shape. Alongside the description of how the films should be produced, each of the panels made recommendations for the subject matter required to meet the needs of the syllabus under discussion. Given that the Ministry of Education's 1944 production experiment focused on providing material for Secondary Modern pupils, it is worth noting that the Secondary Panel stressed that the majority of existing material required that the lesson be adapted around the film, rather than the reverse. The Panel was therefore concerned that future film production should be directed towards making films that would form an integral part of any lesson (Buchanan, 1951). The recommendations would seem to reflect poorly on the Ministry's sponsored films since the aim of the programme was to address exactly these issues, but the Panel were unlikely to have taken the experimental films into consideration. The Ministry's film production did not begin in earnest until around 1946 and the first films were

released in 1948. So the recommendations regarding the desired place of film at the centre of lessons actually echoed rather than criticised the work of the Ministry of Education. It was also recommended that the focus of films for secondary school pupils should be on social studies, industry and concepts of citizenship, with the aim of supporting the development of social and vocational interests for children who would soon be leaving school (Buchanan, 1951). This recommendation extended the wartime use of film as a means to educate audiences about their own, and contrasting communities and again emphasised the function of film as a means for communicating 'real life' to the audience advocated by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films in 1932.

In his book, *Visual Methods in Education* (1956), W.L. Sumner, Reader in Education at the University of Nottingham discussed the application of a range of visual aids to classroom teaching, including that of film. Sumner extended the Panel's recommendation that film should be used for social studies to a much longer list of subjects. He claimed that short, 'teaching' films of ten to fifteen minutes in length were specifically useful to History, Civics, Biology, Languages, Scripture and practical subjects such as crafts and PE, and added that the projection of films should involve activity and discussion (Sumner, 1956). The advice given by Sumner regarding the length of films was derived from the outcome of research carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research and the NCVAE in 1949. The National Foundation surveyed 450 primary and secondary teachers for their opinions on using films in schools. The research found that 'teaching' films should take up approximately one third of

lesson time and 'background' films should last around two thirds of the lesson. 'Background' films were defined as those "which may be used to illustrate a subject generally, to introduce or revise it" (Sumner, 1956, p.149). The division between 'teaching' and 'background' film had persisted from the first discussions of film and education during the pre-war years and while the 'teaching' film was still largely undefined, the general opinion was that it should focus on a specific aspect of the syllabus. The 1947 Arts Enquiry Report had been in agreement on the demand for 'short' films, but argued that these should be used to illustrate facts, without any mention of the activity and discussion which Sumner felt to be important (The Arts Enquiry, 1947). This division of opinion highlighted a lack of cohesion towards any theoretical approach to using film as a visual aid and advice was instead built on classroom practice. So although policy existed to determine the form and style, differences in practice led to differences of opinion regarding appropriate teaching techniques.

In terms of the formal structure of the films, both publications advocated a simple or straightforward treatment of the subject matter, and Sumner stated that there was no need for films to incorporate the whole range of technical devices available, but that slow motion, magnification and diagrams should be included in films for secondary pupils, though less so for primary. Animated diagrams were thought useful in Maths, while slow motion could be used in Science, crafts and sports to demonstrate processes and technique. The argument for including these filmic devices stemmed from the National Foundation research which found that one third of secondary teachers believed their pupils would not be interested in

films which did not include any technical devices, since they were used to watching films at the cinema and would compare the school experience unfavourably (Sumner, 1956). It appeared that the fear that children would respond negatively to films without such devices as slow motion and animated diagrams was a greater factor in driving their inclusion, rather than the specific educational objectives of the film.

There was some reference in The Arts Enquiry Report to the educational objectives of film but this was confined to the particular pupils who were felt to benefit most from its use in the classroom. As had been noted in *The Film in National Life* report published by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films in 1932, the Arts Enquiry also claimed that film was “particularly useful with dull and backward children who learn from films more quickly than from verbal or written explanation” and as such should be used in rural and other schools which had a high proportion of ‘backward’ children (The Arts Enquiry, 1947, p. 105). The Arts Enquiry suggested that in some instances film could actually function as a substitute for lessons, particularly in the Secondary Modern Schools which were considered ‘non-academic’ and would presumably therefore be responsible for teaching ‘backward’ children. Sumner also argued that these children may have responded better to visual methods since they were not dependent on words alone as a means of communication. However he disagreed to some extent and argued that contrary to the generally accepted assertion, the effectiveness of ‘visual methods’ was limited and not a complete solution to what he described as the “difficulties of teaching backward children” (Sumner, 1956,

p.78). Neither *The Arts Enquiry* nor Sumner defined the concept of ‘backward’ explicitly, but it was implied that the term referred to children with lower measured intelligence. Sumner offered the following description in relation to his discussion of the merits of visual aids,

Children of poor intelligence have indifferent powers of concentration, poor and waning interest in most school subjects, feeble memories for these, lack of means to argue in an abstract manner and to connect together the stages of an argument and to carry it forward in logical steps (Sumner, 1956, p.78).

The assumptions inherent in the statement do little to form a convincing argument since there is no further detail with respect to how these conceptions had been formulated, nor yet exactly how film might overcome such ‘difficulties’ as a “lack of means to argue in an abstract manner”. Sumner did state that further research was required. Nevertheless it is worth highlighting the argument for film as a teaching aid for ‘backward’ children since it was commonly agreed upon across the film and education fields at the time and had remained unchallenged since the publication of *The Film in National Life* (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932).

This period of development and the establishment of a new lead organisation resulted in a generally agreed upon approach to the form and style of films for schools in terms of the use of sound, the running time and the technical treatment of subject matter. There was some discussion of how film should be used in the classroom which was directly related to the syllabus and therefore exhibited a more pupil-centred approach, but the targeted audience of learners remained the

same. The educational objectives of using the medium were rarely discussed and evidence of the benefits to pupils was scarce. In addition the abundance of terms relating to film and education such as ‘visual methods’ and ‘visual education’, combined with the lack of a rigorous theoretical model to support and enhance practice, served to maintain the divergence of opinions regarding the application of film to the curriculum and its role in education.

### **Visual Education and Film Appreciation**

At the 1944 Summer School organised by the BFI, Dr Winifred Cullis, Chairman of the BFI’s Education Panel, stated that the increased importance of film in education along with the establishment of related organisations was the direct result of the work carried out by the BFI and its Education Panel in particular (Cullis, 1944). While it was clear that the BFI had been instrumental in discussions with the Board and Ministry of Education with regards to encouraging the use of film and, as Dr Cullis outlined in her speech, advancing the question from *whether* film should be used in education to *how* it should be used, there was opposition to the Institute’s claims of success. The Arts Enquiry Report, published in 1947, was critical of the BFI and claimed the organisation was incompetent to deal with the demands of linking the film industry with the education sector. The Arts Enquiry did not doubt the need for an organisation to carry out the work outlined in the British Film Institute’s aims and objectives, but claimed that the Institute could not meet this need in its current form. The Report argued for the re-constitution of the BFI and permanent funding to ensure its remit was viable (The Arts Enquiry, 1947). The questions surrounding the BFI’s

role and efficacy and the creation of the NCVAE represented the practical impact of the conceptual division between ‘visual education’ and ‘film appreciation’ which had begun to gather momentum. The NCVAE had become the lead organisation in forwarding the production of films specifically for the classroom and the BFI had instead moved towards the advocacy and teaching of the study of film as a social and cultural art form. The Arts Enquiry’s negative judgement of the BFI reached the government and, partly in response, the Radcliffe Committee was formed to debate and advise upon the future of the BFI.

The Radcliffe Report, published in 1948, was instrumental in changing the direction and activities of the British Film Institute (Dupin, 2006). BFI Director Denis Forman formulated a strategy from 1949-50 that included elements of film education, but referred to the educational activity of the Film Institute in terms of the concept of ‘film appreciation’. The BFI’s conflation of ‘education’ and ‘appreciation’ suggested an all-encompassing approach, but from that point on, the organisation actually focused on teaching *about* film, as opposed to teaching curriculum subjects *through* film. The BFI’s commitment to the concept was underlined by the appointment of a Film Appreciation Officer, Stanley Reed, who took up post in 1950. Reed was an ex-teacher whose role included training teachers and youth workers in film appreciation and creating teaching materials comprising extracts of films and associated catalogue information and pamphlets. He also took responsibility for a new publication entitled *Film Guide* which began as a wall chart for school display, aimed at pupils, and developed into a journal

available by subscription from 1951. The focus of the teaching materials and *Film Guide* was on the ‘appreciation’ of feature films (Dupin, 2006).

The concept of ‘film appreciation’ was never fully defined and as such incorporated a diverse range of practices and carried a corresponding diversity of pedagogical and social implications (Bolas, 2009). The concept had begun in the early 1930s in relation to the development of ‘taste’ and the education of discrimination between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ films. It developed away from reference to the film industry and ‘appreciation’ began to exist as an end rather than a means. In 1951 Andrew Buchanan, a former filmmaker for Empire Marketing Board and Gaumont-British Instructional, argued for schools to run courses in film appreciation that would teach children how to be critical in order to guard against the artifice of films in the cinema and their damaging effects on values (Buchanan, 1951). The argument for critical evaluation in this instance again referred back to the pre-war concept of ‘discrimination’ as a means of protecting children against cinema’s influence and the teaching of ‘taste’ advocated by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films. Ernest Lindgren, Founder and Curator of the British Film Institute’s National Film Library, aligned ‘appreciation’ with ‘criticism’ in his book, *The Art of the Film: An Introduction to Film Appreciation* (Lindgren, 1950). Criticism in this context was not merely a critical response to film and its relation to ‘real world’ values, but analysis of the form, content and style of the medium as an art. Lindgren’s approach reflected that of the BFI Film Appreciation department in foregrounding the medium as a



source of research, discussion and study in its own right rather than as an aid to the teaching of other subjects.

The BFI's enthusiastic focus on 'film appreciation' demonstrated the organisation's circular approach to film advocacy. It began with the aim of encouraging a general appreciation of 'good' films before working with the Ministry of Education to promote the directed use of film for education and had now returned to arguing for the place of a new form of 'appreciation' with film analysis at the core. A third approach to 'film appreciation' was expressed by Sumner, who argued that children should learn about technical devices used in film production in order to better understand film language (Sumner, 1956). Sumner's argument supported Lindgren's in the assertion that film as a medium warranted close, analytical study in itself rather than with any further socio-cultural objective concerning discrimination and he advocated for 'film appreciation' as a separate form of study, quite apart from the use of teaching films in school. Although these descriptions of the nature and function of 'film appreciation' differed widely, they all demonstrated the division between the study of 'film appreciation' and pupils' experience of viewing films in other lessons as a means for teaching the syllabus. There was no discussion of the combination of these two concepts and they were considered in isolation.

Alongside 'film appreciation' the post-war years saw the development of the combined concepts of 'visual methods' and 'visual education'. There was no such term as 'film education' and instead the concepts encompassed film and a

range of other visual aids already used in the classroom. However the work of the National Committee for Visual Aids in Education and the Ministry of Education's support had increased the access to and use of films and thereby generated discussion about its application within the education sector, which in turn led to greater consideration of pedagogy. There was no theoretical model for a pedagogical approach but practice had progressed beyond the passive act of merely projecting films deemed 'educational' to a more structured and deliberate use of the medium. The result of the increased discussion and practice of film as a teaching aid was to define its role more clearly. The term 'educational film' which had been widely referenced in the 1930s was replaced by the dual concept of 'instructional' and 'teaching' films which implied a direct reference to the syllabus. The term 'background' film however continued to be used, the definition of which matched the generally educative quality of those films produced by companies such as Gaumont-British Instructional in the pre-war years.

After many years of development, the 'value' of film to education had become more defined. This 'value' was assumed by the Commission of Educational and Cultural Films in 1932, reinforced by the Board of Education in the late 1930s, and heralded as an achievement of the BFI in the 1940s through the publication of its journals *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* (Cullis, 1944). However the production of films that would meet the specific requirements of the curriculum and the needs of pupils signified a practical demonstration of value. The period from the early 1930s through to early 1950s saw the development of a

type of non-fiction film that existed on the margins of production and exhibition and warranted little critical attention, yet its existence represented a significant accomplishment in the fields of film and education.



## **Chapter Three: Methods and Methodologies**

### **Researching the Archives**

I initially found a reference to the Ministry of Education's experiment into the sponsorship of film production in The Arts Enquiry's report, *The Factual Film* (1947). The Report made brief mention of the experiment, which at the time was on-going, and listed the Ministry's proposed titles for some of the films. I used these titles as the basis for the first stage of my research into the archives' collections. Due to the largely historical nature of my research, I sourced the primary texts, such as documentation and the films sponsored by the Ministry of Education, from The National Archives and the British Film Institute Library and National Archive. In this chapter I explore the process of researching the archives, including discussion of archival protocol and access issues such as policy, preservation and copyright, as well as the technical requirements of viewing archive film. I also discuss my approach to cataloguing the films, in terms of industry protocol and in selecting an appropriate method for transcribing and describing the moving image material that would inform my research and enable close analysis of the texts. Aside from the primary, archival material researched and analysed through the course of my thesis, I also used secondary sources to build the educational context of the Ministry of Education production programme. This chapter also includes discussion of my chosen methodologies in sourcing, analysing and generating information from these materials. The

discussion takes into account the contentious issues of re/creating ‘histories’ from historical sources, drawing on post-structural theories of Foucault and Derrida to discuss the subjectivity of historical ‘facts’, the role of archives in establishing and re/presenting histories, and the impact on my research of these issues.

My research seeks to address the following question: can analysis of the Ministry of Education visual unit production programme inform current film education strategies and offer an insight into why the struggle for government recognition of film education still remains? In addition, my analysis aims to identify the objectives and outcomes of the Ministry’s experiment, the pedagogical rationale and the ideological project motivating the experiment, and to establish whether this analysis can offer any insight into the result of such government recognition in the present day. The research itself was an iterative process, building information from sources and cross-referring at each of the archives, in order to construct my thesis. Both the British Film Institute (BFI) and The National Archives (TNA) publish online catalogues of their holdings. The BFI’s film catalogue lists all film and television material which is held within the archive and, similarly, the TNA database lists all documentation held in the vault which has been processed through their acquisition system. More recent acquisitions at both archives may not yet have been entered onto the system however, for the purposes of my research there was sufficient information to source appropriate resources. The reference to the films’ production found in *The Factual Film* (The Arts Enquiry, 1947) enabled a search of the online catalogue at TNA in order to identify any documentation that might be relevant. However, since the film titles

listed in the Report were provisional, these did not provide definitive search terms. I began with a broad search of the catalogue, entering keyword terms such as “Ministry of Education” and “film” and limiting the time-span in the “year” field to the 1940s and 1950s when the experiment would have taken place. This broad approach produced fewer search results than expected and I was able to identify a number of records that were pertinent to my research. The next step was to request these records and visit TNA to view the documents. The collections at TNA are organised according to the government department from which the material originated and chronologically ordered so that the file references follow in a logical pattern. Each file may contain one or many documents and the size of the file is not indicated in the catalogue so that it is only possible to determine the extent of the material on viewing. My search produced a list of files across two separate departments; the Ministry of Education, which is prefixed in the catalogue as “ED” followed by a numeric reference, and the Central Office of Information, prefixed “INF”. Viewing the documents in the first set of files I requested from the vaults enabled me to establish firstly that the Ministry of Education’s experiment had been documented in detail and secondly that the Central Office of Information (COI) had been central to the production of the films. Within these files I found correspondence between staff at the Ministry of Education and the COI with listings of the confirmed film titles that formed the experimental production programme, which enabled me to use the British Film Institute online catalogue to establish whether any of the films were held in the BFI National Archive.

Having located a number of the titles in the online catalogue, I arranged to meet with the nonfiction curatorial team at the BFI for advice, and to search the in-house technical database which contains specific information about the holdings such as gauge, format, condition, date and length of reels, and which is not available for public search. The BFI film catalogue only includes titles that are recorded as held at the BFI, not their technical condition, which would impact on whether they were available to view, since they may be undergoing preservation. Using the titles, production dates and associated companies or personnel I had gathered from the documentation at TNA, I worked with one of the curators to search the technical records for information on whether the BFI held copies of the films that I could view for research. With the exception of the films which I subsequently discovered had been rejected by the Ministry of Education or halted during the production process, the films were all listed on the technical database, however in some cases the production years differed from those referenced in the Ministry of Education production files at TNA. The BFI arranged for me to view those titles I had sourced and which were available, at the preview cinema on site at the Stephen Street offices. I then returned to TNA with the additional information I had gained from the BFI regarding the films and extended the catalogue search. I intended to research not only the details of the Ministry of Education's film production programme, but also the government and associated organisations' pre-war stance on film and education in order to ascertain the context for the Ministry's intervention. I therefore extended my search for records relating to the BFI, the pre-war Board of Education, and the National Commission for Visual Aids in Education which had been referenced in some of the original search results. This wider search enabled me to gather more details



regarding the field of my research as well as build a more complete picture of the production experiment. Finally, I passed a complete filmography on to the BFI curators who allowed me to access the films at the archive's main site in Berkhamsted so that I could carry out close viewing of the material which was held on various formats such as 16mm and 35mm film, VHS video and digibeta tapes. My research at TNA continued concurrently, supplemented with visits to the BFI Library for additional text-based resources, so that I was able to develop my thesis while the technical work of assessing the availability of viewing copies of the films and arranging viewing at the archive could take place.

### **Access to Archival Holdings: Protocol, Policy, Availability and Copyright**

The process of researching the government documentation to source information about the Ministry of Education film production experiment was straightforward. The National Archives are the official repository of government documents to which any member of the public can gain access, providing they have a Readers' Ticket. The Ticket can be obtained by visiting the Archives and carrying out a short, online test that aims to determine whether users understand the guidelines for the correct handling of archival documents and rules and regulations of the Reading Room. The Ticket can then be used to order files from the vaults in advance of a visit to the Archives. The documents are processed by archivists to ensure there is no damage and are delivered to the Reading Room for researchers. For my research I focused on the Department/Ministry of Education and the Central Office of Information collections which, as with all the collections at TNA are organised chronologically and catalogued according to an alpha-numeric

system. The system enables ease of reference and location of associated documents and files. As the official repository, there were no issues regarding whether government documentation had been handed to the Archives, only whether the documents existed in the first instance. Researching the documents required a methodical approach, working through each of the files in turn to establish relevance for my research, and making notes – in pencil – as to the contents, before sourcing further documents to supplement my research. I sourced additional documents from the BFI Library. These were journals, publications and one of the Teachers' Handbooks published for inclusion in the *Local Studies* visual unit. The BFI Reading Room required only that I pay for a day pass and complete a form for each of the texts I wanted to consult. The Library was at that time located at the BFI's offices in Stephen Street, with the most popular materials stored in the basement and less frequently requested titles held in storage at the BFI's vaults offsite. The material I researched was in the basement, and immediately available upon request.

With regards to accessing the relevant film material from the BFI National Archive, there were a number of issues that needed to be taken into consideration, such as copyright, the availability of copies, technical condition, preservation requirements and the procedure of viewing. In the first instance, it is important to note that although the BFI holds the national collection of films, there is no statutory deposit for films in the UK. This means that there is no legal requirement for films produced, distributed or released in the UK to be deposited at an archive. The BFI, and all other film archives in the UK, is reliant on donors

and depositors making the decision to have their material archived. Therefore, despite the films for my research having been sponsored by the government, there was no guarantee that these would be held by the BFI as they may never have been deposited or formally acquired. Fortunately, copies of each of the films produced were deposited at the BFI by the London County Council and all 16 of the titles are held in the archive. Furthermore, while copyright and the physical ownership of archive material can in some instances present a barrier to accessing archival resources since there may be agreements in place which prevent certain types of access or exploitation, for my research this was not an issue. The films were sponsored by the Ministry of Education and therefore fall under Crown Copyright, which the BFI has the rights to make accessible to the public and for research purposes, providing the copy originates from the BFI National Archive.

However, further issues can arise when requesting access to film material held in any archive. The fact that the films have been acquired and archived does not mean that they are available to view since they may be undergoing essential preservation work or exist in an unstable condition that would prohibit their handling for viewing. It is archival policy to provide access to copies of material for research purposes where possible and practicable, taking into account the preservation needs and technical condition of the material. The majority of the films required for my research had viewing copies, which meant that they were available for me to access. The system of prioritisation of preservation and access work at film archives means that not every film will have an available viewing copy. The work of a film archive is dynamic and on-going; as material is

deposited and acquired it is entered into the system, which changes according to the needs of individual titles as well as whole collections. Even where there are viewing copies, these need to be checked by the curators to determine the technical condition to ensure running through a Steenbeck editing bench will not cause any damage to the footage, or that the film has not been affected by any physical degradation or decomposition such as 'vinegar syndrome' in the case of cellulose triacetate footage. Vinegar syndrome is the term given to acetate film that has decomposed due to the chemical composition of the film, made from dissolving cellulose in acetic acid. Exposure to moisture causes the acid to seep out of the base (the plastic on which the emulsion carrying the image has been laid), releasing acetic acid fumes which further attacks the base, resulting in a softening of the plastic and eventual image loss. The films give off a distinct and harmful 'vinegar' odour from which the term is derived. The process is irreversible and in these instances, new prints will need to be made of the films and the affected celluloid disposed (Enticknap, 2005). If the films are in need of any basic repairs, such as mending splices or sprockets, this will be carried out in advance of any screening or viewing.

The films in the Ministry of Education 'visual unit' collection which I requested to view had few technical issues. Other than tramline scratches and occasional warping, the films were all in good condition. Tramline scratches appear as continuous vertical lines on the screen and are caused by the film having been run through a projector which has scored the emulsion. While sometimes distracting to the viewer and denoting obvious damage to the print, these tramlines are a

useful signifier for archivists and researchers since they indicate something of the films' history. Their presence demonstrates that the film has been screened using a projector and therefore in this example, it is likely that the print will have been viewed in a secondary classroom as part of the Ministry's experiment. The presence of warping is less indicative of the films' use. It is caused by the shrinking of the base. The sprockets which run at the edges of the footage cause the shrinkage to occur in an inconsistent pattern through the film, since there is less plastic in some areas. The result is that the base does not lie flat and a ripple effect can be seen so that the film appears to be twisted. Exposure to the air can accelerate the existence of warping in a film, so it is possible that the number of viewings will have had some impact on the level of warping since the film will have been removed from the can, and therefore exposed to the air, repeatedly, however it is difficult to form any conclusions about the films' use from this indication alone, since it does not represent definitive evidence. Nevertheless, the technical condition of the films is of interest, not only to the archive in establishing the quality of the copies, but also to my research since background details about the films can be ascertained by examining their physical properties.

A small number of the films on my viewing list, namely *Local Studies: Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* (1945), *Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham* (1945), *Water Supply* (1951) and *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth* (1948), were unavailable for access at the start of the research process as the BFI held only Master copies. The Master is the primary, or best possible, version of any film held in an archive from which copies can or have been made. The term

does not denote the format of the material, but rather its status in the archive's collection. So for example, the best possible copy may be a print that has a complete soundtrack and no degradation, while the original negative might have some decomposition resulting in loss of image or sound. At the BFI, the Technical Selection Department assesses all copies of any film in order to determine the status of each element so that the Master is preserved and if none exist, copies can be made for purposes of preservation and access. There were some issues in making copies of the, initially unavailable, films for my research since the BFI encountered technical problems with their transfer equipment. Ideally, new prints are made from Master material, usually onto polyester stock, which are then transferred onto digital tape formats through the process of telecine. The production of new prints is dependent on a number of factors, according to the prioritisation mentioned above, so it is not always practical or desirable to produce a new print if, for example, the film is not at risk from degradation or is unlikely to be in high demand for future screenings or viewing requests. The issue with providing copies of the four titles from my filmography involved a breakdown of the telecine equipment and therefore delays across the BFI's preservation work. However, the curator at the BFI arranged for the films to be transferred digitally, essentially by frame-grabbing the original in order to produce a DVD copy for viewing, as a temporary solution. These types of issue are unavoidable in a film archive, since the preservation work is reliant on the availability of specific, industry-approved and, importantly, functioning equipment for the archive to carry out its core activities. In terms of my own research, the issue caused only a minor delay, which did not impact greatly on the process.

## **Researching the Films**

The Ministry of Education's experimental production programme developed from the initial intention to sponsor films for the secondary classroom to include a range of visual aids. Eight 'visual units' were ultimately produced. These visual units incorporated sound and silent films, photographs, wall charts, filmstrips and handbooks for teachers containing background information and, in some cases, advice on how to use the resources in the classroom. However, my research focuses on the films, rather than all the material made available to teachers through the visual units. I took the decision to concentrate solely on the films for a number of reasons. The first, and primary, reason was that the Ministry's decision to sponsor film production specifically for the purpose of teaching secondary school pupils represented the first intervention by the government into the application of film to the formal curriculum. In addition, the timing of this intervention, relatively soon after the publication of *The Film in National Life* (1932), a report produced by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, and the resultant establishment of the British Film Institute, placed the Ministry's films within a historical context focused on emerging debates regarding the 'value' and 'benefits' of film to education, that drew interest from the film industry and education sectors as well as organisations concerned with the social and cultural impact of the medium on children and young people.

In addition there is a further, more pragmatic, reason for my decision to focus on just the film elements of the visual units, which concerns the availability of the

material. The visual units were distributed centrally, with copies supplied to groups of ten, neighbouring schools, co-ordinated by the ‘Area Groups’ which included HM Inspectors, COI Regional Officers and Local Education Authorities (Ministry of Education, 1947d). While the films were archived at the British Film Institute, there is little documentation in either the government or BFI files that offers any indication as to where the additional visual aids materials may have been archived, if at all. It is possible they might have been held in Local Records Offices around the country, having been deposited there by LEAs or schools, however, the task of tracing this material would have been almost insurmountable within the scope of my research. The information gathered from analysing all of the visual aids produced for each unit may have added further context to my analysis of the films and their role within education, however the focus would still have remained on the films due to the rationale outlined above, so the decision to omit the wall charts, filmstrips and photographs was more epistemological than practical.

### **Cataloguing**

I produced full catalogue descriptions of the films on viewing at the BFI for two reasons. Firstly, it is good archival practice to produce a full record of the film for the database, which is accessible to the public for research and enquiry, as well as for curators, to enable future access work. All of the films had an entry in the BFI’s catalogue but some were more detailed than others, depending on whether curators had fully catalogued the films in the past. In addition, cataloguing the films enabled me to carry out further analysis of the films’ style,



content, form and the specific details of the commentaries, where used, since the detailed description of the films requires close reading of their construction and stylistic devices. When cataloguing films, archives use a standard set of elements to organise the metadata for each record, which are equivalent to the fields on a database. Metadata (data about data) is the descriptive information used to find and provide context for individual resources and was devised with the internet in mind. The standard for creating this information is known as the Dublin Core, which began in 1995 with the aim of developing conventions for resource discovery and which has been adapted for use within archives. The Dublin Core is a set of 15 basic elements which are used to describe a wide variety of digital assets and which film archives have adapted for their own catalogues. The elements include, for example, the title, author, description, resource type and format, unique identification number and copyright information (Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, 2012). Not all of the elements may apply when producing a catalogue entry for a film, but the Dublin Core provides useful guidance on the information which should aid in the organisation of data for ease of reference and searching, and contribute to the standardisation of film archive records. In order to produce full catalogue entries for the BFI films, I worked with the curators to determine the relevant information required. In addition to the main fields I also included information on the technical condition of the films which is important to note for preservation reasons and in establishing the generation of the version viewed.

While there are conventions regarding the information that should be included in any film catalogue entry which are recognised across the sector, there are a number of differing techniques and practices which exist across the archives in terms of describing the films' content. Protocol dictates a third person approach, without using emotive or qualitative description, or offering conjecture or opinion on the content. However, this is almost impossible to achieve since each cataloguer brings his or her own style and perspective to the films which may inadvertently have an impact on the process of producing an 'objective' description. Nevertheless, cataloguers should aim to produce a description that is as objectively expressed as possible, and which conforms to the accepted styles and formats of film archive catalogues.

I decided to use two distinct formats when cataloguing the Ministry of Education sponsored films held at the BFI. In some instances I used narrative descriptions, while in others I produced shot listings. Narrative descriptions are written in prose and outline the events of the film's action, with information regarding what occurs as well as how and where. Shot listings also describe the events, but are organised according to the framing of the action so that the information is organised in the form of a list with the shot scale, such as long shot (LS), medium close up (MCU) and so on, appearing at the start of each short description. Camera movement and editing transitions such as zoom and dissolve are also noted. This decision to use both styles of cataloguing for the Ministry of Education material, rather than selecting one format for the complete collection of 16 films, was dictated by the style and form of the films. The majority of the

films followed the expository documentary form, using a voiceover commentary and illustrative visuals, such as *England's Wealth From Wool* (1948), *The Beginning of History* (1946) and the films in the visual unit, *The Story of Printing* (1948). Others followed the structure of visuals accompanied by explanation but were produced as silent films and so used intertitles instead of the voiceover, for example *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* (1945) and *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* (1948). These films were best suited to the narrative style of cataloguing since it enabled detailed description of the visuals interspersed with a transcription of either commentary or onscreen titles as appropriate. However, in some instances, I did include brief reference to the stylistic devices used throughout the film to aid in understanding the film's structure and enable further analysis. For example, where the cinematography or sound were particularly remarkable, in that they differed from the rest of the film or were used in a deliberately aesthetic or poetic manner, these were highlighted, since the departure from the otherwise consistent style of the film was noteworthy and required further analysis (see the catalogue entry for *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* in Appendix One as an example). Some of the films, for example *Instruments of the Orchestra* (1946), where the plot was minimal and the camerawork varied from shot to shot, I catalogued as a shot listing in order to emphasise the foregrounding of the cinematography over the action onscreen, denoting a differing production style (see Appendix Two for the *Instruments of the Orchestra* catalogue entry).

## **Constructing Histories**

The inherently subjective process of cataloguing represents a fundamental issue at the centre of my research which is worthy of some discussion; that is, the notion of history as a discourse constructed through language. The formulation of catalogue entries for films which stem directly from my experience of viewing the material is analogous to the process of re-presenting events from the past within a historical context, derived from information gathered from primary sources. The location, selection and interpretation of these primary, archival texts in order to produce a thesis raise a number of theoretical issues surrounding concepts of ‘evidence’, ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’, the role of historical research and the nature of history itself. In his book, *Re-Thinking History*, Keith Jenkins describes history as “an inter-textual, linguistic construct” (Jenkins, 2003, p.9), and it is this construction through language which is central to my research, since the arguments put forward are based on my application and analysis of the ‘evidence’ presented by archive material and the thesis only exists as a function of my own interpretation.

The term ‘history’ is perhaps ambiguous since it implies two distinct concepts: the past; and the writing, study and discussion about the past, or ‘historiography’. The following discussion refers to the latter notion of history. Taking this sense of history as the way in which we approach and communicate the past as the starting point, it therefore follows that the element of communication adds a further dimension so that the result can be considered a ‘construct’ – through language – rather than an infallible, singular, chronologically-organised re-telling

of events. While there are a finite number of past events, their potential interpretation is infinite since different researchers will contribute their own interpretation of these events through the way in which they choose to read them, juxtapose them with others, insert them within historical contexts or create new contexts through inter-disciplinary analyses and thereby use them to establish new discourses. This infinite variety in interpretation coupled with the volume of past events leads us to conclude that there can be no definitive re-telling of the past, since the wealth of variations across methods, contexts and individual researchers will result in a wide range of differing interpretations and theses, even when presented with the same primary sources for analysis. Based on this assumption of multiple interpretations of past events, Jenkins further describes history as a “personal construct” (Jenkins, 2003, p.14) since we look at the past through schools of thought and attitudes which are contemporaneous to our own research, applying theoretical enquiry retroactively in order to produce an analysis which is relevant to our own times. Through the selection, interpretation and re-presentation of information gleaned from archival material my own research can be seen as a ‘personal construct’, the telling of *a* history within the context of other, previously defined, histories of British education and nonfiction film. Furthermore, my ‘construct’ functions not only to create a history, but also the events within that history.

If history can be understood as having been constructed through the interpretation of events and their subsequent re-presentation using language, this then raises questions regarding the notions of ‘truth’, ‘objectivity’ and the reliability of the

‘evidence’ within the discourse. Foucault analysed history as a discourse, which he defined as “practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 2002a, p.54). The analysis does not attempt to state that the ‘objects’, or historical events, have been entirely fabricated through language but that the circulating discourse orders these objects into new formations, thereby bringing them into our language system and, through discussion surrounding these formations, our ‘reality’. While we can find ‘evidence’ of the existence of past events in the vaults of the archives before any interpretation begins, the texts are then arranged into new relationships and analysed to form a discourse that, in turn, serves to establish the events as a part of that particular discourse/history. By choosing to present the events as a ‘history’, they assume a significance in relation to the discourse created which they might not have otherwise carried. As outlined by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (2002b), “A thing can be absolute according to one relation yet relative according to others ... since, according to the way in which we consider it, the same thing may be placed at different points in our order” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 60). The placing of ‘things’ (historical events) in an ‘order’ (a history), lends them an absolute value, a fixed meaning according to the context and relationship to the other events within that history. The process itself is cyclical. The events of a discourse thereby come into being through the discourse that was created in order to discuss their significance.

The process of my research into the association between film and education from the 1930s to 1950s, and the Ministry of Education’s intervention which resulted in the production of educational films for secondary schools, follows the theoretical

model described by Foucault. Through the correspondence, minutes of meetings, published reports, and production papers of the government, production companies, teachers, pupils and associated personnel, as well as prints of the films, I was able to identify a chronology of events and activities which took place. The identification itself was a fundamental stage in building the discourse and assigning significance to the events and activities and the ordering of these events, their comparison, and their function to provide ‘evidence’ for an argument led to the construction of the history. The analysis then emphasised the events I felt to be significant in building the history so that their existence was established within the context of the relationship between film and education, as opposed to any other, for example, political histories, Second World War government record-keeping, the hierarchies between Ministry of Education staff and so on. The context I have created throws light on the events so that their significance alters to reflect and support the context.

The histories of education and the curriculum that I have constructed in this thesis pose issues similar to those raised by the nature of archival research. My analysis of secondary sources, whether contemporary or published retroactively, alongside some primary materials, such as *The New Secondary Education* (Ministry of Education, 1947b), can be interpreted as what Goodson defines as an “Acts and Facts” approach (1988, p.41). Goodson describes the tradition of educational history as reliant on previously-selected histories, which results in a reduction of complex and ambiguous events to a chronology of interventions. The concept of selection here is twofold. In the first instance, choosing to analyse the work of

particular historians in producing new texts is a selective process, and secondly, the nature of the 'primary' governmental reports on which discussions are based is itself selective. Government reports have themselves been dominated by a chronological tradition, outlining Education Acts and legislative reform sequentially, so that a timeline of educational change is produced, implying a linear pattern to educational history with each development following logically from the previous situation. In addition, from 1944, government reports increasingly omitted information on public and independent schools so that the history detailed in 'official' publications was biased towards state schooling (Goodson, 1988). The data available to historians of education is therefore already narrowed by a form of self-censorship on the part of the government. Any further analysis of published educational histories thereby experiences progressive levels of selection, shifting any analysis further away from the 'factual' events which occurred in the past to a summary of rationalised phenomena. Given our physical and intellectual positioning when writing new education histories, there is little that can be done to overcome this reliance on pre-selected historical narratives since our access to the past is limited by the information we are able to gather in the present.

Goodson (1988) and Whitty (1985) both argue that a greater focus on the issues and events from a sociological point of view would aid in counteracting the limitations of education, and in particular curriculum, histories and avoid the reductive 'Acts and Facts' histories. Goodson asserts that since the term 'curriculum' denotes two distinct concepts, one concerned with the



administrative, policy level, and the other concerned with practice, relying on external views of the curriculum through available documentation limits our understanding of the curriculum as it is “enacted, transacted, realized and received” (1988, p.51). In other words, in curriculum history, policy dominates practice. Analysing the internal curriculum on a ‘micro’ level, through the experiences of individual schools, classes, pupils, teachers, and so on, can therefore begin to redress the balance and overcome the narrow focus and implied singular coherence of a history based on ‘Acts and Facts’ (Goodson, 1988; Whitty, 1985). However, my research includes little personal history data in terms of interviews and analysis of the experiences of individuals involved in determining and shaping the curriculum in practice, which may be considered a limitation to my constructed history and the arguments developed through the course of discussion. My chosen focus is on politics, policy and strategy from an ‘external’ perspective, with the aim of contextualising the Ministry of Education film production experiment within the education system as it was defined by government. The overall objective of the experiment, to change the curriculum through the introduction of ‘new’ technology as a pedagogical device, requires analysis of the contemporary and continuing endeavours of government and other individuals and organisations in seeking to develop the curriculum according to social and political beliefs. The analysis in this thesis therefore focuses on the relationship between film and education in the contemporary setting of the Ministry of Education’s intervention but also seeks to bring the discussion up to the present time in order to promote the “development of an understanding of the connections between previous historical struggles and present contexts, actions and possibilities” (Goodson, 1988, p.56). My ‘Acts and Facts’ analysis of

education and curriculum history may well occlude a more sociological perspective and there are pitfalls to such an ostensibly ‘linear’ approach. The analysis I have produced may therefore appear only to deal with an ‘external’ conception of education however, my research aims to explore the external forces struggling over the control of the curriculum and the individuals within it, and the film technology as an agency of control within this struggle. The ‘internal’ element of my research is the analysis of this agency.

**“I’m telling you stories. Trust me.” (Winterson, 1987, p.5)**

There is a further issue with regards the ‘constructed’ nature of my research and the difficulty in establishing an ‘objective truth’ to my thesis, which relates directly to the primary sources from which I built the history and context surrounding the Ministry of Education’s production experiment. Rather than attesting to the completeness of the history, the fact that my thesis is built on thorough and repeated research into the original documentation and films which reside within official archives actually contributes to its status as a construct. In his publication, *Archive Fever* (1998), Derrida analyses the concept, function and physical structure of the archive and argues that the process of archiving “produces as much as records the event” (Derrida, 1998, p.17). The essential work of any archive involves the deposit, acquisition and cataloguing of primary resources and no archive is capable of preserving all the material relating to any and all events in the past. While we rely on the archives to inform us about the past, it is worth remembering that not everything that has ever happened has been recorded in writing, photographed, filmed and so on, and that not everything that

has been recorded in some way has been archived. In this manner, the archives represent a selection of recordings of the past and, as such, the archive is the physical embodiment of constructed history. The archives therefore hold collections of material which function as evidentiary records about the past which, by the very nature of the archiving process, are selective through no deliberate activity of the archive/archivist. In addition, the methods which the archives have used over the course of their existence in order to organise, reference and catalogue the collections have varied considerably, and include a certain amount of interpretation on the part of the archivists, in line with the social, cultural and political environment in which they took place. For example, the terminology used in cataloguing has altered greatly over time as language has changed and terms used to describe the material may no longer be in common usage, or may be considered an incorrect form of description due to, for example, racist, misogynist or politically sensitive connotations.

It is the selection based on the manner in which material is deposited, acquired and catalogued, and the socially and culturally determined referencing which Derrida argues actually produce as well as record, since we only have access to these 'incomplete' and 'interpretive' resources. There is no guarantee that the picture built from archive material will be complete, nor of its inherent veracity. Instead, we can only assume that the discourse based on such resources is our best approximation of events, filtered through our own subjectivity. As Jenkins explains, there are 'facts' we can determine about the past, such as dates, names, locations, but these only form a chronicle, not a history. However, the 'truth' of

any history actually comprises what Jenkins terms, “useful fictions” (Jenkins, 2003, p.39) which form the discourse in order to create some sort of order out of the occurrence of potentially disparate events. Since all historians or researchers bring their own knowledge, context, attitudes to bear on any research, the result is a subjective rendering of information drawing on a chronicle of events and formulated into an order that tells a story. Following this line of argument from Jenkins, Foucault and Derrida, the history I have constructed through the course of my thesis is, of necessity, built on other histories/discourses, which have themselves been constructed. My history therefore constitutes an assembly of ‘useful fictions’, a story.

Defining my own research as a ‘story’ raises an interesting problem, since following the argument results in the implication that there is little to distinguish between my ‘useful fiction’ and the reader’s ‘fabrication’. However, there is no reason to assume that the history presented here is any more fictional than other discourses about the past, purely on the strength of my admission of its construction. The argument is an epistemological dead end since we can never be certain of the objective ‘truth’ of any discourse. Jenkins argues that the past is revealed to us through stories and there is no way of moving outside of these to check their truthfulness from an ‘outside’ perspective because these narratives “constitute ‘reality’” (Jenkins, 2003, p.11). We engage with the real world events of the past through language. We can never access events from the past through experience, so that the language which describes the events – the discourse – is our only access.

There is a further issue which may lead the reader to question how this particular history has been constructed, based on the selection of archival material around which the discourse was built. The decision to use some texts and not others may well suggest a biased interpretation. However, in striving to achieve an impartial re-telling of events, information must be gathered from both 'sides' in order to avoid any claims of bias. This initially leads to the question of how to define who or what is on which 'side', and of what, so that the attempt at impartiality is itself beset with pitfalls regarding the subjectivity of interpretation. Furthermore, since the notion of 'objectivity', on which any potential bias hinges, is an epistemological impossibility, the argument no longer holds weight. In effect, my selection of material with which to build this history does not signify falsehood, only the inevitable subjectivity of any discourse about the past which, while constructed, adheres to the methodological conventions of its type and presents the reader with an argument based on the 'evidence' as found.



## **Chapter Four: The Ministry of Education Visual Unit Production**

### **Experiment**

#### **Introduction**

The original document collections of the Board, and later, Ministry of Education and the Central Office of Information (COI), which co-ordinated the Ministry's film production programme held at TNA include correspondence, minutes of meetings, film treatments and scripts, as well as copies of the teachers' notes supplied with the visual units. The following analysis of the available documents explores the pre-production and production processes in order to establish the methodology employed by the Ministry in co-ordinating production and determining the form, style, pedagogy and intended audience of what those involved considered to characterise 'educational' films. My analysis of the production process enables a detailed discussion of the aims, objectives and rationale of the individual productions and of the experiment as a whole, and provides context for my later textual analysis of the moving image material.

#### **Educational Context**

Amidst the debate surrounding the educational 'value' of film and its pedagogical application, the Board of Education took the decision to undertake an experimental production programme of films for the classroom. It was felt that the public interest generated by the Education Bill and subsequent Education Act

of 1944 would pave the way for new methods of teaching (Hawkes, 1943). The willingness of the Ministry of Information (MOI) to release funds and facilities through the Crown Film Unit as part of its 'allied service' of production for other government departments enabled the renamed Ministry of Education to begin the programme (Wood, 1943). According to the Ministry, educational films were needed because of the growth of the Youth Service, establishment of Young People's Colleges and the emergency teacher training programme which had been put in place to deal with the increased numbers of pupils in secondary schools after the introduction of the Education Act (Wood, 1943). The experiment was also a response to the identified lack of suitable film material for the classroom and the need to train teachers to use this new form of visual aid, both practically and pedagogically (Crossley, 1946). The programme was not only designed to meet these practical concerns, it also aimed to fulfil the need for research into the educational 'value' of visual education (Roseveare, 1946b). The production of the films was an experiment in itself, in terms of the form and content of material, and the Ministry of Education planned to test the films in schools and use the evidence gathered to shape the programme and inform future filmmaking (Richardson, 1945; Roseveare, 1946b). This approach demonstrated the commitment to investing in visual media as an integral element of the newly established education system however the aims of the production programme were even broader in scope. Although previous concerns within film and education circles had primarily been the lack of relevant material for teaching, the Ministry's experiment was not simply intended to provide film to fit the syllabus but to use film as a means of changing the curriculum, by introducing new



methods of teaching and learning through project-based work which focused on visual aids (de Mouilpied, 1946d).

While the Ministry was relatively explicit about the experiment's overall aims, they did not issue detailed objectives in terms of the pedagogy of the production programme, nor of the targeted audience. Instead control of this aspect of the experiment was handed to regional representatives, in the form of District and LEA Education Officers, HM Inspectors and teachers, with the deliberate intention of allowing the pedagogical objectives to be defined locally (Roseveare, 1946b). The advice offered to these 'Area Groups' was that the purpose of the experiment was to evaluate the visual material provided and investigate how it could be used in the classroom as well as any problems that arose (Roseveare, 1946b). The pedagogical application of the films was therefore determined only after production, as opposed to film production having been informed by pedagogy. The experiment was initially designed to assess the effect of film and visual aids on pupils attending Secondary Modern Schools (Crossley, 1946). This was later modified to include children enrolled in any form of secondary education although in terms of intended audience numbers the emphasis remained on the Secondary Modern (Ministry of Education, 1946a). The Ministry planned to select from 1,500 Grammar Schools, 10,000 Secondary Moderns and 3-4,000 "other" schools for inclusion in the experimental use of the films in order to gather feedback (Ministry of Education, 1945 p.2). Although the Ministry of Education's argument for the production of educational films was based in part on the increase in Youth Services and Young People's Colleges, these no longer

formed a prominent part of the production programme. The educational aspects of the experiment, in terms of classroom practice and the age and level of pupils, were not outlined in detail at the outset but developed through the course of the production process and this same approach was taken with respect to determining the role of film.

Despite its requirement having purportedly been an instigating factor of the production programme, the experiment comprised more than just film. The programme instead consisted of packages of material called ‘visual units’, defined as “a combination of two or more media of publication and display for the use of schools” (Ministry of Education, 1949). The units included sound and in some instances silent films, filmstrips, photographic material with accompanying explanatory text displayed on wall panels, models and printed notes for teachers (de Mouilpied, 1946e). Still more material was added to the units during the production process, for example leaflets that included background information for pupils (de Mouilpied, 1946g). Maps were also added and “handleable material” for the classroom (Forman, 1947b). The Minister of Education stressed the importance of including other visual media since it was believed that film should not be provided in isolation (Ministry of Education, 1946c). The Ministry later justified the decision by explaining that “no single medium is capable of doing all that is required” (Ministry of Education, 1949). This justification would seem to contradict the government’s initial intention to promote and evaluate the role of film as an educational resource and the methodology of its application since this was expanded to incorporate a range of visual aids. What had begun as an

innovative foray into film production for secondary schools, instigated largely by discussions with the British Film Institute regarding the ‘benefits’ of film education and identified lack of films for the classroom, became a broader and more ambitious undertaking.

### **Defining the Visual Units**

Having secured the agreement of the MOI to fund the production programme, the Ministry of Education wasted no time in planning the visual units. The agreement stipulated that while the MOI would carry out production, this must be spread over the course of a year to ensure the Film Unit had the capacity to produce the films (Radcliffe, 1943). As a result, the Ministry was keen to get film production underway since it was clear that the MOI personnel and facilities were available for a limited time (Richardson, 1944a). The Ministry were able to sponsor twelve films and had not yet determined what visual units should be made, so requested ideas for topics from Divisional and HM Inspectors in January of 1944 (Hawkes, 1944j). The selection decisions were based entirely on the suggestions made by Ministry personnel or HM Inspectors, some of whom were then asked to form curriculum subject committees in order to consider the options (Richardson, 1944a). The Ministry of Education did not publish strict parameters to define the visual units and so the process of determining the subject matter resulted in proposals for a diverse group of films. Initial suggestions were proposed to the MOI in March of 1944, some more specific than others. The first two suggested films were speculative and concerned aspects of teacher training, while an additional four were assigned the working titles of *The House You Live In*, *Britain*

*Before the Romans*, *Local Study* and *Principles of Engineering Design* (Hawkes, 1944a). Two further suggestions were put forward at the end of the year, for a film on British ships or seafaring and one focusing on the development of the wool trade in Britain (Hawkes, 1944g). However not all of these initial ideas made it onto the final production list.

One of the films which did make it into production, *Local Studies*, was put forward by HM Inspector Jenkins and based on the work of a Geography Master at a school in Devon (Hawkes, 1944f; Hawkes, 1944m). *Local Studies* was envisaged with the dual purpose of training teachers to undertake survey work and to encourage both teachers and pupils to carry out similar work of their own (Hawkes, 1944n). As stipulated by the Ministry, the intention was to highlight the benefits of project work as a teaching technique, rather than to meet the needs of a specific curriculum subject (Mander, 1944). Two further films which remained from the first list were proposed by staff at the Ministry of Education. Mr Richardson of the Office of Special Inquiries and Reports put forward the suggestion for *The House You Live In* (Hawkes, 1946k). The aim of the film was similar to that of *Local Studies* in that its intention was to stimulate active study by teachers and pupils in their local area (Ministry of Education, 1947c). The film was also intended as a means of generating interest in the subject matter, but there were no further pedagogical objectives detailed and no curriculum subject specified for its application (Ministry of Education, 1947c). *Britain Before the Romans* was suggested by Jacquetta Hawkes, also from the Office of Special Inquiries and Reports as the subject matter was her own area of expertise

(Richardson, 1944a). Hawkes was an eminent and published archaeologist who was employed by the Ministry throughout the war years (Finn, 2009). No explanation was recorded as to the learning objectives of the decision to produce this film.

In stark contrast to the processes of deciding upon *The House You Live In* and *Britain Before the Romans*, the selection of the fourth unit, *Water Supply*, involved a good deal of discussion and research. Hawkes contacted the Scientific Film Association (SFA) and asked for suggestions for films to fit the Science syllabus that could be made within the scope of the experiment (Hawkes, 1945h). The Association was then invited to draw up a report outlining a film that would be suitable for children aged 11-14 (Scientific Film Association, 1945). The SFA responded by establishing a sub-committee of their own Educational Committee comprising three teachers, a specialist in schools broadcasting and an educationalist, in order to discuss potential films for the Ministry (Coppen, 1945a). The sub-committee researched films that were available, in order to avoid the possibility of duplicating material already in existence before making their final suggestion of *Water Supply* (Coppen, 1945a). Another HM Inspector, Mr Winn, suggested the fifth film. Winn responded to Richardson's circular requesting proposals and suggested that a group of films be made for the Music syllabus (Hawkes, 1944j). *Instruments of the Orchestra* was selected for production and, as the title implied, the focus was on the orchestra rather than music more generally (Hawkes, 1946h). In addition a supporting film was

proposed that would deal with the physics of sound so that the unit was now targeted at Science as well as Music (Hawkes, 1946i).

Jacquetta Hawkes was integral to the proposals for two further film productions. A film on the history of the printing press was originally suggested by John Wales at the production company Films of Fact, who was himself an experienced teacher (Forman, 1946b). Hawkes then recommended the idea to her colleagues, along with another film detailing the development of writing on the strength that they had received no other suggestions (Hawkes, 1945i). As with *Britain Before the Romans*, this film proposal appeared to have been based more on the interests and expertise of Ministry personnel than on identified classroom requirements. The approval based on the fact that no other ideas were forthcoming seemed to imply a lack of rigour in the selection process. With regards the film on printing, HMI Travis was asked for advice and responded in support of the suggestion, stating that he believed it would be of great interest to children in order for them to learn about the production of books (Travis, 1945). A supplementary film was added at a later date by Peter Bradford, the Director in charge of the production at Films of Fact, who believed that it was necessary when dealing with the topic to also include information about the development of the papermaking industry. This film was duly added to the production list (Boon, 2010). There appeared to have been little to no consideration of the contribution to education made by *The History of Writing* and *The Story of Printing*, other than that the topics were assumed to have been of interest. A film on the development of the wool trade was also proposed, inspired by a book on the subject written by Professor Eileen

Power and initiated by Frank Wormald of the British Museum (Hawkes, 1945e; Hawkes, 1945k). This topic also lacked any concrete justification for its inclusion. Other than the intended audience of children from aged 12, there was no recorded information regarding its application to the curriculum or pedagogical objectives and the only written description of the content at this stage emphasised the need to focus on the trade rather than the industrial aspect of the topic (Hawkes, 1945g).

The decisions regarding the selection of films to be made for the Ministry's experimental production programme were diverse in terms of the personnel involved, the inspiration for the ideas and the subject matter with which the films were intended to deal. One unifying factor which ran across all the decisions however was the lack of rigorous attention to the pedagogical application of the material, both relating to the curriculum subject which the films aimed to support and for the learning objectives they were designed to meet. Some, contrary to the initial intention, were planned to fit subjects within the syllabus such as *Instruments of the Orchestra*, while others only held an implied relationship to the school curriculum, such as *Britain Before the Romans* and *The History of Writing*. Not everyone involved was entirely satisfied with the manner of selection. Even *Water Supply*, which was decided upon after a lengthy process of discussion by experts at the SFA was criticised by HMI Dance, the Staff Inspector in Visual Aids, who did not believe there was a clear demand for the film (Dance, 1945b). Mr Roseveare who was a Ministry of Education employee and who served on the panel of History experts tasked with contributing and advising on the films, was

critical of the topics that were chosen and questioned the pedagogical justifications of the films (Roseveare, 1946a). There was no explanation in response to Roseveare's concerns and the Ministry's experimental production programme was already underway. Due to the timescale of selection and receipt of advice from the various parties, proposals for films were made after production on the first suggestions had begun. By the end of the proposal process nine visual units were set for production; three less than expected at the start. The first, *Local Studies*, incorporated four film titles which were *Near Home*, *Simple Casting in Steel*, *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* and *Cine Panorama*. The second unit was *The House You Live In: Houses in History* and the third *The Beginning of History* which had originally been called *Britain Before the Romans*. *Water Supply* was the fourth unit, while *Instruments of the Orchestra* and its subsidiary film *Physics of Music* formed the fifth visual unit. Next were *The History of Writing* and *The Story of Printing* which included the additional film *The Story of Papermaking*. *Ships and Seafaring* was planned as the eighth visual unit but abandoned in 1948 and no documentation exists regarding its production (see The National Archives collection, file reference ED 121/454). The ninth and final visual unit in the Ministry of Education's programme was *History of the English Wool Trade* (de Mouilpied, 1946e). The list of films was diverse in terms of subject matter, although there was some bias towards the History syllabus, and there was no explanation as to how the films related to secondary school teaching. While the Ministry consulted with HM Inspectors and subject experts, the choice of topics was seemingly arbitrary.



## **The Role of the COI**

The Ministry of Information (MOI) had agreed to make the films sponsored by the Ministry of Education almost immediately however, the process of production was not straightforward. The responsibility fell to the Central Office of Information (COI) and its Films Division but the production itself was not simply assigned to personnel at the COI (de Mouilpied, 1945b). Decisions regarding work within the Films Division were controlled by a committee which consisted of Public Relations Officers from the various Ministries. The Films Division had no powers to determine production and instead responded to requests from government departments. When a film was requested and agreed upon, its production was sub-contracted either to the Crown Film Unit within COI or to one of the independent production companies who were associated with the MOI throughout the Second World War (Manvell, 1947).

In order to carry out the production of the required educational films, the MOI established a committee to coordinate the work on the visual units as a whole and a COI Visual Units Committee was set up to coordinate the production of the films and filmstrips (de Mouilpied, 1946e). The MOI requested information and advice from the Ministry of Education on their specific requirements for the films (Bamford, 1946). In reply the Ministry outlined the first six films required (Hawkes, 1944a). However, four of the films were not approved by the MOI since it was decided that they did not have priority over current and anticipated productions which the department had been tasked with making for the government (Pyke-Lees, 1944). At this stage the Ministry of Education was

unaware of the complex process that existed to determine which films would be produced. The COI received an annual fund for all expenditure but did not have authority to administer the money. Instead all proposed expenses had to be submitted and then authorised by the Treasury in advance of spending (Manvell, 1947). Therefore any decision to undertake production of the experimental films had to be approved by the Treasury; a detail which the Ministry claimed had not been made clear and which resulted in a delayed start to the production programme (Pyke-Lees, 1944).

There were further complications in coordinating film production through the COI. While the intention had been to establish committees within both government departments that would take responsibility for organising production, the first meeting of the COI Visual Unit Committee did not take place until February 1946. The purpose of the Committee was to bring together all the divisions within COI who were responsible for the various elements of the visual units, such as the Exhibitions and Photographic departments that produced the wall panels and the publications department who produced the teachers' notes (Hawkes, 1946f). Filming had already begun at this stage and in fact five of the films were in production by January of 1945 (Hawkes, 1945b). The delay caused some concern for the Ministry of Education and Hawkes met with the Visual Units Committee at COI to discuss the lack of progress of some of the units, specifically with regard to the Exhibition department which she felt was not taking the work seriously (Hawkes, 1946m). Before the formal establishment of the Committee, the departments had each worked on the visual unit programme

separately and, according to Hawkes, “incoherently” which she felt was detrimental to the units and further delayed completion (Hawkes, 1946f). While this may have been the case, from the point of view of the COI, the way in which their work was structured caused them great difficulties in meeting the demands of other government departments. The need to apply for and receive approval from the Treasury caused delays and the disparate manner in which requirements reached the department from the sponsoring Ministries created tension and a lack of efficiency in workflow (Manvell, 1947). However although financing and coordinating the production experiment may have been complex, the COI was committed, though the films would take several years to complete rather than the twelve months originally planned.

### **The Films**

A large number of personnel from various organisations and government departments were involved in making the films. Aside from the production companies appointed by the COI, there were the subject ‘experts’ who were assigned the task of ensuring the accuracy and veracity of information conveyed and assisted in writing the treatments and scripts, and the HM Inspectors who acted on behalf of the Ministry of Education to supervise the production. In addition each film was assigned an educational advisor to work with the production companies and ensure the films were appropriate for the syllabus and targeted pupils and had defined pedagogical objectives. HM Inspectors were generally appointed for this purpose and therefore worked in a dual capacity (Crossley, 1946). In some instances curriculum subject committees were also

consulted, comprised of teachers and HM Inspectors. At the centre was Jacquetta Hawkes at the Ministry of Education who coordinated the production of the visual units, and whose collaboration with Helen de Mouilpied at COI Films Division worked to instil a level of continuity throughout the programme. However the exact process varied for each of the films so that the story of production differed in each case.

### ***Local Studies***

Having suggested the idea, HMI Jenkins was commissioned to write the first treatment for *Local Studies*, which comprised a broad outline of the purpose and scope of the unit in terms of its overall aims. At this stage the scope of the film was described as “directed towards the study of a society in its setting” so that the unit was intended to encompass more than one subject of the syllabus (Jenkins, 1944 p.2). The original plan was for *Local Studies* to be circulated around colleges for trainee teachers but the target audience was later expanded to include teachers in practice as well as those in training (Dance, 1945b; Hawkes, 1946j). *Local Studies* was also intended to be screened in the classroom which meant that the unit required considerable planning to meet the needs of the varied audience (Mander, 1945). After completion the treatment was evaluated by the Ministry and the concept was deemed too “subtle” for the audience of children who might not have understood the purpose of the film (Hawkes, 1944m). Mr Richardson of the Ministry also claimed that the treatment was “elusive” and that advice should be sought from more HM Inspectors to ensure the film was fit for purpose (Richardson, 1944b).

However, Basic Films were commissioned to produce the film elements of the unit and it was the production company who actually carried out research in order to develop Jenkins' work to produce a more appropriate treatment and script. Since the idea for the unit had come from survey work at Blundell's School in Devon, Kay Mander, who was the Director of *Local Studies*, arranged to visit the school to discuss their lessons (Hawkes, 1944k). The teacher at the centre of the project, Mr French, agreed to assist with any research the production company had in mind (Roberts, 1944). Since Basic were likely to film in Devon, Hawkes informed the local HM Inspector of the plan with the idea that he would assist in advising and coordinating production (Hawkes, 1944e). However Mander was keen to research a range of local studies work and to visit a number of appropriate schools, so Hawkes also contacted LEAs and Inspectors in Bishop Auckland, Middlesbrough, Chelmsford and Ely to arrange for Mander to visit secondary schools who had undertaken local studies work in their regions (Hawkes, 1944c). After the visits, Mander decided on Bishop Auckland as the location for *Local Studies* since it was well situated for photography, of a reasonable size, and held industrial as well as historical interest (Hawkes, 1944o). Basic Films and Mander in particular were clearly integral to shaping the film not only in terms of production details such as location but also with consideration for the educational purpose, and published a report which detailed the form and style of the film which Mander felt was appropriate to meeting the educational objectives.

In the report Mander outlined her vision for the film and explained that because of the two distinct target audiences the production would not be a “teaching film” as initially intended and would instead present a story of how a particular school undertook a local study and the benefits derived from the project (Mander, 1944, p.7). Mander understood the film as requiring two separate approaches in order to fulfil the stated requirements of inspiring children to carry out their own local studies and informing teachers of the educational implications. The intention was that the film would create discussion rather than for teachers to build a lesson around its content (Mander, 1944). The educational ‘value’ of the film was therefore perceived as illustrative, but for an audience of teachers with a focus on pedagogical technique as opposed to directly illustrating elements of the syllabus for pupils.

Jenkins’ original treatment described the form the film should take as “‘documentary’, especially in the sense of being honest and sympathetic and neither tied to prejudice nor made to a stereotyped pattern” (Jenkins, 1944, p.2). Jenkins’ conception of ‘documentary’ was contradictory in that by referring to its ‘honesty’ he assumed that the documentary form had the capacity to convey an unbiased perspective, yet the claim for sympathy implied a point of view, thereby resulting in bias. However, Mander disagreed with Jenkins’ assumptions regarding film form to some extent and described the *Local Studies* production as a “fiction” although it was based on the information gathered during her research in schools (Mander, 1945, p.2). The decision to take a fictional approach to the subject matter was an interesting and perhaps controversial one, since it

contradicted previous assumptions that educational films must be non-fiction due to concerns regarding the propaganda potential of fiction.

The script for the unit's main, sound film *Near Home* was influenced by the visits Basic Films made to the various secondary schools, and Mander saw the film as a means to convey the principles of local studies project work in narrative form. She described these principles as the freedom of local studies from association with any one subject, a lack of any pre-conceived plan and the need for children to guide the focus of the study rather than the teacher. Also important for local studies and therefore for Mander's film *Near Home* was the opportunity for project activities to involve first-hand experience and the inclusion of pupils from all stages and types of education (Mander, 1945). While the main film would function as a story, telling the tale of the relevance and educational benefits of carrying out local studies, Mander intended the additional visual material for the unit to be used as classroom aids and give background to the film (Mander, 1945). Three silent films would be produced that were directly related to the content of *Near Home* entitled *Milk From Grange Hill Farm*, *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* and *Cine Panorama of South-West Durham*. The silent films would serve the dual purpose of illustrating the work of the fictional pupils in *Near Home* by showing the project in action and functioning as visual aids for teachers. These films would be shot on 16mm, which was less costly than the 35mm used for the main film, and would be much shorter than *Near Home* (Mander, 1945). The shooting scripts for all four films were approved in April 1945 with just a few small amends (Hawkes, 1945c) and the films were ready for distribution early

1947 so production took a little over a year (Marcousé, 1947). A Welsh language version of *Near Home* had also been planned but this was abandoned after many months of negotiations with LEAs in Wales, mainly due to the difficulties of lip-synching the dialogue spoken in the film (Hawkes, 1946b).

The handbook designed for teachers using *Local Studies* was the only one officially published, by HM Stationery Office, and although it was particularly aimed at trainee teachers it included little advice about classroom practice. Its introduction described the handbook as “in line with the tradition of the Ministry’s Educational Pamphlets in not attempting to instruct [student teachers] how to teach” and instead sought “to stimulate thought along profitable lines through the study of an example built from such recent teaching experience as may point the way for future development” (Ministry of Education, 1948a, p.5). This sentiment made clear the need for teachers to adapt both the handbook and the unit as a whole according to their own teaching requirements. In some respects this approach contradicted the original purpose of the production experiment in its aim to develop teachers’ skills in visual education as it presumed trainees would be able to adapt film material for their own classes without instruction. The additional visual aids within the unit, which included the three silent films, now entitled *Milk From Grange Hill Farm*, *Casting in Steel at Wilson’s Forge* and *Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham*, was described as supporting material for the main film and the silent films were apparently intended to “relieve it of functions that might complicate or confuse its content” (Ministry of Education, 1948a, p.14). This statement suggested a



diversion from the original intent of the silent films and underlined the difficulties of the dual argument which *Near Home* had hoped to convey. In aiming to appeal to an audience comprising teachers, trainee teachers and pupils in order to convince them all of the merits of undertaking a local study, the film's message was perhaps confused and the subsidiary, silent footage was included not as additional visual aids but as the only material suitable for pupils. The educational objectives of *Near Home* were certainly not specifically defined in the teachers' handbook and the Ministry offered the following justification of its production,

“*Near Home* is a developed statement of the faith that if the men and women of the next generation, being grounded in its cultural heritage, have their innate powers and abilities fully developed, then the future will be held in the safest hands the present could find” (Ministry of Education, 1948a, p.26).

While inspiring, this explanation offered the teacher little to go on in terms of building lessons around the film in order to provide the Ministry with the feedback it required to complete its research into the ‘benefits’ of visual education.

### ***Houses in History***

Rather than employing an HM Inspector, the architect Ralph Tubbs was appointed to write the treatment for *Houses in History* due to his expert knowledge of the subject (Hawkes 1946k). Its original title was *The Englishman's Home* and Tubbs wrote the treatment in the form of a commentary which detailed the chronological development of housing in England from Mediaeval times through to 1939, focusing on stately homes and the property of

landowners and merchants. The commentary contained heavy criticism of the impact of the industrial revolution on the architecture of workers' houses and made reference to the future need for housing to be met by residential areas that had "unity and dignity", which showed a certain social bias in Tubbs' approach to the subject matter (Tubbs, 1945, p.5). Richardson of the Ministry of Education had no criticisms of the treatment, however there was dissent concerning its content and structure from other parties (Richardson, 1944c). Personnel at the MOI expressed the opinion that it was only useful as a discussion point and the emphasis should be shifted away from focusing solely on examples of grand architecture and towards the houses of the general population. The MOI also believed the treatment did not include enough information and expected a high level of prior knowledge in the viewer (Hawkes 1944l). *Houses in History* was intended for secondary school as well as adult audiences and was also considered to be useful for youth organisations and further education (Pearson, 1944). The wide range of audiences not only showed a lack of specificity in terms of the pedagogical rationale of the production but also a lack of consideration for the varied levels of knowledge and understanding of such an audience. However, a meeting was called at the Ministry of Education to discuss the treatment where it was agreed on Helen de Mouilpied's suggestion to expand the 19th Century section in order to deal with the impact of population increase and alter the emphasis so that it focused less on the role of the architect and more on society's response. It was also decided that the commentary was too long and would have to be cut to reduce the length of the film (Ministry of Education, 1944c). In response to the criticism it received, Hawkes re-wrote the treatment in collaboration with Tubbs to produce a final version (Hawkes 1946k). This

version was used by the filmmaker, H.M.Nieter of Seven League Productions, as the sole basis for making the film as he believed it was not necessary to have a detailed shooting script as the shots could only be worked out on location (de Moulpied, 1944). So in this instance the commentary, which had been written as a chronological narrative with few references to the visuals other than some indication of shooting locations, functioned in lieu of a detailed shot breakdown.

The unit as a whole aimed to show the development of domestic architecture related to economic and social background and the purpose of the film was to highlight the difference in architectural styles throughout history (Ministry of Education, 1946b). The unit was intended to be used as an introduction to the subject matter and the film, filmstrips and wall panels were themselves intended to introduce the unit to different, yet unspecified, age groups (Marcousé, 1946a). The implication was that pupils of different ages would find the range of visual media variously accessible however the justification that each element formed an introduction and that the unit as a whole was also an introduction resulted in a lack of explanation as to what the substance of the educational experience actually comprised. However, a letter circulated to LEAs by the Ministry informing them of the unit's production included suggestions for the use of the material in different curriculum subjects which offered some indication of its pedagogical application. It was suggested that *Houses in History* could be used in English to "stimulate visual experience and increase ability in verbal expression and verbal understanding" although there was no further guidance as to how the unit might achieve these objectives (Marcousé, 1946a, Appendix). The emphasis

was placed on the student to develop interpretive skills through working with the visual unit and the LEAs were advised that History teachers should encourage pupils to learn how to deduce information about social conditions in the past by seeing how people lived. Finally, some indication was given as to how the visual material could be used in Art to teach children to appreciate concepts of form by studying the architectural changes which the film and associated wall panels and filmstrips aimed to highlight (Marcousé, 1946a). However, even these broad suggestions were not transferred to the teachers' notes which accompanied the unit. The notes largely comprised background historical information regarding the development of architecture and some suggested activities which were arranging for local architects to give talks in school, forming pupils' societies to carry out investigations into local housing, visits to local industries and museums and the preparation of maps tracing the changes in land use in the local area (Ministry of Education, 1946b). The approach of the *Houses in History* teachers' notes mimicked that of *Local Studies* in encouraging practical activities in response to the visual unit, rather than explaining classroom-based work that could be achieved through the specific study of visual media. Instead the use of visuals was considered only as a means to understand the developments in style by noting the differences in form of the houses, which reduced the status of the film to illustration of the subject rather than focusing on the potential benefits of visual education as a learning objective in itself (Ministry of Education, 1946b). The visual unit was even described in the Teachers' Notes as intended to provide an opportunity for pupils to "observe and appreciate what previously may have been taken for granted", which underlined this passive approach to its use in the classroom (Ministry of Education, 1946b, p.3). In correspondence to HMI

Addison, who had been critical of the content of the film's commentary, Hawkes explained that the arrangements of production had been improvised as a result of the disruption to departments and personnel caused by the war and that no one had been appointed as an educational advisor to the unit (Addison, 1946; Hawkes, 1946k). This may well have been the root cause of the lack of focus on the pedagogy, and the film was not unique in this respect.

### ***The Beginning of History***

As with *Houses in History*, the teachers' notes prepared to accompany the sound film for *The Beginning of History* contained background historical information about each of the periods with which the film dealt, broken down according to film sequence, along with a transcription of the commentary against a brief description of the visuals. The notes did not include any information at all regarding how the film or unit as a whole might be applied to a classroom setting or even some suggestions to promote project work (Ministry of Education, 1948b). Also following the model of *Houses in History*, the production of *The Beginning of History* began with a narrative commentary, written by the historian Colonel Haskard (Ministry of Education, 1948b). The commentary traced the development of civilisation in Britain from the Old Stone Age until the arrival of the Romans. This commentary functioned as the treatment from which the film was to be developed and was sent to District Inspector Adams who was himself a History specialist, for his opinion on its relevance to education and historical accuracy (Hawkes, 1944d; Hawkes, 1944h). HMI Hales assessed the treatment with Adams and concluded that the film could be produced just as effectively

using only still images, the treatment covered too much ground and its content was too difficult for a school audience. Adams had previously objected to the topic for this unit and had suggested others to meet the needs of the History curriculum which were overlooked in the selection process. He had further, more fundamental, objections to the treatment and claimed that History was the most difficult subject to select for the production of appropriate educational films since he felt that any film that dealt with historical topics ought to include fictional reconstructions of past events which would prove prohibitively expensive (Adams, 1944). There was no discussion in this instance of whether documentary or fiction was the most appropriate form for educational films yet the comment suggested a conflict of opinion from education practitioners in this regard.

Despite Adams' objections, the commentary was passed on to the production company for development into the final film. The Crown Film Unit itself took on the production of *The Beginning of History* rather than outsourcing the work to an independent company and the Director Graham Wallace was keen to ensure the film's historical accuracy. Even though Haskard's original commentary had been checked by the two Inspectors with their knowledge of History, Wallace requested advice from Jacquetta Hawkes on its historical detail (Wallace, 1945). Hawkes offered her own suggestions and also verified the historical accuracy of the proposed film with various academics, museum curators and historians who each offered their suggestions, for example Professor Childe of the Department of Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. The feedback received concerned only the detail of the narrative and no reference was made to the form

or style of the planned film or its suitability for the study of History (Childe, 1945).

The Ministry decided two versions of the film were required and instructed the Crown Film Unit to adapt the footage they had shot and edit it accordingly. One version, specifically intended for school screenings, would be broken down into three chapters and the other would run continuously through its fifty minutes for broader educational screenings (de Mouilpied, 1946b). Despite the textual nature of the film's treatment this decision marked some consideration of how the film might be used in the classroom and the impact of educational objectives on the form of the film. Once the film had been completed by Crown, there was a divergence of opinion between the Ministry of Education and the filmmakers regarding whether non-diegetic music ought to be included in a film made for education. Having viewed the film, Hawkes wrote to COI Films Division to complain about the inclusion of a music soundtrack, which she described as "displeasing, meaningless and unnecessary" and requested that it be removed from the schools version. De Mouilpied of the Films Division agreed and asked Crown Film Unit to omit the music from the soundtrack (Hawkes, 1946a). Crown responded by enquiring as to whether the removal of the music was a policy decision as they believed it to have been useful for children, and in order for the producers to prevent any further waste of time and money they needed to know what the Ministry of Education had decided in this respect (Shaw, 1946). De Mouilpied replied on the Ministry's behalf and stated that there was no rigid policy on the inclusion of music in school films but there was "considerable

feeling in the educational world” that it should be left out unless it was the subject of the film itself, and that background music which overlapped with the voiceover commentary absolutely did not help children’s understanding (de Mouilpied, 1946a). Eventually Crown conceded that a music soundtrack might present difficulties for this particular audience but still felt that the inclusion of some music was necessary. A compromise was reached whereby the only instances of music left in the film were those during which there was no spoken commentary (Wright, 1945). This disagreement concerning the style of the film highlighted the absence of any policy decisions made prior to production. The lack of policy could be explained by the Ministry of Education’s refusal to restrict the terms of the experiment in order to generate a wide range of findings, but the insistence that music was simply not appropriate for educational films without any evidence to support the argument suggested otherwise. Along with the conflict surrounding style, the dissent from the educational advisors regarding the film’s usefulness to teachers and the History syllabus as a whole marked the division of opinions with respect to the role and production of educational films.

### ***Water Supply***

The development of the *Water Supply* unit involved even more conflict. The pre-production and approval of the film elements was a lengthy process and encompassed disparate points of view from the vast amount of experts brought in to advise on the scientific and educational aspects of the production. Hawkes wrote to the Scientific Film Association (SFA) in 1945 and asked for suggestions for a film and visual unit that would be used for “direct teaching purposes”



(Hawkes, 1945h). While awaiting a response she also contacted HMI Marshall to inform him that the SFA were considering the request and asked his advice on the specific age group that would benefit from visual material to support the Science curriculum. Hawkes made it clear that although she was interested in Marshall's recommendations, the SFA should be free to select the exact focus of the visual unit (Hawkes, 1945h). The response from the SFA was entirely positive and the Secretary of the Education Committee replied that the Association was glad of the opportunity and the issue would be raised at the next Committee meeting (Coppen, 1945b). A sub-committee was then established within the SFA to put together an outline of the proposed unit, aimed at pupils aged 11-14, which took into account the requirements of the syllabus and educational films already in existence to ensure that the proposal met a defined need in schools without replicating footage already available (Coppen, 1945a).

On receipt of the completed draft, which proposed a visual unit dealing with the supply and drainage of water, Hawkes declared that she was disappointed at the "social aspect", having expected a science-related film that made no mention of its role and impact on society (Hawkes, 1945i). Marshall was also unhappy with the proposal and believed it was "too comprehensive" for a general science course and would therefore not be of use to secondary teachers (Marshall, 1945). The suggestion was shown to HMI Dance for his opinion and, while he agreed that production should go ahead, he had reservations about committing government funds to a project that he believed would not contribute to a "purposeful experiment in the development of visual methods" (Dance, 1945b).

Despite the negative response to the SFA's proposal, the production company Films of Great Britain were commissioned to make the sound and silent films and the Director, Andrew Buchanan, wrote the first draft of the script which was considered by the production committee. The committee comprised members of the Metropolitan Water Board, Dr Lloyd who was an expert on micro-organisms, as well as Dance and a teacher, Miss Doyle, both of whom were History specialists. A script for a sound film was sent to the COI who forwarded it on to the Ministry of Education for approval. In September of 1946 the COI called a meeting between the Ministry, Buchanan and the SFA (Scientific Film Association Education Committee, 1948b). As a result of the committee's discussions, the script was re-drafted three times and some aspects that were considered irrelevant were removed and instead became the focus of supplementary silent films. The proposed unit comprised a 15 minute sound film and five short, silent films lasting between one and three minutes each (de Moulpied, 1946f). In addition three film loops were proposed as background material to illustrate the workings of a valve, suction pump and centrifugal pump. The loops were to be extremely short lengths of film that were run through the projector continuously to show the detail of the mechanisms in action. This decision immediately caused some upset and Denis Forman of the COI claimed the loops would not adequately show the process and short films would be better (Forman, 1946a). Nevertheless production went ahead.

On completion, HMI Dance viewed the silent films and expressed the opinion that they made “no contribution whatever to the development of visual aids or teaching methods” (Dance, 1947). The SFA were actually in agreement and produced a long list of improvements for the films (Williams, 1948a). However the production had apparently been approved at every stage by educational advisor Mr Pyke and the teachers’ notes had gone to press, so it was seemingly too late to change the unit at this stage (Hawkes, 1947b). It was decided that the sound and silent films should be withheld from distribution until the COI, Ministry of Education and SFA had discussed how they might be improved (Dowden, 1947). The SFA was particularly concerned since the organisation’s name appeared in the credits and they did not wish to be associated with the production and so issued a three page analysis of points of confusion and inaccuracy upon which they expected the Ministry of Education to act (Scientific Film Association Education Committee, 1948b). Eventually the Ministry and Scientific Film Association agreed the unit should be overhauled at the SFA’s direction, budgets permitting (Williams, 1948b). The SFA objected to the entire production process and stressed that in future criticisms and opinions should be obtained during the filmmaking stage to prevent any such problems occurring again (Scientific Film Association Education Committee, 1948b). Even so, the SFA persisted with their attempt to improve the films and produced another detailed document in July 1948 with still more recommendations which stated that the commentary should be re-written and the film re-edited. The SFA advised that the tempo of the film ought to be varied so that the film was not so monotonous and that there should be “greater dramatic emphasis, more liveliness and interest” which suggested the Association was not only unhappy with the

information conveyed by the film but also the manner in which it was relayed (Scientific Film Association Education Committee, 1948a, p.5).

Finally, agreement was reached to keep the sound film, but omit three of the silent films from the unit and re-write the teachers' notes. These silent films had not even been made at this time, so the decision to leave them out was fairly straightforward (Richardson, 1948). However the debate continued regarding the rest of the silent films and the reluctance to release a sound film with which no one was satisfied. In the end, HMIs Wilson and Weaver decided to view the entire visual unit, determine which of the elements worked and scrap the rest. It was not possible to dispose of all the elements since the Ministry would have to justify the wasted expenditure with the Auditor General (Wilson, 1948a; Wilson, 1948b). The final unit consisted of one sound film, *Water Supply*, silent films entitled *Primitive Ways of Raising Water* and *Diagrammatic Summary of the Film* and three further silent films which were joined to form one reel, called *How a Force Pump Works*, *How a Lift Pump Works* and *How a Centrifugal Pump Works* (Baron Hartley, 1949a; Wales, 1951b). HMI Dance was still unhappy with the material and the process as a whole and stated that the project "never had proper supervision from us and apparently not from the S.F.A." (Dance, 1948a). There had been a significant amount of confusion and conflict concerning who took responsibility for advising on the films. HMI Marshall began as educational advisor and Hawkes had believed the SFA were working as subject advisors (Hawkes, 1946g). Later in the process Mr Pyke was assumed to have overseen

the 'educational' aspects, yet everyone involved was dissatisfied with the final productions.

As a last attempt to pull the unit together, Helen Coppen of the SFA Educational Committee was persuaded by the Committee's Honorary Secretary and eventually took on the task of re-writing the teachers' notes (Baron Hartley, 1949b). The teachers' notes contained a wealth of technical information to supplement the films such as sources of water, pollution, organic and inorganic matter and the various methods of treatment. The notes also included the film scripts and some information regarding the targeted audience and pedagogical applications of the unit. The unit was now designed for ages 12-14, not 11-14 as originally intended, and the purpose was to encourage the study of Science in and outside the classroom, rather than to teach specific aspects of the syllabus or scientific principles. As with previous visual units, the suggested activities included in the notes were project-based, encouraging pupils to study the geology and water supply in their local area and to compare the findings with the town shown in the sound film. Further activities devised as a response to the silent films were again practical, such as building models of water filtering devices and studying water through a microscope to identify any organisms present (Scientific Film Association, 1947). Having begun in 1945, *Water Supply* was finally completed and sent to the Educational Foundation for Visual Aids (EFVA) in May 1951 for distribution. However, the trial of its development was still not over. It was discovered on arrival at the EFVA that the films were numbered incorrectly and two of the silent films were missing. Although they were eventually located, John

Wales who had been searching for the missing elements on behalf of the EFVA suggested scrapping “the whole issue” since “the short films are not in my view very good anyway” (Wales, 1951a).

### ***Instruments of the Orchestra***

After confirmation from HMI Winn that a film on music was appropriate for the secondary syllabus, production was assigned to the Crown Film Unit and work on *Instruments of the Orchestra* began in 1944 (Hawkes, 1944j). It was decided at the first production meeting, held between Hawkes, Winn, Basil Wright and de Moulpiéd of the COI Films Division that the film would focus on the orchestra itself and its form would be structured around a simple piece of music (Ministry of Education, 1944b). Benjamin Britten was asked to write the score, which he finished in January of 1946, and pre-production of the film began (Bentley, 1946). Britten and Sir Malcolm Sargent both wrote draft commentaries for *Instruments of the Orchestra*, which were combined by Crown to form the final shooting script that fitted the music exactly (Jones, 1946). Although it dealt with very different subject matter, the pre-production of *Instruments* was similar to that of both *Houses in History* and *The Beginning of History* since all three films began with a treatment that focused on text rather than visuals.

Realist Film Unit was commissioned to produce three additional films to accompany *Instruments of the Orchestra*. These films focused on the science of sound production and reception and were given the group title of *Science in the Orchestra* (Hawkes 1948a). The group comprised short films of approximately

ten minutes, entitled *How We Hear*, *How Instruments Make Sounds* and *Looking at Sounds* (Realist Film Unit, 1947a; 1947b; 1948a). While Forman of the COI believed the films to be “ingenious” their production caused a dispute with Realist Film Unit (Forman, 1948b). Forman approved of the content of the films but claimed they would be too costly to produce and that instead of being filmed as actuality they ought to be Technicolor animations made by Halas Batchelor, since he believed these would demonstrate the scientific principles more effectively (Forman, 1948b). Realist objected as they felt there were no educational grounds for animation. Realist had devised models which they believed would illustrate the concepts effectively and would be more educationally advantageous due to their “close linkage with reality” (Grayson, 1948a). It was felt that the introduction of animation would suggest the content was a fiction and that this would then make it more difficult for children to grasp the difficult scientific concepts with which the film dealt (Grayson, 1948b). A compromise must have been reached since the shooting scripts for all three of the *Science in the Orchestra* films outlined live action footage which included models as well as animation to explain the Physics of sound production and the physiological mechanisms of hearing (Realist Film Unit, 1947a; 1947b; 1948a). While the dispute surrounding the educational merits of actuality and animation footage showed the production companies were clearly concerned with how film contributed to learning, the lack of any clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education or educational advisors highlighted the absence of an agreed upon pedagogical rationale, and therefore the importance of the experimental production programme in generating evidence to define a pedagogy of film.

This lack of a pre-determined pedagogy was reflected in the Teachers' Notes issued to accompany the visual unit. The Notes made some reference to the educational application of the unit but this varied across the separate film elements and did not include advice on classroom activity specifically related to the films. Included within the Notes was a detailed breakdown of the music with each movement transcribed on staves. The role of the conductor was explained as well as the tone, sound and role of each instrument and the way in which the musicians played their parts. A great deal of information was provided about the instruments themselves, for example the French horn and the harp, but concepts and terms such as key and tone were not defined (Shore, 1946). The teacher was expected to have already introduced the instruments to the class in preparation for the screening. The Notes appeared to include both too much and too little information to give clear advice to teachers. The aim of the film was to illustrate the orchestra and to teach music at an advanced level, which would account for the incredibly detailed description of the music itself, but a Music teacher would presumably already be aware of the different instruments and the Notes do not explain exactly how the film should be used for teaching the subject or its contribution to developing and evaluating visual education (Shore, 1946).

The Notes also claimed to assist the teacher by enabling "him to stem the flood of questions which will probably follow the children's initial and later impressions" (Shore, 1946, p.1). The advice given to teachers was to screen the film a minimum of three times, yet the "flood of questions" which teachers were warned to expect itself implied an ambiguity in the film's educational role. The film may



have been intended to provoke discussion, but the language used to describe pupils' response to viewing suggested a more didactic lesson. The inclusion of further, background information and the lack of any explanation of the specific educational objectives of the film medium underlined the film's function as a visual aid designed to contribute to a wider lesson rather than as the focus for study. In contrast the educational function of the accompanying films comprising *Science in the Orchestra* was more explicitly defined. The films were conceived as a substitute for the technical apparatus of a series of Music and Science lessons for children, boys in particular, aged eleven and over. The combination of practical demonstrations by the conductor and his assistants, with diagrams and models showing the scientific processes of producing and hearing sounds aimed to function as lessons (Realist Film Unit, 1948b). In this way, *Science in the Orchestra* used devices of film form and style to achieve defined teaching objectives, although the aim was more pragmatic than pedagogical. Nevertheless, the dispute between the COI and Realist Film Unit showed that the production companies were concerned with the educational 'benefits' of the films' form and style which implied a consideration of the aims of visual education. The production of the *Instruments of the Orchestra* visual unit demonstrated some concern with questions of how and why visual education should be applied to the secondary classroom which differed from some of the other units, such as *Houses in History*, *The Beginning of History* and *Water Supply*, which were more concerned with relaying information on particular subject areas.

### ***The History of Writing***

Jacquetta Hawkes was again central to contacting and commissioning a series of experts to advise on the production of *The History of Writing* and consulted with her former tutor, Professor Minns, on the content of the film (Hawkes, 1945m). Hawkes then commissioned Dr Driver of Magdalen College Oxford to advise on the unit and write the treatment (de Moulpied, 1945a). A meeting was held between Hawkes, de Moulpied, Driver and Professor Glanville of University College to discuss the treatment and what they believed a film on the development of writing ought to contain. The group decided the film would follow a chronological structure, tracing the formation of written language from early symbols to the introduction of the Roman alphabet (Hawkes, 1945o). Driver was asked to write a 20 minute film on the subject that would be split into two, ten minute parts (de Moulpied, 1945a).

The resultant treatment was written in essay form detailing the historical developments in chronological order, much the same as the treatments for *Houses in History* and *The Beginning of History* (Driver, 1945). Forman was quick to object again and this time disagreed with the way in which Driver had outlined the intended film on the basis that it included too much extraneous and irrelevant information, and should instead deal with recent developments so that it related to children's everyday lives. Forman was not alone in his objection, since de Moulpied also believed the film ought to relate to the present day in order to link the topic to children's experience more clearly (de Moulpied, 1945a). However while Hawkes agreed, she claimed that this could be achieved visually within the

film, “without very much solid information” and so did not ask Driver to produce a detailed written description (Hawkes, 1945a). Forman also felt that the pace should be slower so that the wealth of detail would be easier to absorb and that for the targeted audience of children aged eleven and over, the film would benefit from division into three or four chapters (Forman, 1946c). Films of Fact were commissioned to produce the film and John Wales, who took charge of the production, was himself an experienced teacher so had some knowledge of classroom practice. Films of Fact submitted a report to the Ministry of Education before filming began that included a synopsis which was structured as a series of questions on the topic of writing which the film aimed to answer. In addition the Report included an indication of the intended form and style of the film. As Forman had suggested, Films of Fact also believed it would be beneficial to produce four sequences which would trace the chronological development of writing. Each sequence would function independently, so that the film could be screened in sections (Films of Fact, 1946). So although the film had begun as a historical essay, Wales developed the idea in filmic terms, structuring the narrative as documentary rhetoric with consideration for how the information might be presented on screen.

Meanwhile de Moulpied recommended that Miss Marjorie Wise, Headmistress at a girls’ Secondary Modern School should act as educational advisor and work with Films of Fact on *The History of Writing* scripts (de Moulpied, 1946c). Hawkes also contacted various experts on Chinese and North American writing at the British Museum for guidance on the historical subject matter. Soame Jenyns

at the British Museum agreed to give his input and verify the information related to Chinese writing but Hawkes was still concerned about the historical accuracy and wrote to de Moulpiéd that “if a Chinaman is wanted to give a practical demonstration, I have the name of one in Oxford who apparently would be particularly well-qualified” (Hawkes, 1946c). Hawkes was clearly prepared to go to some lengths to ensure the script dealt with the subject of writing authentically, but the involvement of so many advisors and experts was not appreciated by Films of Fact. John Wales submitted the developed treatment and blamed the delay in its completion on “the number of subject experts involved and the monumental character of their researches” (Wales, 1946). Wales believed that lessons should be learned for future productions particularly with regard to working with academic experts whose timescales conflicted with those of film production. The thorough approach to research taken by the academics caused problems for the production company who worked to a much tighter turnaround time (Wales, 1946). However Films of Fact clearly understood that the audience of school children required a specific approach to filmmaking and requested advice from teachers on the suitability of the material for children. The company explained there would be no possibility of completing final edits until rough versions had been tested in the classroom. In addition, they also asked for expert advice from professionals who delivered teacher training to ensure that the handbook was appropriate for teachers who would use the visual unit in the classroom (Films of Fact, 1946). The company clearly took the educational status of the film seriously and endeavoured to ensure the footage would be of benefit to teachers and pupils alike.

The notes produced for teachers to accompany the visual unit consisted of extensive background information to supplement the film and additional visual material, along with a summary of the film, a bibliography for further study and some suggestions for classroom activities. The introduction to the notes was somewhat negative in justifying the selection of topic for this experiment into visual education and described how the history of writing might seem unsuitable since it was an unfamiliar and difficult subject to grasp (Ministry of Education, 1948c). The reason for its inclusion was outlined as being primarily due to the importance of writing to civilisation and the unit aimed to “stimulate an aesthetic appreciation of the differences between good writing and bad” although there were no definitions of either term (Ministry of Education, 1948c, p.5). However the introduction did offer some information regarding the pedagogical application of the film. Having been divided into four sections, it was advised that the film should only be shown in full at the beginning and end of the project. So again, the film was intended to inspire project-based work. Each of the sections was supplemented by additional visual material in the form of filmstrips, charts and leaflets, all of which should be studied together. Teachers were advised against using any of the material in isolation and screening the film without introductory or follow up lessons was described as “a waste of time” since the unit was designed as a complete entity that should take from four to six weeks of classroom time (Ministry of Education, 1948c, p.6). The notes included some definition of this project work but the ideas outlined were described as “tentative indications” of classroom work rather than strict instructions (Ministry of Education, 1948c, p.28). It was made clear in this section of the text that, in contrast to the approach of *Science in the Orchestra*, visual aids should not be

considered as a substitute for classroom activities. Teachers were instead encouraged to plan activities relevant to their own class. The suggestions included experimenting with different writing instruments and surfaces, writing Egyptian hieroglyphs, Chinese characters and cuneiform and transcribing short sentences using only pictures or symbols (Ministry of Education, 1948c). As with many of the other visual units the focus was on the pupils applying the knowledge and understanding they had gained from the film to practical tasks in the classroom, rather than studying the film itself. Although Films of Fact worked to ensure the production of *The History of Writing* was carried out with consideration for the genre and form of a film aimed at the classroom by consulting with education practitioners, there was no indication that wider debates regarding the social and cultural impact of the medium were taken into account.

### ***The Story of Printing***

*The Story of Printing* was also produced by Films of Fact after having been suggested by John Wales (Forman, 1946b). Wales agreed to take on executive supervision of the production, which included the educational aspects, as he had experience of both teaching and working on the previous visual unit (Hawkes, 1947d). He was assisted in this regard by HMI Travis who was appointed by the Ministry as educational advisor (Hawkes, 1946l). In addition, Stanley Morison of The Times was consulted on *The Story of Printing* and suggested Sir Sidney Cockerel and Mr Turner of St Bride's Library to advise on the technical detail (Forman 1947a). Films of Fact put together a report as an initial outline to *The Development of Printing*, as it was then called, which functioned as a framework

for the film and visual unit. The report stated that the film was required to deal with three linked aspects of the subject which were its technical and aesthetic developments and the social background. The production company considered the unit to be different from those already determined in that the film would not form the central focus of the unit, but would instead be afforded lesser importance than the material for display which would illustrate developments in type and lettering (Films of Fact, 1947a). A second film was also proposed at this stage entitled *The Story of Papermaking*, since it was considered necessary to complete the history of the industry and add further information not included in the main film (Films of Fact, 1947a). *Papermaking* was proposed by Peter Bradford, the Director of *Printing*, during pre-production of the main film (Boon, 2010). The production company submitted a treatment for *Printing* and a brief outline for *Papermaking* and both were approved with only minor amends (Forman, 1947b). The synopsis of *The Story of Papermaking* stated that as well as linking with *The Story of Printing* the film should connect with *The History of Writing*. This was the only example in the entire experiment of cohesion between the films and the units were generally considered in isolation. In a similar manner to *Writing*, the decision was made to structure the film chronologically and to explain the earliest methods of making paper in great detail with less film time spent on more recent developments (Films of Fact Ltd, 1947b). In contrast to *The History of Writing* there were no objections with respect to relating the topic to the children's experience and production went ahead as planned, with full support from the Ministry of Education, and official approval for both films was received in June 1948 (Hawkes, 1948b).

Following the example set by John Wales on *The History of Writing*, Bradford made efforts to ensure the films were fit for purpose and took into account the need for the material to be relevant for the audience of pupils. He screened the films to three schools in order to gain feedback from teachers that would inform the booklet to accompany the visual unit (Bradford, 1948). Bradford himself wrote the text for the booklet in 1950 and indicated the expected audience for the material. It had originally been thought that the unit would target Secondary Modern School pupils but after the test screenings it was decided to expand this audience to include Grammar Schools, Art and Printing Schools and Evening Institutes with the caveat that the unit should not be used in the same manner in each of the educational establishments (Ministry of Education, 1950b).

In the Report on the visual unit submitted in 1947 the production company had outlined how *The Story of Printing* offered the opportunity for the study of Art, Literature, History, Geography, Science and Mathematics, since all of these curriculum subjects were central to the technical and industrial development of printing (Films of Fact, 1947a). However these suggestions were not included in the booklet that accompanied the film and instead some broad advice was given regarding the amount of classroom time that should be spent on the unit and the benefit of delivering an introductory session using the background charts before screening the films. Twelve sessions were advised for the complete unit, two of which should be used to screen the entire film with pauses between the sections for discussion. Alternatively, study of the film would take five sessions if the parts were shown separately. Teachers were encouraged to consider each of the



sections of the film as distinct entities and to fit these with their own planned activities. Some advice was offered regarding appropriate activities, these being a school visit to a local printer and the production of a classroom exhibition showing the pupils' work. Although initially intended as subsidiary to the wall displays, the two films had become central and the booklet described them as the "keystone" of the unit, which demonstrated a shift of opinion regarding the importance of the films (Ministry of Education, 1950b). However, the intention of Films of Fact to produce material which specifically related to the needs of pupils with guidance informed by educational practitioners was not realised, and the films were made available without specific instruction or advice for teachers. Emphasis was instead laid on the teachers' responsibility to adapt the visual unit to the needs of their own pupils rather than issuing definitive guidelines, which was a consistent approach throughout the experiment (Ministry of Education, 1950b).

### ***England's Wealth From Wool***

Another of the units affected by conflicting opinions regarding the factual content, form and style of the films during the pre-production stages was *England's Wealth From Wool*. The topic was inspired by Professor Eileen Power's book on the wool trade during mediaeval times and her sister, Rhoda Power, was appointed as the subject expert who would write the treatment, using Professor Power's research and unpublished notes. The appointment was not solely based on Power's connections since she was a writer of children's books and broadcasts so had some experience of producing texts for this particular

audience (Hawkes, 1945d). Power was advised that the film was intended for children from the age of twelve, and therefore would be suitable for Youth Clubs and for adult education though this was left unspecified (Hawkes, 1945g). Hawkes initially advised Power to complete only a general outline of the film and leave the visual treatment to the production company who she would only need to contact in order to check that they had conveyed the information in the manner Power had intended (Hawkes, 1945f). Later, Hawkes added that it was essential to include reference to the visuals but that the technical description could be left to the producers (Hawkes, 1945g). Although this advice was a little ambiguous, Power prepared a treatment that gave equal weight to sound in the form of commentary and the imagery that would support and illustrate the information (Power, 1945d). The early pre-production stages of *England's Wealth From Wool* differed in this respect to the other films that dealt with historical subject matter, as the film did not begin with only a chronology of events. The visuals were well-researched and drawn from concrete examples and Power included a list of sites for location shooting divided into subject areas such as “brasses”, “buildings other than churches” and “devices and emblems of wool and cloth trades” (Power, 1945c). In addition she submitted an essay, compiled from her sister's notes and her own research, which outlined a chronology of the woollen industry in terms of trade routes and developments in mechanisation. Power stressed that the essay was for reference only, to give the producers a wider understanding of the subject (Power, 1945b).

Alongside the detailed description of content, Power made some indications as to how she believed the film ought to be structured. At a meeting of the personnel involved, which now included the production company Basic Films who produced *Local Studies*, it was agreed that the main, sound film be divided into three parts each lasting ten minutes. The parts were entitled *The Wool Trade*; *The Cloth Trade* and *These Trades and The Industrial Revolution*. Two short, silent films would support the main production, which would deal with the technical processes of spinning and weaving (Hawkes, 1946n). In her previous correspondence with Hawkes, Power had made it clear that she was strongly in favour of using animated maps and cartoons and that the film should include live action so that people in the film spoke rather than using only a commentary to relay the narrative (Power, 1945a). However at the meeting, Hawkes insisted to Basic Films that while puppets and animated drawings could be used, “living actors must be avoided except in the most ‘background’ and generalized way” (Hawkes, 1946n). This decision changed the style of the film which Power had envisaged and highlighted the assumptions which the Ministry had made regarding the form of educational films. The avoidance of any overtly fictional elements may well have been decided on monetary grounds, but this decision underlined the assumption that educational films should be inherently nonfiction. This avoidance was particularly noteworthy, given that no such assertion was made during the pre-production stages of *Local Studies*, Basic’s other contribution to the experiment, which the filmmaker openly described as ‘fictional’ (Mander, 1945). It was also agreed at the meeting that the film should not deal with issues of politics or sociology and should follow what Hawkes described as a simple, “archaeological method” for telling the story (Hawkes,

1946n). This approach underlined the presumption that the medium of film was able to deal with the subject matter through a chronological methodology that existed apart from any reference to its social influence or implications, to form a purely 'factual' account. It also highlighted the strong association between non-fiction film, concepts of 'objectivity' and education.

During the script-writing stage, Basic Films carried out their own research and attempted to implement some changes to the treatment which met with disapproval from both Hawkes and Power (Hawkes, 1946d). The changes were brought to a halt, but only after Hawkes contacted de Mouilpied at the COI who smoothed things over with the production team at Basic Films (de Mouilpied, 1946d). On viewing the final films Power was still not convinced of their usefulness and felt the sound film would not be suitable for the audience nor hold the attention of pupils, and regretted that all the historical information was conveyed through the voiceover commentary which she had hoped to avoid. Power also questioned the role of the subject expert since much of the production time was spent in dispute with Basic Films over the content (Power, 1948). Hawkes was in agreement but explained the difficulties as due to working with professional filmmakers on an educational project, and stated that it was "difficult to get hardened producers to understand the objective approach necessary for education work" (Hawkes, 1948c). This final word from Hawkes throws into question the commissioning process as well as the communication between the Ministry of Education and the companies assigned to produce the films. While on the surface the collaboration between professional filmmakers and education

experts appeared to be the solution to the problem of producing educational films that were relevant and appropriate for the classroom, this collaboration instead highlighted the lack of understanding on both sides.

Having struggled to agree upon form and content, the Ministry of Education focused on pedagogy only after production was complete. HMI Alington was assigned as educational advisor to bring all the elements of the visual unit together (Hawkes, 1947a). Hawkes also requested comments on the films from a teacher, but this was limited to the two subsidiary, silent films (Hawkes, 1946e). However all three films were screened to groups of school children to gather feedback and determine whether any changes needed to be made. Only the intertitles of the sound film were changed and, other than this minor edit, no feedback on the content, form, style or relevance to education from either the pupils or teachers was recorded (Green, 1948). It is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions regarding whether the films were after all suitable for the classroom, however the Ministry's efforts in gaining feedback would seem to have come rather late to make any impact since the unit was already finalised and the budget spent.

### ***The Experimental Visual Unit Production***

The Ministry of Education film production experiment was an ambitious undertaking and a lengthy process, which in some instances was beset with conflicting opinion. While the Ministry had a central, co-ordinating role with staff assigned to oversee the production programme, each film within the selected

visual units was produced in isolation. The films were made by different production companies and the huge amount of personnel involved from HM Inspectors, subject experts and educational advisors led to divergent approaches. Therefore while the experiment began with the overall aims of researching visual education and training teachers, with the side benefit of increasing the amount of films made specifically for the classroom, the variations in approach to producing educational films resulted in a diverse range of material intended to determine the 'effects' and 'value' of visual education.

The targeted audience was initially defined as those pupils attending Secondary Modern schools but this was expanded to incorporate all children in secondary education. However in some cases the films were also presumed suitable for adult education which threw into question their suitability for children aged 11-15, and there were recorded instances of dispute over whether children would actually understand the material. Further disagreement occurred regarding policy on the films' content and style. The choice of actuality or animation footage for *Science in the Orchestra* also caused some consternation surrounding concepts of fact versus fiction which these two forms were presumed to imply. The overwhelming rejection of fiction expressed by Hawkes of the Ministry of Education and others at the COI exemplified the opinion that non-fiction was the only appropriate form for educational films yet this was not a strict policy which carried across all the productions. For example the choice of Basic Films to produce a fictionalised account of the subject matter for *Local Studies* caused no dispute between the production company and the sponsors, and the film, *Near*

*Home*, was approved without amendments. The issue of sound was also dealt with in a contradictory manner. The non-diegetic, music soundtrack for *The Beginning of History* was criticised for being unhelpful and distracting for children, yet some music was left in the final production. The official line seemed to be that the only sound included in the films should be ‘natural’, or diegetic, stemming from action or events within the narrative, yet all except *Instruments of the Orchestra* and *Near Home* used a voiceover commentary to tell the story of the film so this use of non-diegetic sound was clearly considered acceptable. There was no justification for the contradictory decisions which were made for each of the films.

A good deal of attention was paid to historical ‘accuracy’, particularly in the films dealing with subjects relating to the History syllabus such as *Houses in History*, *The Beginning of History* and *The History of Writing* but the educational aspects of the films were not treated with the same rigour. The pedagogical rationale of the films, the visual units and the experiment as a whole was inconsistent. Prior to the visual unit experiment there existed no definitive policy on film and education. The production programme aimed to establish film pedagogy by using the evidence gathered through testing the visual units in the classroom however it also aimed to train teachers in ‘visual education’ (Crossley, 1946; Richardson, 1945; Roseveare, 1946b). Without having yet established a pedagogical approach, it was not possible to train teachers and the lack of specific instruction relating to classroom practice or even practical considerations of projecting film in the classroom highlighted this absence of pedagogical rationale. In fact, not all

of the accompanying notes for teachers even contained suggestions for project work which the films had been intended to encourage.

There existed a further contradiction at the core of the Ministry of Education's film production experiment. Throughout the production process there was no indication that the experiment was intended to develop 'film appreciation' and film was treated as just another visual aid. Therefore, contrary to contemporary discussion and one of the reasons why the British Film Institute had been established in 1933, there was no recognition of the medium's contribution to education in and of itself, or of its potential impact on society. While film was believed in some quarters to have propaganda potential and 'film appreciation' grew out of a presumed need to counter this influence (British Film Institute, 1944), the production experiment films existed outside of this argument. The messages and values conveyed by the films were apparently above any such scrutiny.



## **Chapter Five: Nonfiction Film: Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Introduction**

In highlighting the ‘value’ of film to education, the 1932 Report published by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films stressed that the primary function of the moving image medium was to teach children about real life. It was believed that film was an effective means of bringing this ‘reality’ into the classroom and, in order to achieve this, educational films must therefore be nonfiction. In a parallel argument, the Report warned against what was understood as the detrimental social and cultural impact on children of fiction films shown at the cinema. The resultant recommendations called for education to embrace the medium as a tool for teaching pupils about the world on one hand, and on the other, to teach children the importance of guarding against the influence of the potentially damaging effects of the artifice of fiction which had the potential to convey morally questionable values (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). The establishment of the British Film Institute (BFI) was a central recommendation of the Commission’s Report and the objectives of this newly formed organisation were taken directly from the Report. The intention was for the BFI to act on the findings and recommendations of the Commission. Alongside its role of taking a direct responsibility for film and education, the Institute also aimed to influence public opinion and encourage a greater appreciation of film (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films,

1932). The overall aim of the BFI, and one which related to formal education, was to promote the use of film as a “means of instruction”, which implied the medium was to be used to impart information (British Film Institute, 1933). The correlation between education, nonfiction film and real life continued into the next decade, and at the BFI-organised conference on Visual Education and Film Appreciation held in 1944, there was debate surrounding the approach to film and education. The ‘truth’ conveyed by documentary material was considered a benefit to education in its capacity to present real life, while at the same time being considered a threat, since there was a concern it could lead to propaganda if, for example, sponsored films were used in schools. The argument followed that sponsored films would have a motive beyond conveying information and would therefore not best serve the ‘objective reality’ required by educational films (British Film Institute, 1944). This argument did not appear to apply to the government when the Ministry of Education sponsored the experiment into the production of films for secondary schools. The films produced as part of the visual unit programme were all defined as ‘documentary’.

Throughout the planning and production process of the Ministry of Education’s experimental programme of educational films for the classroom which began in the early 1940s, there were repeated discussions between the production companies and the Ministry about the form and style of the films. These discussions centred on a number of concepts which Ministry personnel considered integral to the defining qualities of educational films. The first of these was the opinion that the films’ link with ‘reality’ was paramount and their treatment

therefore required an “objective approach” in order that the films were suitable for the purposes of education (Hawkes, 1948c). This adherence to conveying a sense of reality led to the assertion that what were considered to be overtly fictional techniques should be avoided at all cost. These ‘fictional’ techniques included the use of actors, inclusion of non-diegetic sound, or the dramatic reconstruction of historical events detailed in the films. In addition, each of the films was assigned at least one subject expert, HM Inspectors and, in some instances, curriculum subject committees to ensure the accuracy and veracity of information conveyed. This attention to detail in the content of the films showed the lengths to which the Ministry were prepared to go to maintain the ‘factual’ quality of the moving image material.

The assertions made by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, the BFI and the Ministry of Education regarding the filmic treatment of subject matter appropriate for education, hinged on a number of assumptions and theoretical standpoints in relation to the production and reception of nonfiction film. These assumptions are still relevant today. The defining properties and associated definitions of nonfiction, as well as particular notions of ‘reality’ and ‘objectivity’ are debates which remain at the centre of critical and theoretical discussion about nonfiction film. The following discussion focuses on the historical definitions of documentary film, and the theoretical standpoints taken by film theorists in attempting to define nonfiction as a film form within which documentary resides. My analysis and discussion of critical approaches centres on formal structures, stylistic techniques, audience reception and historical and

emerging concepts of non/fiction. The chapter serves as a discussion of the post-modern and poststructural nonfiction film theories, which built on previous, structuralist approaches, in relation to concepts of nonfiction modes, ‘objectivity’, ‘reality’ and ‘truth’, which I have applied to the following analysis of the Ministry of Education films.

**“*nonfiction*: an entire dresser labelled *non-socks*” (Shields, 2011, p.385)**

The origin of the term ‘documentary’ to describe the particular qualities of films dealing with real world subjects is generally associated with the filmmaker John Grierson. Grierson described the “documentary value” of Robert Flaherty’s 1926 film *Moana* in a newspaper review (Winston, 1995, p.8). However, the term had been used as early as 1898 by Boleslaw Matuszewski, a Polish camera operator, who advocated the use of film as an instructional tool for education and claimed the medium was capable of documenting history and recording ‘evidence’ (Barnouw, 1993). The Continental Film Company, headed by Edward Sheriff Curtis, also used the term ‘documentary’ throughout their 1914 production brochure to describe the films’ treatment of subject matter, and impressed the need for the material to be preserved for the future. This early, in film terms, usage of ‘documentary’ to describe the treatment and properties of moving image material referred to a specific alignment between the document and evidence and asserted the films’ equivalent status. Despite these earlier references, Grierson is the figure most associated with the term due to his influential role in establishing the Documentary Movement and his self-styled definition of their output as the

“creative treatment of actuality” (Winston, 1995, p.11). The contradiction evident within Grierson’s definition was deliberate. Grierson intended that the films of the Documentary Movement should have impact by making social commentary based on real events and subjects, but the fictional quality, his “creative treatment”, was designed to set the productions apart from other forms of nonfiction film, such as scientific or instructional films that were based on real world action. The ploy worked as a marketing device, informing the public and, more importantly, the sponsors who funded the productions, of the unique approach taken by the Documentary Movement filmmakers (Winston, 1995). Given the nature of its application, Grierson’s definition of ‘documentary’ should be understood as designating a specific moment in film history. However, discussion still surrounds his use of the term and the contradictions which exist within the definition remain relevant.

In his book *Documentary. A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (1993), Eric Barnouw refers to all nonfiction film as ‘documentary’. The title alone demonstrates a conflation of the two descriptors. However, some theorists refute this interchangeable approach to the two terms. Nichols instead offers a model of analysing film which makes the distinction between ‘documentary’ and “non-documentary” to articulate a broader definition of the realm of nonfiction film (Nichols, 2010, p.146). ‘Non-documentary’ describes nonfiction moving image material such as scientific or instructional films, whose organisation is designed to convey factual information rather than offering an opinion on a particular concept, which is what Nichols argues defines the documentary film. While I

would agree that there are different styles or types of nonfiction film, I would also argue that it is possible for 'non-documentaries' to present an opinion on or argument about the world, purely through the process of selection. The choice of content and representation signifies an opinion regarding the appropriate information to be conveyed, the choice of audience that it has been decided require this information, and the manner in which the information is re/presented to that audience. Nevertheless, the term documentary does not equate to nonfiction, since there are other types of nonfiction moving image material which do not fit easily within the documentary category, for example news reports, sports coverage and unedited footage such as CCTV material or the raw footage filmed before a film has been edited. However, it is not sufficient to argue that nonfiction is more than just documentary. In order to analyse nonfiction film, it is necessary to identify its conventions and define what is meant by the term.

### **Nonfiction/Not Fiction**

Since the label 'nonfiction' sets the term apart from what it is not, it is worth looking at the division between fiction and nonfiction in order to better define the properties of those films which are placed within the nonfiction category. The theorist Christian Metz took a structuralist approach to analysing film and argued that all film could be considered fiction since the very act of production highlights its creation and therefore forces us to recognise film as artifice (Metz, 1991). A counter argument which stems from André Bazin's theory of film language which was based upon what he believed to be its fundamental feature, the ability to represent the world through mimetic photography, defines all film as nonfiction

since it represents actual objects (Bazin, 1967). While these two theoretical standpoints offer opposing views on defining film, the arguments themselves are congruent, since they both underline the difficulties in distinguishing fiction from nonfiction based on the act of production. Postmodernist theorists have further developed and undermined this concept in order to break down the formal boundaries between fiction and nonfiction. The assertion that nonfiction film is equally constructed as fiction through its production process, coupled with the argument that fiction films can incorporate or mimic stylistic devices common to nonfiction film, such as the use of hand-held cameras and interviews, led postmodernists to the conclusion that there exists no distinction between the two modes of filmmaking (Choi, 2006 and Renov, 1993). For example, the 1984 Rob Reiner film *This is Spinal Tap* used documentary techniques and conventions such as interviews and direct address to camera to comedic effect in order to create the world of the fictional rock band who were the subject of the film. Few points in the film actually convince the audience that this is anything other than a comedy fiction, but the techniques of nonfiction are easily mimicked in this way. Another example, and one which actually imitated nonfiction conventions to more convincing effect, is the Chris Morris TV Series *Brass Eye* (2001). The series recreated the format of current affairs programming in order to spoof both the format itself and public and media responses to the subject matter under discussion. One such programme dealt with the subject of paedophilia and made for uncomfortable viewing, presenting its 'findings' in a *Crimewatch* style studio debate, complete with CCTV footage, 'expert' testimony and interviews with suspected paedophiles. While the programme was convincing in terms of style, nonfiction conventions were used in this instance for the purposes of satire, and

the audience was invited to join in with the joke, laughing at the expense of celebrities who were convinced of its authenticity. Despite their stylistic traits, both these examples remain fictional and, perhaps because of the comedy elements, there was little sustained confusion in the audience regarding whether the subjects should be understood as nonfiction. However, the fact that they could use stylistic conventions to portray the subject matter as nonfiction supports the postmodernist argument that there is nothing within the style of a moving image text which forces any distinction between fiction and nonfiction.

Returning to Grierson's definition of the documentary, we can assume that his notion of 'actuality', or the real world, has some bearing on defining nonfiction film. However, the postmodernist argument can counter this also, since real people and real events can be the subject matter of fiction. The 2004 film *The Assassination of Richard Nixon* serves as a good example. Certain elements of the film stem from real events, yet the film itself is a dramatic reconstruction as envisaged by the filmmaker. Any film which includes the caveat "inspired by true events" immediately informs the audience that some of the detail has been either created or written specifically for the film. Furthermore, real events can be manipulated by the filmmaker during the production or editing processes of a documentary, thereby removing the distinction from fiction. Flaherty's 1922 film *Nanook of the North*, which followed the lives of an Inuit family, famously involved collaboration between the director and 'Nanook' in which the family recreated old ways of living, such as building an igloo for his family and hunting for walrus with a spear instead of his usual gun, in order to present Inuit life in a



manner which the filmmaker felt was more appropriate to his audience (Barnouw, 1993). Whether or not these fictionalised elements actually prevent the film from being considered nonfiction is immaterial. The point is that any nonfiction film, by the very nature of its production, requires an amount of manipulation in bringing the film to the screen; even if it is simply using arc lights for an interior if the subject's home is too dark for adequate exposure, or re-shooting a conversation because the sound was found to be inaudible.

The approach taken by postmodernist theorists appears logical and, while I would agree that the boundaries between the 'look' and indeed the content of fiction and nonfiction films are blurred, the argument leads nowhere in determining what exactly constitutes a 'nonfiction' film. Comparison between the style of fiction and nonfiction films, and the recognition that in some instances there is no distinction, hinges on the assertion that nonfiction film is 'constructed'. However, we were already aware of the constructed nature of film, nonfiction or otherwise. The fact that the text is a film at all, and therefore required certain practices of production to bring it to the screen such as cinematography, lighting, sound and editing, points to this conclusion at the outset. Its construction is not in dispute, yet the nonfiction category is still in circulation. Definitions of nonfiction film must therefore exist outside of this fiction/nonfiction debate if we are to create a meaningful avenue for analysis.

## **Nonfiction as Discourse**

Plantinga argues that the distinction between fiction and nonfiction exists not only in the films themselves, but also in the audience's understanding of the films and in the cultural and historical context in which they were produced (Plantinga, 1997). The argument would seem to offer a useful alternative to approaching a definition of nonfiction that moves beyond focusing solely on the text and which acknowledges the fact that the films do not exist in isolation. While there may be identifiable formal and stylistic traits common to nonfiction film, it is not true to say that these are exclusive to nonfiction. If we follow this argument through its course, this would lead us to believe that there were no indications within the text of a nonfiction film which would enable the audience to identify it as such. Yet, experience of being in the audience tells us that, on the whole, we are able to identify nonfiction films and respond to them accordingly. Nichols suggests that what distinguishes a documentary is a "function of the assumptions and expectations brought to the process of viewing the text" (Nichols, 1991, p.24). If we accept that documentary is one type of nonfiction film and extend this categorisation, then perhaps it is the relationship between film and the audience which defines nonfiction. The classification of nonfiction film according to Nichols' analysis avoids the evident difficulties of defining it on the strength of its textual characteristics and offers the possibility of understanding its distinction based on the discourse which is both carried through and surrounds the text.

In this respect, the definition of nonfiction is similar to that of genre theory, since it too is concerned with defining and classifying 'types' and modes of

filmmaking, albeit generally focused on fiction. Steve Neale defines genres as “systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject” (Neale, 1980, p.19). I would argue that nonfiction film can be defined in this mode, according to the discourse between filmmaker, film and audience, rather than on the basis of any one element in isolation, and it is the assumptions and expectations regarding the text that the audience brings to the discourse. Nichols extends this circulating discourse to include “institutions” as a fourth element and emphasises the role of time and place, which supports Plantinga’s argument regarding the context of production (Nichols, 2010, p.16). The danger of this argument is that it appears to be circular. If the audience is to engage in the discourse of nonfiction in order to define it as such, they will first need to be made aware that this is the particular discourse under discussion. However, the solution is straightforward, as Noël Carroll outlines in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology* (2006); films are indexed according to ‘type’ by means external to the text. Through publicity, interviews with directors, posters, cinema listings and so on, films are categorised, which gives the audience an immediate indication of whether they are intended to be viewed as fiction or nonfiction. The DVD box of *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) carries a label which reads, “Oscar winner Best Documentary Feature 2003”. This label alone lets us know the film is intended as nonfiction, even before we buy the DVD and, on viewing, we understand the film as a nonfiction text. The audience are therefore just as much a factor of the creation of nonfiction discourse as the filmmaker and film, and our assumptions and expectations inform this discourse.

### **Nonfiction and ‘Reality’**

The key assumption regarding nonfiction film, and one which was made by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films and the Ministry of Education, concerns its relationship with reality. While there are similarities between the form and style of fiction and nonfiction films which undermine the distinction at a textual level, it is the association between nonfiction and the real world in the minds of the audience and the intentions of the filmmaker which creates the distinction. Nichols argues that the division between fiction and nonfiction rests on the degree to which the film “corresponds to actual situations, events, and people versus the degree to which it is primarily a product of the filmmaker’s invention” (Nichols, 2010, p.12). While spectators are aware of the film’s constructed nature, we are willing to make inferences about the real world based on the information put forward by the film, since we assume there is some correlation between the two.

The association between reality and nonfiction can be traced back to the assertions of the early filmmakers, who claimed that the ‘scientific’ properties of the camera apparatus enabled them to record the profilmic world (i.e. that which exists in front of the camera) to produce a form of visual ‘evidence’ (Winston, 1993). The apparatus itself was considered to be transparent, and filmmakers such as Matuszewski claimed the resultant film was a reproduction of reality through its unmediated presentation of the real world. Since that time, film theorists have developed this concept of the camera as a recording device and related the ‘reality’ conveyed by nonfiction film to the indexical nature of the

image. Metz argues that the fact that the photographic image resembles the original object, combined with the effects of movement added by the film medium, gives the audience the impression of reality (Metz, 1991). Although Metz re-focuses the argument on the text rather than the equipment, it still implies transparency and the capacity of the moving image to reproduce the real world purely on the strength of its resemblance to the original object.

Digital technologies have helped encourage a more sceptical approach to whether a film can be considered an unmediated *reproduction* of reality, but even without the possibilities of image manipulation which they afford, the claim that a film can constitute irrefutable evidence about the real world is still contentious. While the function of a camera may hinge on its ability to produce a *likeness* of the profilmic world, the resultant film cannot be considered as a faithful ‘reproduction’ of the real world. Through the movement of the camera, selection of appropriate lenses, choice of framing, lighting, focal length and so on, the filmmaker creates the world of the film, even before the reels have been edited for the final production. In *March of the Penguins* (2005), which follows the migration of emperor penguins across the Antarctic, we witness the action from a variety of angles, both practically and intellectually. Aerial shots show the penguins’ journey from the vantage point of a helicopter, underwater cameras depict the penguins fishing for food, and extreme close ups reveal the moments when the chicks hatch. These perspectives are in some instances possible in real life, if we had access to a helicopter and undertook a trip to Antarctica, however, they do not reproduce the real world as we experience it. The technology used

affords access to vantage points which would not be possible with our own senses alone, and these privileged perspectives are combined to produce the story of the emperor penguins so that their lives are condensed into just 85 minutes. The film also assigns motivation to the central ‘characters’ of the film, which are anthropomorphised in order to create a sense of association in the audience. The commentary reveals not only what the penguins do, but also why they do it and how they feel about it. This is in no way exceptional, they are filmic techniques, common to documentary filmmaking, but their existence and status as documentary conventions highlight the difference between the real world and the film. The film does not reproduce *the* Antarctic, but creates *an* Antarctic that we can believe in. Plantinga asserts that in producing a film, the filmmaker actually constructs *a* reality, rather than reproducing *the* reality, so that the relationship between the audience’s ‘impression’ of reality and the real world object is a matter of representation, not reproduction (Plantinga, 1997). I would argue that nonfiction film is a re-presentation of real world objects and events, mediated and constructed by the filmmaker, which the audience perceives as bearing a relation to historical ‘reality’.

Nichols’ theory regarding the degree of correspondence between nonfiction and reality is more consonant with both the filmmaking and viewing experience. Neither act is passive; the filmmaker creates a filmic world which the audience interprets according to our own social, cultural, political knowledge and beliefs, while acknowledging the film’s construction. The degree to which the film corresponds to the real world is therefore a function of the audience’s acceptance

of its assertions. In order for us to engage with nonfiction as a representation of the real world, we need to believe that its events are at least possible, if not wholly plausible. Therefore, as Nichols argues, we are situated in a position of complicity with the text (Nichols, 1991). Given that the nonfiction film *represents* rather than *reproduces* reality, and choices have been made regarding which elements of the real world should be included, the information conveyed actually comprises the filmmakers' perspective on the world, or an argument about the real world as s/he perceives it. In order for the audience to accept this perspective and any claims made by the text in forwarding an argument, we have to assume, not only a correspondence to reality, but also a certain level of 'truth'. If we dismissed the film out of hand as falsehood or conjecture, we would not be complicit in engaging with the film as nonfiction discourse and it would fail in its task. The question we need to ask of the text is how this 'truth' is constructed in order to instil complicity in the audience through the film's degree of alignment with the real world. One such method is through techniques of realism. As Nichols argues, the aim of realism is to convince the audience of the film's 'reality' through its use of stylistic elements and persuade us that its claims are 'truth' (Nichols, 1991).

Currie outlines three 'types' of realism which have persisted through studies of film. The first is 'transparency' which argues that film reproduces rather than represents the world. The second is 'perceptual realism', which claims the experience of watching film approximates to the experience of watching the real world. The final type of realism is 'illusionism' which asserts that the reason film

is realistic is that it engenders an illusion of reality in the viewer (Currie, 1996). It is clear from the discussion above that the film image cannot be considered a 'reproduction' of the real world, so I will discount 'transparency' as a working theory. Turning to illusionism, this concept suggests a dream-like state in which the audience is unaware that they are watching a film. However, our experience of being in the audience counters this theory, since the environment forces us out of any belief that the film is an illusion through the collective experience of viewing at the cinema, the presence of distractions external to the film, the appearance of the film confined to a rectangular screen and so on. Our behaviour also proves we have not been duped into believing the film is 'reality'. Take for example a genre such as Science Fiction. While watching *Blade Runner* (1982), we do not believe that the action we witness is actually taking place and respond accordingly, by taking a Voight-Kampff test to prove we are not Replicants, for example. While a nonfiction film does not exhibit this level of 'unreality', the argument follows that we would not accept nonfiction as an illusion since we have experience of viewing other films and know that they are just that, films. Illusionism therefore does not offer a convincing theoretical model as to how nonfiction films persuade the audience or why we choose to accept their claims about the real world. Perceptual realism is the most convincing theory regarding the relationship between film and the audience, since it acknowledges the nature of the film image as representation and takes into account the audience's active role in determining whether what we see onscreen matches our own understanding of the real world. The importance of understanding the concept of 'perceptual realism' lies in its implication that the film has been constructed *in order to* approximate our experience of the real world.



Realism in this sense is a technique of film style, rather than a simple correlation between the filmic representation and the real. Styles of realism were developed by filmmakers against dominant or previous styles in order to make the films seem *more* 'real' in relation to nonfiction films of the past (Carroll, 1996). The French Cinéma Vérité and American Direct Cinema are good examples of this in practice. The use of techniques such as seemingly unmediated filming, and natural sound and lighting, aimed to offer an alternative to the previous modes of nonfiction filmmaking which relied on 'voice of god' commentary and an unseen filmmaker. However, if we assume filmic techniques are employed to create a sense of realism in order to encourage the audience to accept the film's claims, we are still left with the difficulty of ascertaining 'truth'. Since an overt acknowledgement of its constructed nature exists within the discourse of nonfiction, and the 'truth' of the film is created through its style, we need to examine the extent to which this truth can be verified. We can compare our own knowledge and experience to that conveyed by the film and determine how well we believe it to relate to the real world, but we also need to study the nature of the 'truth' itself and consider questions relating to objectivity and the film/maker's capacity to mislead, as well as the extent to which any representation can be considered 'objective'.

### **Nonfiction and 'Objectivity'**

Bazin claimed that the 'objectivity' of photography is based on its indexical nature and lends it a quality of credibility (Bazin, 1967). However, given the

constructed nature of film and its status as a representation that uses techniques of style in order to align the spectator with its perspective, we need to question the extent to which the images which are combined to form the medium can ever be considered 'objective'. According to Carroll (1996), there are three notions in film theory to which the term refers. 'Objectivity' can refer to concepts of 'truth'; or to be objective can mean the text represents all possible points of view on a given subject and finally, 'objective' can refer to a text which is disinterested and offers no point of view (Carroll, 1996). Contrary to postmodern theorists, Carroll claims that objectivity can be achieved across these three notions "when it abides by the norms of reasoning and standards of evidence of the areas about which it purports to impart information" (Carroll, 1996, p.231). This argument makes the case that films can therefore be considered 'objective' in line with any other form of discourse, according to the extent to which they conform to accepted protocols governing the production of nonfiction texts. Carroll asserts that all research practices, within which he includes the production of nonfiction film, incorporate protocols that account for and limit the impact of bias, which enables the audience, in the case of film, to make a judgement as to whether any claims made can be considered 'true'. The issue of objectivity is therefore not unique to filmmaking and, according to Carroll, the selectivity which accompanies its construction "does not *guarantee* bias" (Carroll, 1996).

However, this reasoning relies upon the assumption that film is a form of evidence in order for us to accept nonfiction as 'objective', and the previous analysis of concepts of 'reality' points to the conclusion that film cannot be

considered as direct, unmediated 'visual evidence'. Nichols offers the theory that nonfiction film actually *uses* evidence to construct a perspective about the world. As a result, no film can ever be entirely disinterested, and unless this construction is referenced in the text then the film itself is a deception, since the audience is unaware of how the evidence has been gathered, generated and mediated in order to present this perspective (Nichols, 1991). While Carroll describes Nichols' argument as "methodological paranoia", since not highlighting the construction does not equate to a denial, I would argue that it does carry some weight (Carroll, 1996, p.299). Even if Carroll is correct in asserting that selectivity does not preclude objectivity and guarantee bias, it does guarantee a perspective, through the choice to include certain aspects of the world within the text and the way in which they are represented. Home movies work as an example of this. While the seemingly 'natural' events that take place before the camera may give the audience the impression that the film is depicting everyday life, since there may be little editing and the subjects are not 'performing' or responding to questions co-ordinated by the filmmaker, that filmmaker has still chosen to operate the camera at a given moment. The resultant, processed film and its contents have therefore been selected by the filmmaker even before the celluloid is exposed. This is not to suggest that home movies do not present an aspect of the everyday, but that the specific content has been determined according to the filmmaker's own vision of what s/he wishes to include in a film about the everyday. This selection in itself demonstrates a perspective. The question for film theorists and audiences engaged with ascertaining a film's objectivity and therefore 'truth' centres on what this perspective comprises.

Plantinga argues that practices of objectivity may actually be employed to conceal bias and the film/maker's perspective from the audience (Plantinga, 1997). This standpoint does not seem to give the audience enough credit in interpreting the medium, however it does indicate what I believe to be the key aspect of the function of objectivity within nonfiction film. The question is not whether a film can be considered an example of pure 'objectivity', since this is unattainable; epistemologically and practically. The question instead centres on the reasoning behind the use of objectivity as a means to convince. Nichols argues that objectivity itself is a perspective, which raises questions of the motivation behind the filmmaker's decision to convince the audience of the subject matter (Nichols, 1991). The concept of objectivity sits at the heart of debates surrounding 'reality' and the nonfiction film, and it is the implication of 'objectivity' which affects the film's assertions of 'truth'. Film criticism therefore needs to consider why a film elects to present a particular perspective on the world in an objective manner in order to ensure the audience's complicity in its arguments. However, before we can ascertain why a film/maker requires this complicity, we first need to analyse how the film is constructed to represent 'objectivity', 'reality' and 'truth' by looking at its form and style.

### **Film Form**

Film form is defined by Bordwell and Thompson as the "overall system of relations we can perceive among the elements in the whole film" (Bordwell and Thompson, 1997, p.66). A film's form is not only an organising factor of the text itself, but also a function of the audience's relationship with that text. Form

enables us to understand the film's construction in terms of what is represented on the screen and to interpret this construction as a means to convey story information or, in the case of nonfiction film, the arguments put forward. Formal systems which describe and govern the structure of films, and which comprise identifiable codes and conventions, can be divided into narrative and non-narrative. Narrative is defined, again by Bordwell and Thompson and in relation to fiction, as "a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space". It is the cause-effect relationship which is key to describing and defining a film as 'narrative' (Bordwell and Thompson, 1997, p.90). If there is no direct link between the action and reaction, the film may still display a formal structure, but this is described as 'non-narrative' and further descriptors are used to explain how the film is organised. Non-narrative fiction films can be categorical, rhetorical, abstract or associational and each of these terms both describe and define the way in which the film elements are structured to produce the whole. Categorical structures feature definition, classification and comparison and may include an analysis of the subject matter, whereas rhetorical films are structured to present an argument and persuade the audience about an aspect of the world. Image and soundtracks which are linked by a likeness of form or subject matter yet do not exhibit a cause-effect relationship are associational, whereas cases where these images and sounds are not linked, or are linked by a thematic or ideological project not present in the text, are termed abstract (Plantinga, 1997). Narrative films can also be described as exhibiting these structures, but the determining factor in labelling a film as 'narrative' is that of cause and effect.

Nonfiction films are not easily placed within Bordwell and Thompson's definition of narrative, and are often better described by the structures of non-narrative fictional film. Within fiction, the narrative, or cause-effect relationship, is exhibited by the film's story and plot. The plot comprises all the events explicitly presented by the film, in the order in which they appear, combined with associated non-diegetic material which does not stem from the action of the film, such as a musical soundtrack or credit sequence. The film's story is all the events which are both presented by the text and inferred by the audience, in chronological order. The plot gives us the onscreen structure and allows us to determine some cause and effect relationship between the events, and the story can often give more information that enables us to infer a cause-effect relationship that may not be immediately understood through the events presented onscreen (Bordwell and Thompson, 1997). For example, the plot of the 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* is not presented in chronological order and it is only by building the story retroactively that we can assign motivation, or cause, to some of the events which occur. The film opens with two characters, Pumpkin and Honeybunny, who are about to rob a diner. As they jump up and threaten the customers with guns, the opening credits roll. The scene is repeated later in the film, and it transpires that this event actually occurred after the sequences which follow it, approximately half way through the story, even though it was the first scene in the plot. We do not find out who these characters are and how this event fits into the plot until we have constructed the story events, chronologically, which enables us to understand the cause-effect chain of events which occur through *Pulp Fiction*.

It is possible to describe the events of a nonfiction film as having a plot or story since they occur in *an* order through the duration of the film and can be assembled into chronological order retroactively, yet this order does not necessarily follow a cause-effect relationship. The concepts of plot and story are therefore more difficult to apply to nonfiction. The 2011 documentary *We Were Here* deals with the outbreak and impact of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, through the testimony of people who lived through it. The film is structured around interviews and includes archive footage and photographs from the time. The film follows a loosely chronological structure in that each interviewee recalls their memories and experiences from the beginning of the outbreak until the present day. However, there is no cause-effect relationship between the sequences which are juxtaposed onscreen; each interview does not *cause* the next. So while the film exhibits a clear structure, it is not organised according to a narrative.

### **Nonfiction Modes**

Brooks offers a further definition of plot which is more obviously applicable to nonfiction film, arguing that plots are “intentional structures, goal-oriented and forward-moving” (Brooks, 1996, p.255). It is the intention which is fundamental to understanding how concepts of plot relate to nonfiction film, since it is the forwarding of an argument or perspective on the world which comprises the formal system, rather than a direct cause-effect chain. Since nonfiction film makes an argument about the real world by selecting the subject matter and its representation, the structure is organised according to a rhetoric. Within this rhetorical structure, Nichols (2010) identifies six main modes. The modes do not

determine every aspect of the films' organisation but instead offer conventions around which the structure is formed. There is clearly some overlap between these modes and their development did not follow a chronological line, although each progressed in response to the others (Nichols, 2010). The first of these, the 'poetic' mode places emphasis on visual association and rhythm as a means of organising the structure, as in Shirley Clarke's experimental film *Bridges-Go-Round* (1958) which combines imagery of New York skylines and bridges with a specially commissioned, free-form soundtrack. 'Expository' films emphasise an argumentative logic, so that the film is structured in order to forward an argument. The 1940 GPO Film Unit production, *London Can Take It* serves as an excellent example of the expository documentary mode. The film depicts a night of bombing raids in London during the Second World War and the commentary emphasises the impact on the city and its inhabitants. The film shows the aftermath on the rubble-strewn streets and its central message, as hinted by the title, is that of the resilience of the British people whose lives carry on regardless of the threat of Nazi attacks. 'Observational' nonfiction films are structured to present the everyday lives of their subjects as unobtrusively as possible. An observational film which secured a cinema release in 2002 is *Lost in La Mancha* in which the filmmakers follow Terry Gilliam's, ultimately abortive, attempt to make a film based on the novel, *Don Quixote*. The filmmakers follow the behind-the-scenes action of Gilliam's production and, as the litany of disasters beset the film, their camera observes from a distance, without intervening in events. In contrast, 'participatory' films involve the filmmaker interacting with the subject/s through interview, conversation or confrontation, as in Michael Moore's documentary productions. In *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11*



(2004), *Sicko* (2007) and *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009) as well as Moore's earlier film, *Roger & Me* (1989), the Director appears onscreen to interview/cajole his subjects and speaks directly to camera in order to build an argument based around the films' central themes. In the 'reflexive' mode, the film draws attention to its own construction by revealing its production to the audience. While Michael Moore's direct address style does underline the constructed nature of his films and can therefore be considered reflexive on this basis, the actual, physical production of the film is not revealed. Reflexivity is a gradation; however those which can be understood as reflexive in a 'pure' sense are films such as Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929), which include the production of the film within the text itself. *Man With a Movie Camera* includes sequences showing the cameraman filming and the film actually being edited so that we are in no doubt when viewing that this is a construction. The final mode is 'performative' in which the filmmaker is subjectively involved in the film and with its subject/s in order to increase the audience's emotional response to the film and its arguments. Again, Michael Moore's documentaries can be understood within this mode. Through his interviews and personal investment in the subject matter, particularly with regard to *Roger & Me*, Moore forces us into a position of sympathy with his cause.

### **Style and Voice**

Each of the modes described comprises stylistic conventions which the filmmaker uses to convince the audience of the film's 'objectivity', relationship to 'reality' and the 'truth' of the argument put forward. Film style is the characteristic use of

the filmic techniques comprising cinematography, editing, sound and mise-en-scène. Cinematography describes the use of the camera in terms of its movement and angle, and the framing of the image through shot scale, focus and depth of field, both during and in post-production. The term 'editing' applies to two concepts in film analysis. It refers in the first instance to the selection and juxtaposition of camera takes during filmmaking, and also the overall relationship between shots and sequences in the completed film. Sound in film can either be diegetic or nondiegetic and is comprised of four elements, which are music, dialogue, effects and the use of silence. The way in which these elements of sound are applied to the film, as well as its qualities and dimensions, comprise this aspect of style. Mise-en-scène is the collective term for all the elements placed in front of the camera and which therefore appear within the frame of the finished film. This can include, for example, settings, lighting and costume, and the actions and behaviour of characters onscreen. It is difficult to separate style from form in film analysis, since the way in which a film is structured and organised is directly related to the way in which events are represented using stylistic devices (Bordwell and Thompson, 1997).

Expository texts generally centre on the use of commentary to convey information and construct argument, whether through voiceover or using an onscreen narrator. The sound is therefore the dominant stylistic element, and the images are used to illustrate the opinions put forward or provide a counterpoint. The argument of expository nonfiction films is the organising factor, and the material is edited to maintain the rhetorical continuity, rather than the visual. The film will move

across time and space in a discontinuous manner, since it is not necessary to construct the film according to spatio-temporal links between sequences in order to build the argument. While interviews and testimony may be used this is, again, to progress the argument which has been developed in advance; the interviews do not structure the text. As such, the information conveyed by the film is often abstract or conceptual, as opposed to stemming from the action presented onscreen. Cinematography is used for clarity, rather than displaying an expressive use of visuals, connected through rhythm and pattern, which characterises the poetic mode. In contrast, the information conveyed by reflexive nonfiction films is always contextual. The film acknowledges the process of production and knowledge builds throughout that process. The editing also follows this contextual logic. While the sequences may not be juxtaposed in order to maintain the continuity of space and time, the structure will be organised around the central, often investigative, search for knowledge. The information presented by reflexive films is brought into question by the filmmaker, either through their onscreen presence or narration, and their initial assumptions and expectations can be proven incorrect or undermined through the production process. Reflexive nonfiction films are also reliant on interviews or confrontations to build the structure and, while technically important, cinematography and sound are used to 'capture' rather than present events. The camera and, usually synchronised sound, are therefore secondary to the discovery of information (Nichols, 2010).

These stylistic conventions are recognisable to the audience and used by the filmmaker, or institution sponsoring the film, to build a convincing argument. Further to the use of form and style, through the practical manipulation of the production process itself, the way in which the argument is conveyed is also affected by the less tangible factor of the films' 'voice'. Nichols (2010) uses this term to describe how the films convey a social 'point of view'. However, given the many uses of the term 'point of view' within film studies, to describe the perspective of a character or the direction of the camera, 'voice' is a less confusing descriptor. A film's voice can be explicit through a commentary for example, or implicit through the selection and arrangement of the sound and visuals. The voice governs the way in which the audience is addressed and this can be either direct, or indirect. Direct address can describe a filmmaker or subject within the film speaking directly through the camera to the audience, but it also refers to the way in which the film gives the sense that the film/maker is conveying a proposal about the real world. Indirect address, by contrast, describes the way the audience perceives the film as suggesting an outlook on aspects of the real world. The film's voice functions more as an impression implied by the film/maker and inferred by the audience, and it is the film's style which facilitates the voice. Nonfiction modes and voice structure the form, construct and convey the films' argument about the real world, and engage the audience in its discourse. All of these factors require consideration in order to analyse the discourse of nonfiction film.

### **‘Educational’ Nonfiction Film**

When the Ministry of Education took the decision to sponsor an experimental programme of ‘visual units’ for the secondary classroom in 1944, it was the first government intervention into the production of films for schools. The films were just one aspect of the visual units, which included other visual aids such as photographs and maps for display on wall panels, along with teachers’ notes (de Moulpied, 1946e; Forman, 1947b). The Ministry considered nonfiction to be the most appropriate medium for these educational films, due to its association with real life and the assumption that it could objectively convey information to the intended audience of secondary school pupils (Hawkes, 1948c). The assumptions made by the Ministry relate to concepts which exist at the centre of debates surrounding nonfiction film texts and raise questions regarding the definition and impact of nonfiction film. I have argued above that the concepts of ‘objectivity’, ‘truth’ and the representation of reality form a complex interrelationship through the discourse of nonfiction which not only includes the audience but is constructed through their engagement with the text and its indexing. In creating this discourse, the audience must be complicit with the text. The filmmaker uses formal and stylistic devices, structured within recognisable nonfiction modes, in order to convince us of its argument by constructing a film which persuades us of its ‘objectivity’, and therefore reliability. The production programme sponsored by the Ministry of Education explicitly intended to use nonfiction film as a means of instruction. In order to analyse the production and objectives of the Ministry’s programme, it is therefore important to look at the films’ style, form and voice to identify how the films have been constructed, not only to convey information, but also to convince the intended audience of an argument. This, in turn, will support

analysis regarding the nature of the films' arguments, and how and why it was felt that secondary pupils should be persuaded of these particular opinions. By these means I hope to throw light on the ideological project behind the films and the experiment as a whole.

## **Chapter Six: Film Analysis**

### **Introduction**

The eight visual units which were produced for the Ministry of Education's experimental programme of classroom resources all included film elements, alongside other visual aids such as photographs and filmstrips, and teachers' notes. The experiment was designed to address the identified lack of films for the classroom, and to research the educational 'value' of visual education (Crossley, 1946; Roseveare, 1946b). The films, once produced, were to be distributed to schools and evaluated by teachers and pupils alike, and the findings would enable the Ministry to define the types of film, in terms of form and style, which were of use in the classroom, the specific teaching techniques required for their application and the benefits to both teachers and pupils of including the medium within secondary school lessons (Richardson, 1945; Roseveare, 1946b). The research would thereby enable the Ministry to define the educational 'value' of film. The variations across the planning and production processes brought about a programme of films which differed greatly in terms of subject matter and intended audience. However, the Ministry had been clear about some details of the films' form. It was made clear that the films produced for the visual units must all be nonfiction as this was considered less likely to have a negative impact on pupils than the 'artifice' of fiction film, could teach factual information in an 'objective' manner, and introduce aspects of the real world into the classroom

(Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932; Hawkes, 1948c). This factor lent some cohesion to the programme, but the collection of films was still diverse. The category of 'nonfiction' is in itself varied; incorporating a wide range of modes and stylistic conventions, and the experimental production programme reflected this range and demonstrated the many possibilities for using nonfiction film as an educational resource. Through analysis of the style and form of the films, I aim to ascertain how conventions of nonfiction were used, and enable a definition of what the Ministry of Education considered to comprise 'educational film'. In addition, the chapter aims to inform the identification of the ideological project conveyed through and informed by the films discussed later in the thesis, by building on the analysis of form, style and content to support the analysis of issues of representation and the construction of meaning.

The completed programme of visual units included 16 films, held at the British Film Institute National Archive, the titles of which are *Local Studies: Near Home* (1947) and the associated silent, subsidiary films *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* (1945), *Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham* (1945) and *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* (1945); *Houses in History* (1946); *The Beginning of History* (1946) and the accompanying silent film *Primitive Iron Smelting* (1949); *Water Supply* (1951); *Instruments of the Orchestra* (1946) and the other film in this visual unit, *Science in the Orchestra* (1950); *The History of Writing* (1947); *The Story of Printing* (1948) and the additional film *The Story of Papermaking* (1948); and *England's Wealth From Wool* (1948), along with the two silent films *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* (1948) and *the Making of Woollen and*



*Worsted Cloth* (1948) (See Table 1, Appendix Three). Although the different approaches to production led to a range of styles across the experiment, the films can be grouped into sub-categories, according to their formal structure. There is some overlap across the categories, but there exists sufficient delineation between the films to demonstrate that the experiment comprised several distinct formal and stylistic interpretations of the definition of ‘educational’ nonfiction film.

**Episodic, Expository Nonfiction: *The History of Writing, The Story of Printing, The Story of Papermaking, England’s Wealth From Wool and Water Supply.***

The films in the first and largest group, comprising *The History of Writing, The Story of Printing, The Story of Papermaking, England’s Wealth From Wool and Water Supply* all display the same formal structure. The texts deal with historical subject matter, are structured chronologically, are edited into historical ‘episodes’ and incorporate filmic devices such as maps, diagrams, animation and dramatic reconstructions of historic events in order to punctuate the flow of information and explain the detail of the commentary. In addition, the plot events are organised according to cause-effect relationships so that the films are not merely chronological, they are also narrative. *The History of Writing, The Story of Printing* and *The Story of Papermaking* were all produced by Films of Fact Ltd and include, not only references to each other throughout the course of the texts, but also overlap in the visuals. *The History of Writing* deals with the invention of written text from the early use of signs and symbols in Africa and North America, through to the development of Chinese characters, the use of cuneiform in

Mesopotamia and the development of Ancient Egyptian and Semitic forms of writing into the Greek and Roman text which eventually reached Britain. Similarly, *The Story of Printing* begins with the Chinese and Japanese inventions of wooden block printing and traces its evolution, through to the invention of the Gutenberg Press and the development of type and its impact on Western Europe and specifically Britain in publishing books and newspapers. *The Story of Papermaking* was produced after *Printing*, for inclusion in *The Story of Printing* visual unit, as it was considered essential in giving background information to the history of publishing (Boon, 2010). This too follows the chronological development from Native American, Middle Eastern, Egyptian and East Asian inventions until the point where paper was produced on a large scale in Europe. Sequences from each are shared across the films to illustrate relevant sections, such as the reconstructions of early forms of writing from *The Story of Printing* that are repeated in the opening five minutes of *Papermaking*. While *England's Wealth From Wool* was produced by a different company, Basic Films, the film displays the same chronological, cause-effect structure. *Wealth From Wool* begins by focusing on the origins of the wool trade in rural, subsistence farming, and traces the developments of trade routes from England, the establishment of wool mills and the money invested in English towns and cities by the merchants. *Water Supply* is set in the 'present' day and details the work of the Metropolitan Water Board and the processes which are required to pump water from the River Thames into storage reservoirs, filter, chlorinate and supply clean water to the public. With the exception of *Papermaking*, the films all open with a contemporary sequence, set in the 1940s, before focusing on the earliest relevant instance of the topic at hand. The films then depict what are identified as the

significant developments in the industries, in terms of their impact on British, or English in the case of *Wealth From Wool*, life and end with another brief reference to the ‘present day’. This impact is invariably marked by mechanisation and measured by revenue. The narrative exposition of each of the films relies on the insertion of maps that indicate the geographical movement of inventions, industrial processes, money and ideas and, as such, the plots are forwarded by the historical development of trade routes.

All of the films are divided into sections, in some cases this is explicit through division into distinct parts for projection in the classroom on separate occasions, but all are divided implicitly through the formal structure. Although the films focus on different subject matter, each of the sections begins with a map, detailing the geographical area with which the episode deals. This is followed by live action, which incorporates dramatic reconstruction, illustrative visuals and still-life imagery of museum artefacts to demonstrate the key points made by the commentary. The images underscore the voiceover narration and function as a visual description of each of the statements made. In *The History of Writing* and *The Story of Printing*, there are diagrammatic interpretations of the action and/or processes described at the end of each section to summarise the information conveyed. *The History of Writing* actually includes instructions for the audience at this final stage to ensure we are following the explanation. *Writing* is divided into four parts and at the close of each part, the commentary tells us to “stop and see how far we’ve got”. The summaries are accompanied by onscreen titles which recap the main points of explanation and the next section then begins with

another map. *England's Wealth From Wool* and *The Story of Papermaking* do not use diagrams to recap, instead the image simply fades to black before fading back up to reveal a map that marks the beginning of the next section.

The opinion expressed at the time by educationalists and confirmed by research carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research and the National Committee for Visual Aids in Education in 1949, was that educational films for the classroom ought to last for approximately ten minutes (Sumner, 1956). There was little discussion regarding how this number was calculated, however it is possible it was related to the length of a single reel of film. A 375 foot reel of 16mm, running at 24 frames per second for a sound film, lasts for ten minutes. This would have been a convenient size reel and length of film to project in the classroom and to distribute to schools in 400 foot cans. Since the production companies were shooting on 35mm film, this would have required the final, edited reel to be 900 feet in length, which would then have been reduced to 16mm for distribution to schools. If the parts of the film were divided according to this amount, it would have made projection easier since the teacher could run each part individually without having to change the reel and disrupt the flow of the film. However, whether the running time of ten minutes was determined by practical reasoning or pedagogical rationale, this opinion was not reflected in the films and the length of each of the parts, and complete films, varied greatly (see Table 1, Appendix Three).

The fact that the targeted audience was secondary pupils suggests the structuring of the films in this particular form was a pedagogical device, based on the filmmakers' assumptions about the amount and level of information that was relevant and appropriate for the audience. However, while the subject matter of all the films is historical, the visual units for which they were produced were not intended to support only the History syllabus. *The Story of Printing* visual unit was originally envisaged by the production company as being of use to the study of Art, Literature, Geography, History, Science and Maths (Films of Fact, 1947a). However, these subjects were not referenced in the Teachers' Notes which accompanied *The Story of Printing* and *Papermaking* films so that it would have been unclear to teachers where exactly the films fitted within the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1950b). Having been recommended and largely written by the Scientific Film Association, *Water Supply* was intended to support the Science syllabus, but the emphasis was on project work that would be inspired by the film and could take place both in and outside of the classroom (Scientific Film Association, 1947). Similarly, *The History of Writing* aimed to encourage project-based activities centring on the development of 'good' handwriting (Ministry of Education, 1948b). The Teachers' Notes did not include any reference to the syllabus and were defensive about the inclusion of the film within the production programme, since it was not made clear how and why this film was appropriate to the secondary syllabus (Ministry of Education, 1948b). While it can be assumed from the text that the target subject for *England's Wealth From Wool* was History, any pedagogical rationale for its production was entirely absent from the supporting documentation, leaving the educational objectives of the film open to interpretation (see The National Archives collection, file

references ED 121/562 – ED 121/566). So although the group of films exhibit similar structures and a chronological approach to the organisation of information throughout the text, this choice of form does not appear to have been related to the curriculum subject for which the films were intended, given the range or, in some instances, lack of subjects for which the films were considered to have been of benefit.

### **Stylistic Distancing**

While the narrative structure might suggest that the films belong more in the fictional category of the medium, the stylistic devices employed throughout the films signal their place within the nonfiction realm. Stylistically, all the films in this group fall within the expository mode of nonfiction, and the narrative form enables the film/makers to present a series of historical events as having existed in a linear progression; building the argument that these are historical accounts with their basis in ‘fact’. The films open with brief title sequences which signal their place within the Ministry of Education’s sponsored programme. All of the films include a credit explaining that the film is part of a specific visual unit. The titles stay onscreen for a very short period and are not accompanied by any music or effects. The information included is perfunctory and the lack of any music over the opening credits distinguishes the films from fiction or feature films, with which the audience of pupils may have been familiar. The silence and stark imagery sets the tone, implying the seriousness of the film that follows and signifying its status as nonfiction. From the outset, the films force the viewer to pay attention and await instruction, and there is just a brief pause before the films

begin. These credit sequences function to index the films according to a 'type', as described by Carroll (2006). From the opening frames, the audience is immediately made aware that what we are about to view is nonfiction, from the tone of the audio-visuals, and 'educational', since the film has been sponsored by the Ministry of Education. According to Nichols' (1991) theory of analysing nonfiction film as a circulating discourse, to which the audience brings assumptions and expectations about the text, the title sequences lead us to form the expectations that the film/s will teach us about an aspect of the real world and therefore will include factual information, and the assumption that we will be required to learn the facts that will be presented. Therefore, what we bring to the discourse is an acceptance of the films' educational 'value'.

The pace of the films is dictated by the division into sections and slow visual exposition however, following the conventions of the expository mode, the voiceover commentary used by the films is the primary means of conveying information and is central to conveying the voice of the film (Nichols, 1981). The predominance of the voiceover narration signifies a contradictory approach to the use of sound. The commentary is entirely non-diegetic, it does not stem from action within the frame and therefore does not adhere to the opinion of the research report which the National Committee for Visual Aids in Education (NCVAE) submitted to the Ministry of Education in 1947, that all sound in educational films should be 'natural' (Buchanan, 1951). In all of the films, the commentary is delivered didactically in Received Pronunciation by a male voice, and addresses the audience directly. The direct address works to include the

audience in the story by giving instruction, such as in the opening sequence of *The Story of Printing*. A young boy is making potato prints and the first line of the commentary tells us to, “Take a piece of wood, or linoleum, or half a potato and cut away part of the surface so that you leave a raised pattern”. From the outset it is made clear that the narrator is in a position of authority, not to be questioned. His words and tone immediately draw the audience into a submissive position, mimicking the authority of a teacher in the classroom; we are being told, not invited to consider. The films’ voice is formal and, as Plantinga (1997) argues, the omniscient stance adopted by the ‘voice of god’ narration encourages the viewer to infer that the statements are ‘truth’. The tone and delivery of the narrator signals that he is the ‘expert’ and there is never any reference to how the stories have been constructed, or whether the histories depicted could have been interpreted differently. The authoritative voice forces us to infer that these are the definitive histories on the subjects. Aside from the commentary there is no other sound within the films, with one obvious exception. In *England’s Wealth From Wool*, there is a sequence which depicts the uprising of the weavers against the introduction of machinery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A dramatic reconstruction shows a gang of men entering a factory, knocking over and breaking some of the equipment. The sequence is accompanied by the sound of the machines crashing to the ground and shouts of the men, all of which has been added to the film in post-production. The shouts are matched by fast-paced imagery which is cut at a higher tempo than the rest of the film. The sequence therefore stands out as an extraordinary divergence from the otherwise consistently measured and emotionless style of the film/s.



The cinematography of *The History of Writing*, *The Story of Printing*, *The Story of Papermaking*, *England's Wealth From Wool* and *Water Supply* are also similar. The visuals work only to illustrate concepts that are described verbally. There is little camera movement throughout the films; instead, the movement takes place within the frame. The camera is removed from the action, using long and medium shots to show live action events and dramatic reconstructions, with close ups used only to focus on the details described. Again, this adheres to the conventions of the expository nonfiction mode, using the cinematography to maintain the clarity of the argument, rather than ensuring spatio-temporal continuity (Nichols, 1991). For example in *The Story of Printing* close ups are used to show the various processes and printing presses so that we can clearly see the specific mechanisms. In *England's Wealth From Wool*, the close ups are reserved for details on buildings, such as the crests and shields of wool merchants. In this manner, the films use the camera only to direct the attention of the audience, and the visuals lack redundancy, rather than displaying an artistic or poetic use of the cinematography to highlight the beauty of the visuals themselves. In addition, the films use what Nichols refers to as “evidentiary editing” (Nichols, 2010, p. 169) whereby the organisation of shots and sequences serves to maintain the continuity of the spoken argument, rather than establishing a formal pattern, without drawing attention to the films’ construction. The style of the cinematography implies that the films are emotionally distanced from their subject matter, and combined with the editing, contributes to the films’ empirical verisimilitude (Nichols, 1991). We are encouraged to infer that the events are unmediated and therefore objective, yet the films are structured *in order to* elicit exactly this response.

The films' use of mise-en-scène is far more diverse than the consistent style of the cinematography and editing, incorporating a range of settings, 'characters' and technical devices such as animation and diagrams. *The Story of Papermaking* and *England's Wealth From Wool* both rely heavily on real world locations in order to demonstrate processes to the viewer and illustrate the concepts described. For example, one sequence in *Papermaking* shows the men and women in a village in India producing single sheets of paper using the methods described in the commentary, and another depicts tree-felling in North America. *England's Wealth From Wool* shifts between various locations, from the Highlands of Scotland and European mountain settlements where subsistence farming still took place in the 1940s, to the towns and cities of England where revenue from the wool trade enabled merchants and guilds to invest in architecture. *The History of Writing* also includes sequences set in the real world. However, these are confined to what appear to be library shots of Mesopotamia and Egypt in the 'present day' and function to illustrate the country as a whole, rather than focusing on specific aspects of these settings that relate directly to the commentary. The use of the real world as a backdrop to, or illustration of, the commentary is a fundamental technique of this group of films in conveying historical 'fact'. We witness the evidence of the guild halls and far-off countries, just as the commentary explains, and are therefore convinced of the 'truth' in the story. The inclusion of annotated maps adds to this factual representation of events. The maps show us where in the world events took place and the labelling gives us the exact dates, thereby supporting the claims of the commentary. However, there is a contradiction in the films' approach to the 'truth'.

Despite the suggestion of ‘reality’ implied by the inclusion of real world settings, all of the films include dramatic reconstructions of historical events and processes. The majority of *The History of Writing* is comprised of reconstructions, interspersed with close ups of written texts, to explain the development of writing. The ancient texts and examples of handwriting punctuate the reconstructions, signalling that, although these may have been actors playing the parts, the events still took place because here are the results. Therefore, rather than hinting at the artifice of the information, these reconstructions function to persuade us of its ‘truth’. The real world settings, names, dates and examples of historical artefacts confirm the films’ objectivity and function as irrefutable evidence that not only did these events happen, but by implication this is also therefore *how* it happened. *The Story of Printing* is constructed almost entirely from these fictionalised scenes, with the exception of the final sequence which depicts the machinery and staff involved in ‘modern’ printing. The characters throughout the film wear period costume and wigs, are placed in what we are told and therefore understand as historically accurate printing workshops, and perform the tasks that the commentary explains as the historical methods of working in a printing press. The sets are darkly lit interiors and the combination of commentary and cinematography draw our attention only to those details which are relevant to the unfolding of the story. We have no access to any other point of view, so these rigidly controlled sets are our only resources in building a history of the subject; they are our only ‘reality’. The reconstructions are a logical and practical way of depicting past practices, however the use of fictional characters within these determinedly ‘nonfiction’

films opposes the Ministry of Education's strict aims to produce educational films that use an "objective approach" and avoid fictional techniques (Hawkes, 1948c). The inclusion of the reconstructions would therefore seem to run contrary to the Ministry's assumptions regarding the usefulness and importance of using the nonfiction form in educational settings. While the films can still be defined as nonfiction, given the indexing and use of 'evidence', the fictionalisation of actual events and narrative structure demonstrates a less literal use of the nonfiction medium than the Ministry perhaps intended at the outset.

The films in this group all use stylistic devices characteristic of the expository nonfiction mode in order to convince the audience of an argument that this history took place, in this manner, with these results. The chronological structure and authoritative voice do not invite contradiction and the use of perceptual realism forces us to recognise that this is indeed the 'real world'. The distanced camerawork, used for clarity in order to afford us a better understanding, along with the inclusion of real world settings and artefacts align the film with 'reality'. We know these churches, hillsides, guild halls and books to exist because we see them in situ and cannot refute their existence. Therefore we infer that each of the films *must* be a factual account of events because of the reference to dates, names, places and so on that we know to exist. The inclusion of the dramatic reconstructions combined with the sheer volume of historical information relayed through the commentary and its dry, measured delivery aim to convince us that this was so, and this is *how* it happened. Rather than interrupting the 'factual' content, these fictionalised action sequences are constructed as evidence. We

witness the ‘printers’ working 17<sup>th</sup> century presses, or 15<sup>th</sup> century ‘monks’ laboriously scribing copies of the bible and, since we have no proof otherwise, conclude that these events took place just as they are depicted. The authoritative voice builds on the ‘evidence’ of the film, and functions to convince us that the statements are the ‘truth’. Furthermore, the inclusion of the viewer in the commentary brings us into a position of complicity with the text. We are a part of the story being told. The authoritative tone and language, combined with the visual ‘proof’ counteracts any questions regarding its ‘truthfulness’ since we have no evidence to dispute its claims. The films are constructed specifically *in order to* discourage dispute. The nonfiction discourse is therefore characterised by didacticism and control. The audience is positioned to receive the information conveyed, and on viewing we know that the authoritative voice comes from the institution of government, the Ministry of Education. The film, filmmaker and institution that sponsored the films become one side of the nonfiction discourse, with the audience as complicit recipients of the arguments.

**Subjective Objectivity and the Expository Mode: *The Beginning of History* and *Houses in History***

The main, sound films for the visual units *The Beginning of History* and *Houses in History* both began with chronological, narrative essays rather than filmic treatments, and this approach is evident in their commentary-driven forms (Ministry of Education, 1948; Tubbs, 1945). As with the films discussed in the previous group, the two films in this ‘sub-group’ both follow a chronological structure, but are not organised according to a narrative logic. *The Beginning of*

*History* depicts what the commentary describes as the “important events which had already happened in our history before most history books begin”, tracing the development of specifically British social history from the Old Stone Age through to the Iron Age. Each of the ‘Ages’ are dealt with in turn, and focus on the broadly social aspects of the periods such as housing, farming and industry. Similarly, *Houses in History* outlines developments in housing over the centuries, but the focus this time is on England. The original treatment for the film had been entitled *The Englishman’s Home* before being amended to its final version (Tubbs, 1945). The film begins by explaining how the availability of different raw materials around the country impacted on housing, then takes us through a visual inventory of various architecture from the Middle Ages through Tudor, Renaissance, Georgian and finally, Victorian styles, and ends with footage of contemporary suburbs of the 1940s. The link between sequences in both films is implied by the chronology of events, but each sequence does not logically follow the previous; there is no cause-effect relationship and therefore no narrative structure according to the definition proposed by Bordwell and Thompson (1997). For example, in *Houses in History*, we are told that by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, the medieval style of architecture was “over” and replaced by that of the Renaissance, but this replacement is not explained, only described. We are given no insight into why the architecture changed at this point, so the Renaissance sequence merely follows that of the Medieval, rather than having been *caused* by it, or by any external factors of which we are made aware. While the films are non-narrative and the formal structure is associational, they are still organised according to a recognisable plot, as outlined above, which are “intentional” and “forward-moving”, according to Brooks’ definition (Brooks, 1996, p.255). The

intention in these films is to build a 'history', through selecting 'significant' events and using the visuals to illustrate and provide evidence for this history, and the forward movement is provided by the chronology. The chronological association between historic events provides the overall argument of the films, and these films exhibit the stylistic conventions of the expository mode of nonfiction film by organising the visuals as 'evidence' to support the statements of 'fact' put forward by the commentary.

### **Stylistic Subjectivity**

In a similar manner to the previous group of films, the commentaries of *The Beginning of History* and *Houses in History* are the central organising factor, and, as is characteristic of the expository mode, function as the primary means of conveying information throughout the films (Nichols, 1991). However, while the commentary is again delivered by a male voice in Received Pronunciation and the tone is authoritative, the voiceovers differ in one significant aspect; they not only convey information, but also opinion. The commentary addresses us directly and the inclusion of the audience in the language used forces us to accept both the 'facts' which are stated about the histories of British society and housing, and the opinions of the narrator.

*Houses in History* opens with a question for the audience, asking, "Have you ever stopped to look at your own house and to wonder why it is built in just the way it is?" before continuing on to explain how different building materials found across England led to variations in the construction of houses, such as those made from

clay bricks or timber. This direct address immediately signals the authority of the narrator to the audience, since he provides the answers to his own questions, demonstrating his position of knowledge. Later in the film however, this address shifts and the audience is included in the ‘discoveries’ made through the film. In describing the changes in housing from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, the commentary tells us that “we can follow these changes through the centuries”. The shift from “you” to “we” brings us into alignment with the film. It has now become ‘our’ history. So when the narrator begins to offer his perspective on the housing described, the opinions become our own through the films’ rhetorical technique. For example, the Renaissance building, Wrotham Palace is described as “simple, perfectly proportioned – and very lovely”, whereas workers’ homes built to accommodate the rise in population during the industrial revolution are described as “rows and rows of ugly, cheap little houses all jumbled up with factories.” These brief descriptions of the houses we see onscreen are all the information we receive regarding their architecture, and the terms used in the commentary are charged with social implications. *The Beginning of History* uses the commentary to similar effect. Early on in the film, during a sequence which deals with the Stone Age, we are shown the interior of caves carved into the rocks at Cheddar Gorge. The commentary explains the hunter-gatherer existence of the people at this time and proclaims that, “by our modern standards their way of life was very savage. Their meals finished, they threw the bones on the cave floor”. This is followed by images of cave paintings, which is accompanied by the explanation that, “they carved animals on their tools and painted and carved them on the walls of their caves. They probably did this for magical reasons to help them kill animals which they drew. Nevertheless, they are true works of art.” In



both these examples, the commentary simply states opinions without offering any explanation. The “savage” life which the Stone Age peoples lived is qualified in terms of contemporary ideals regarding manners, and the statement that cave paintings are “magical” yet “true art” does not include any definition of the terms, nor explanation as to how this opinion has been reached. The narrator in both films delivers seemingly ungrounded opinion in the same didactic tone with which he relays the factual information, such as dates and the names and geographical location of places depicted. The opinions are therefore stated as ‘facts’, without offering the possibility of alternative interpretation. As argued by Plantinga (1997), the ‘objectivity’ practices of nonfiction function to conceal discursive positions and bias in the film. In these two films, the socio-cultural bias of the commentary/filmmaker is masked by the tone of authority which implies a disinterested objectivity. The effect on the audience is to persuade us of opinions regarding the subject matter, which we are not in any position to dispute, since we only have this perspective on the subject, and that perspective is narrowed by the selection of, and omission of further, information.

While the style of the voiceover commentary is the same and neither film includes any dialogue, the two films differ in their use of non-diegetic music and effects. The only sound effects in either film occur during the end sequence of *Houses in History*. These are added during the montage sequence which depicts the impact of mechanisation on the building of houses. The visuals show steel works, mills and steam locomotion and the soundtrack comprises the roar of the furnace and whistle of the trains. The sequence is brief, and the use of effects at this point is

interesting since it runs counter to the style of the rest of the film. By contrast, the earlier architecture is accompanied by a musical soundtrack. The music is emotive and matched by the commentary, which describes the grandeur of the buildings, such as Hatfield House, Ely Cathedral and the Regency housing in Bath and Cheltenham, selected as examples of ‘good’ architecture. There is no overlap between the commentary and the music and we are instructed to consider the beauty of the imagery, while listening to the choral music which accompanies the cathedral or triumphant brass instrumental over the shots of Stokesay Castle. This stylistic device runs contrary to the advice given by Jacquetta Hawkes of the Ministry of Education and Helen de Mouilpied of the COI to the Crown Film Unit with regards the use of music in *The Beginning of History* (Hawkes, 1946a). De Mouilpied wrote to the Crown Film Unit and requested that the music be removed since she and Hawkes claimed it was a distraction and not in keeping with the ‘natural’, diegetic sound which they believed should characterise educational films (de Mouilpied, 1946a). There was some dispute over this opinion and two separate versions of the film were produced. One was intended as a ‘background’ film which would include music and run through the entire 47 minutes of its duration continuously while the second was divided into three parts (de Mouilpied, 1946b). On viewing the educational version, the music has been omitted, so it seems that the Ministry of Education’s advice won through in this instance. The result of this decision is that *The Beginning of History* incorporates long passages of silence throughout the film, while *Houses in History* is rarely without commentary or musical soundtrack.

Throughout the films, the cinematography is used for visual clarity and the relationship between the imagery and non-synchronised sound is fundamentally illustrative. The spoken word holds primacy while the visuals function to support or clarify the speaker's argument. The framing changes little throughout *The Beginning of History*, using long and very long shots of the landscape and medium close ups for the interiors of the archaeological features, such as the farmstead in the Orkneys and the caves at Cheddar Gorge. This use of shot scale signifies a lack of intervention by the filmmaker and implies an 'objective' perspective through the physical distance between the object and the camera. *Houses in History* is slightly more visually expressive and uses dissolves to edit between shots, particularly during those sequences accompanied by music, whereas *The Beginning of History* uses only straight cuts to edit between both space and time. Both films use techniques of perceptual realism which closely aligns the profilmic world with its real equivalent, in order to heighten our belief in the 'truth' of the film (Currie, 1996), since the experience of viewing the landscapes of *The Beginning of History* and *Houses in History* is closely matched to our experience of the scenes in the real world. The imagery is therefore stylistically coded as 'reality' and the meaning of the visuals is anchored by the authoritative commentary. Barthes (1977) used the term 'anchorage' to define the concept of fixing the meaning of an image through the application of a linguistic message, such as the caption on a photograph. The meaning of the visuals, and therefore the argument of the films is fixed by the commentary so that we are denied any possibility of an alternative interpretation.

There is one exception to the slow, distanced cinematography which is worth highlighting since it points to another characteristic feature of this pair of films. During a sequence nearing the end of *The Beginning of History*, we are given a ‘guided tour’ of the reconstructed Iron Age farm of Little Woodbury, near Salisbury. This sequence is filmed entirely using point-of-view shots. We enter the farmstead through the main gate, and proceed into the main dwelling to study the artefacts which are arranged inside, before ‘looking’ around the farmyard where a goat is tethered and crops hang out to dry. This sequence is the most intriguing of the film. Firstly, because it is the only incidence where a human element is introduced, and secondly because despite the inclusion of the personal, social history, people are entirely absent. The fire is burning, food simmers in a pot, weaving has been abandoned mid-way, so there are signs of recent ‘life’, yet there is none. In contrast to the episodic group of films which rely heavily on the use of dramatic reconstructions to illustrate historical events and processes, both the films in this group omit any instances of reconstruction. The only human action which takes place in either film is anonymous. For example, *Houses in History* includes a shot of a woman reading in her Regency library and a silhouette of a man working a furnace, and *The Beginning of History* includes only the hands of a metal-worker as he forges tools at a furnace. The lack of dramatic reconstruction is entirely in keeping with the Ministry of Education’s opinion and requests regarding the nonfiction status of the educational films sponsored within this experiment (Hawkes, 1948c). However, the omission or complete anonymity of people in the two films which had claimed to depict social history is extraordinary. The effect on the audience is one of distance. We are expected to engage with ‘our’ social history, yet there are no examples of society.

While the flow of information conveyed by the commentary is less repetitive in both these films than in the previous ‘episodic’ group, the visuals are characterised by a high level of redundancy, offering numerous examples of each concept described. One sequence in *The Beginning of History* focuses on burial mounds dating from the Neolithic period and we are shown four examples from the Cotswolds, one from Cornwall and another from the Orkneys. Each of the examples is shot in long, slow takes so that we can see the detail of each of the archaeological features. However, since the features are very similar, this amount of repetition seems unnecessary in making the point. *Houses in History* displays a similar redundancy of the visuals. The Ely Cathedral sequence lasts for several minutes and is constructed of various shots of the cathedral’s exterior and interior architecture, accompanied by the sound of a monastic choir, with little explanation as to how and why the cathedral was built in this manner other than that, “in the Middle Ages when the church played a very great part in people’s lives, the finest architecture went into religious buildings.” It is difficult to assign motivation to the inclusion of so much detail and such a wide variety of settings however, the real world locations seem to have been intended to increase the films’ effect of perceptual realism. The comprehensive list of visual examples of the facts which the commentaries impart, imply a ‘complete’ history and function as exhaustive ‘evidence’. The implication of the display of real world objects and artefacts is that the film is showing us ‘reality’ and that the histories which the films re/present are therefore definitive.

In a similar manner to the previous group of films discussed, the argument of *The Beginning of History* and *Houses in History* is exactly as the titles imply; that these are definitive ‘histories’. The style is constructed in such a way as to signify the ‘objectivity’ of the films, yet the language of the commentary is subjective throughout, giving the films a social perspective, rather than an unbiased presentation of ‘factual’ information. The films use the nonfiction form in order to persuade the audience according to a specific opinion, put forward by the production companies and the film’s sponsor, the Ministry of Education. The nonfiction discourse between institution, film/maker and audience is dominated by the films’ authoritative voice, conveyed through the commentary, and the submissive anticipation of ‘facts’ which the audience brings to the screening. The discourse is therefore characterised by the hierarchical relationship between the production and reception.

### **Fictional Nonfiction: *Local Studies: Near Home***

*Local Studies: Near Home* stands out from the entire programme of films sponsored by the Ministry of Education as the only one which is overtly fictionalised. The film builds the story of a teacher, Mr Richards, and his group of children’s ‘discovery’ of the educational benefits of undertaking project work based on their local area. Set in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, the film follows the children as they investigate the civic, industrial and geographical history of their town and surrounding area, through library research, interviews with local people and field trips, culminating in a public exhibition of their work. *Near Home* is the main, sound film in the *Local Studies* visual unit, and was

accompanied by three short, silent films along with a handbook for teachers and additional visual aids (Ministry of Education, 1948a). The initial suggestion for the film came from HM Inspector Jenkins, who also wrote the treatment, which followed what he described as a “documentary” form (Jenkins, 1944, p.2). Basic Films were then commissioned to produce the film and the writer and director, Kay Mander, carried out a significant amount of research into local studies work in secondary education, visiting schools and speaking with teachers around the country as part of the pre-production process (Hawkes, 1944c). However, when Mander wrote the script based on her research, she later described the film as “fiction” (Mander, 1945, p.2). The title sequence of *Near Home* highlights the dual approach from the outset. The titles include the credit, “‘Richards’ played by Donald Finlay”, which is immediately followed by “Written and directed by Kay Mander with the assistance of children and townspeople of Bishop Auckland”. In these short sentences, the audience is made aware of the combination of fiction and nonfiction throughout the duration of the film. Nichols (2010) argues that it is the degree to which the film corresponds to actual events set against the level of invention which distinguishes documentary from fiction. Since the story of *Near Home* stems from the extensive research undertaken by Mander, the level of nonfictional content which contributed to its production would appear to outweigh the fictionalisation of events. Despite the director’s insistence on referring to it as a ‘fiction’, the film can still be understood as documentary according to Grierson’s definition as the “creative treatment of actuality” (Winston, 1995, p.11). The story stems from actual events and takes place in a real world location with real people, but the diegetic action is derived from the imagination of the writer/director.

The fictionalisation of events not only distinguishes the film from all the others, but also lends the film a clearly identifiable narrative structure. After the opening credits, the first sequence of the film shows a group of children sitting on a hillside which overlooks the town of Bishop Auckland. One of the boys complains that there is nothing to do in the town and, when the other children begin to name some places of interest, Mr Richards suggests that they carry out their own research into the history of the local area. He explains that he is new to the town and would like to learn more about it himself, adding further motivation to the suggestion. This conversation is the instigating event for the narrative which unfolds. Back in the classroom, the children are set the task of forming groups to investigate various aspects of Bishop Auckland, such as the steel works, council, dairy farm and its history as a Roman settlement. The cause-effect structure of the film is provided by the information found by the children as they uncover more details regarding the town. The final *dénouement* is an exhibition held for the public and the unveiling of their project work. This exhibition functions as an in-text 'conclusion' as well as a conclusion to the film's argument. The visitors, some of whom are characters we have met along the children's research journey, comment on the work produced and point out how much they too have learned about Bishop Auckland. However, the film also includes a further argument, expressed by Mr Richards, which is the educational benefit to the pupils of conducting a local study. The narrative serves a rhetorical purpose and the film fits the expository nonfiction mode, building the argument through the events, yet the use of the character of Richards for this purpose draws us back to the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction. The narrator in



this film is not the filmmaker but a fictional character, constructed by the filmmaker in order to convey the film's argument effectively. Despite the filmmaker's definition of the film as a "fiction" (Mander, 1945, p.2), *Near Home* is formally constructed as nonfiction with the specific intention of 'teaching' its audience about a social aspect of the world.

### **Stylistic Bias**

The cinematography of the film is used solely for narrative clarity. We are directed towards what happens, rather than how it happens and the result is that the visuals appear less deliberately 'educational' than the previous examples since we are not instructed to absorb 'facts' which are presented in diagrammatical form or through the voiceover commentary, and instead are encouraged to realise the information conveyed for ourselves as the action unfolds. The editing conforms to this same narrative logic and the association between sequences centres on the film's rhetoric. The action moves across unconnected locations and does not run according to chronological time. The reason behind this choice of cinematographic and editing style may have been related to the intended audience of the film. *Near Home* was aimed at a dual audience of pupils and teachers, with emphasis on those teachers undergoing training. The film was intended as a guide that would teach education professionals about classroom practice, as well as a resource to be screened for secondary pupils in the classroom (Dance, 1945; Hawkes, 1946j; Mander, 1945). This approach was unique to *Near Home* and none of the other films within the production experiment aimed to perform both tasks. The decision to omit any visual

sequences which addressed the pupils overtly, such as maps, diagrams and close-up shots of artefacts, may well have resulted from a consideration of the audience of teachers who would have used the film for their own development. The intention was that the rhetoric of the film would be two-fold, however the final production exhibits a bias towards the audience of teachers.

This bias is most apparent in the soundtrack of the film. In filmic terms, the soundscape of *Near Home* is straightforward since it stems entirely from the diegesis. However, the inclusion of visual and aural stylistic devices which manipulate the diegetic time and space differs greatly from the previous films discussed, which used only the commentary to convey factual information at a slow, measured pace. Both the dialogue and commentary of *Near Home* include few ‘facts’ and instead focus on forwarding the narrative and therefore the film’s argument. We are aligned with the character of Richards and events are explained from his point of view. While the cinematography is omniscient, in that we witness Richards’ actions as well as those of the children when he is not present, for the majority, the voiceover commentary is restricted to Richards’ perspective and allows us access to Richards’ thoughts and opinions, so that the film’s narration (i.e. the manner in which the plot distributes story information) is subjective. Our alignment with Richards is a direct consequence of this restricted subjectivity.

Despite being fictional, the scripted dialogue and its delivery not only contribute to the film’s ‘truthful’ argument, but are also used to imply its ‘objectivity’ and

encourage our complicity with Richards. The dialogue of the Bishop Auckland residents is delivered in an awkward, disjointed, hesitating manner and they affect 'correct' voices, masking their regional accents, whereas Richards speaks with Received Pronunciation, delivered with calm joviality. The distinction between the accents of the 'real' people of County Durham and Richards identifies him as an outsider. This distinction, combined with his voiceover commentary which guides us through the narrative, situates Richards in the position of observer, explaining events from outside of the action. While we are aware that Richards is a fictional character, he is still the teacher, whose voice therefore represents authority and his status as outsider suggests his opinions are objective. This further implies that his evaluation of the local studies work the children undertake and its positive impact on their educational development also comes from a position of objectivity. Throughout the film, Richards repeatedly states his distance from their investigations, claiming the ideas were all theirs, and that aside from writing introductory and thank you letters to the townspeople, such as the farmer and the owner of Wilson's Forge, for allowing the children access to their workplaces, he had little influence over the course of the research. In the final, exhibition sequence it is the children who explain what they have achieved, leaving Richards the role of prompt, asking questions to instigate their explanations. Richards' is the voice of the film. He marshals the hesitant assertions of the children and the townspeople so that we fully comprehend the significance of their statements. In the voiceover commentary, Richards addresses us directly, using the past tense as if he is recounting a story but also including further detail which builds on what we have learnt from watching the action. He summarises the children's activities and explains how and why they

are valuable. For example, when the children suggest that they share their research, because “people might like to have a look at it”, Richards agrees that an exhibition would be ideal. The next shot reveals the pupils working at desks, compiling charts, mounting photographs and writing captions, and Richards’ voiceover explains that, “each group sorted out the information they’d acquired, selected the essentials and arranged them to illustrate the theme they had chosen. It’s amazing how much can be shown pictorially when you really have something to say.” Furthermore, the voiceover combined with the visuals is humorous in tone. In one scene Richards describes how he has been conducting his own “research” and the image track shows him drinking a pint of beer in a local pub. The direct address functions to align us with his perspective, imparts further information regarding the educational ‘value’ of the project work and the humour suggests that he is ‘one of us’. This technique is clearly aimed at the audience of teachers, who are encouraged rather than instructed to take note of the film’s argument.

The final dialogue in the film is left to Richards, and it is here that his authority is exerted strenuously in order to convey the film’s overall argument. At the exhibition, he is approached by a town councillor who praises the work on display and suggests, in a somewhat stilted manner, that, “I should say you’ve given them something very valuable – what you might call a really objective view of the town in which they live.” This statement underlines three significant aspects of the film. Firstly, that despite his protestations to the contrary, and the evidence of the children’s own work, it has been Richards who has produced this outcome.

Secondly, that the local study has been “very valuable” for the children and finally, that what we as the audience have seen is the children’s *objective* representation, through the wall charts, photographs, diagrams and maps, of the history of their local area. The parallel between the visual aids produced by the children and the Ministry of Education’s intentions in the promotion of film as visual education is hard to miss. We are told, indirectly through the councillor’s speech, that the displays they have produced are objective. By implication we must conclude that visual education is capable of objectivity in the classroom; one of the Ministry’s key aims in sponsoring films for the production experiment (Hawkes, 1948c). Furthermore, the response from Richards summarises the message that runs through the film, and leaves the audience with a final reminder of its argument. He replies,

“they have been getting a basis of first-hand information which will still be there when they can make use of it – and they’re developing too, a habit of wanting to know, of finding out for themselves. Instead of learning History, Geography, Science and so on, all in watertight compartments, they’ve been finding out how everything fits together – oh, and learning a lot of other things too, things that will influence their whole life, and more...”

His statement is far-reaching, and we have no proof from the film itself that the children have learned anything other than the details of the town’s organisation, historical development and industry, however this final dialogue represents not only the argument of the film, but the Ministry of Education’s aims for the production experiment. The Ministry intended for the films to introduce visual education into the classroom in order to promote project work, change the curriculum, teach pupils about the world through the nonfiction films’ association

with ‘reality’ and to train teachers in its use (Crossley, 1946; de Moulpiéd, 1946d; Hawkes, 1948c). The result is that *Near Home* functions as a lesson for teachers, but also a summary of the production experiment as a whole. The real world settings, our alignment with Richards and the ‘evidence’ of real people stating the positive benefits of the local study combine to present an ‘objective’ argument directed towards the audience of teachers. The inclusion of Richards as an onscreen narrator is used in this film in order to convince us of the argument, yet the technique follows a contradictory logic. He is positioned as the film’s voice, both physically and intellectually, and while we are aware that Richards is a fictional character and that the film was scripted, we are complicit with his perspective since we have no access to any other point of view. The nonfiction rhetoric of *Near Home* is deceptively persuasive since the argument is covertly represented as a fictionalised account of successful teaching.

### **Performative Nonfiction: *Instruments of the Orchestra***

Like *Near Home*, *Instruments of the Orchestra* is one of the few films included in the Ministry of Education’s experimental programme which uses synchronised sound throughout. Given that the film deals with the subject of music, this production decision would seem to be obvious, however, it is the way in which the soundtrack combines the music of the orchestra with the direct address to camera of the onscreen narrator which defines its formal and stylistic techniques. Unlike the majority of films in the programme which use a voiceover commentary to drive the plot and impart information, *Instruments of the Orchestra* instead uses the orchestra conductor, Malcolm Sargent, who looks

directly into the camera lens and describes the action of the film. This technique exemplifies the predominant stylistic and formal device of the film, that of performance.

The plot of the film is structured around the various instruments which constitute an orchestra, in this instance the London Symphony Orchestra, and each section is explained in turn, starting with the woodwind, then strings, brass and finally percussion. Each section plays a few bars of the Benjamin Britten score, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell*, which he composed specifically for the film (Bentley, 1946). Within each of the sections, individual and groups of musicians play their own parts and Sargent explains how the instruments are sounded. The closing sequence of the film shows the orchestra playing together so that we understand how the particular sounds of the instruments combine to produce the piece of music. While we could identify a cause-effect relationship at a macro level, in that the combination of instruments forms a piece of music, the text itself is non-narrative and specifically, within the performative nonfiction mode. The performative mode is characterised by the filmmaker's subjective involvement in the film and its subject/s. The intention is to increase the audience's emotional response to the subject matter of the film, since it gives the filmmaker the voice to convey his/her own emotions and construct evidence to elicit the 'correct' response (Nichols, 2010). *Instruments of the Orchestra* was produced by the Crown Film Unit and while they are not physically present within the film, the co-writer, Malcolm Sargent, is its central protagonist. He instructs us to listen and leads us through the events according to his own

knowledge and experience. His presence onscreen, involvement in the action and the use of his own dialogue to convey the information, brings us in line with his personal perspective on the ‘world’ of the orchestra. In this capacity, Sargent represents the performative filmmaker, who aims to convince us of a particular emotional response. Sargent also represents the voice of the film. He takes a light-hearted approach to the dialogue, joking at the expense of the musicians, and the direct address works with this personal tone to bring us into alignment with the profilmic world, which would perhaps not otherwise have been possible given the nature of the subject matter. In his opening speech, Sargent suggests that many of the audience “may have heard and seen a symphony orchestra playing in the concert hall.” It is true that the targeted audience of secondary pupils may well have been to a concert hall however, the assumption he makes seems an unlikely one. Nevertheless, the distance between the concert hall musicians sporting formal suits and the experiences of the children watching the film is lessened by the humorous dialogue and friendly, inclusive voice of the film.

Since the film has a limited plotline, organised only according to the constituent musicians of the London Symphony Orchestra, it is not immediately apparent on viewing what emotional response the filmmaker intends to engender. There is little emphasis on any social or historical argument which might form the core of the film’s rhetoric and aim to persuade. Instead, the film makes one very simple, clear point that ‘this is how the orchestra sounds’, and this is exactly the basis for the emotional response. Sargent and the film are not simply asking us to listen, but to *appreciate* the sound of the orchestra. The Teachers’ Notes which



accompanied the film included a breakdown of the score with additional information relating to each of the individual instruments and how they work to produce specific sounds, the job of the conductor and a biography of the composer, Benjamin Britten. There was no advice on the pedagogical application of the film, other than its aim to introduce the instruments of an orchestra, nor even of the age range of the intended audience (Shore, 1946). Instead, the Notes included a detailed description of the music, and the explanation that they were “designed to help the teacher reap the full enjoyment of the film himself” (Shore, 1946, p.1). The Notes are even more effusive about the film’s central figures, Sargent and Britten, stating that,

“when we see Dr Sargent conducting the final presentation of the great Theme, in all its modern glory, we can think of Purcell’s brooding figure in the background and Britten’s portrait of him; Dr Sargent and the London Symphony Orchestra are bringing the thoughts of these two composers to glowing life” (Shore, 1946, p.3).

The film lacked any clear pedagogical directive and the enthusiasm for the music itself forms the central theme of the production. Throughout the twenty minutes running time, Sargent speaks with passion and humour, explaining the different instruments and the music played with evident conviction. The argument of the film is simple and its form straightforward, but it is the film’s intention to engender an appreciation for the music of the classical orchestra, and Britten in particular, which is the central focus of the text, and the film employs a range of stylistic devices in order to convince us.

## **Staged Style**

*Instruments of the Orchestra* is a performance; a staging of events. The film opens with proscenium arch framing, within which the orchestra are seated, on the stage of a concert hall. The credits are superimposed over this image and, once the film begins, the conductor turns and speaks to the concert 'audience', before looking direct to camera and continuing his speech to us, the film audience. Other than the presence of the musicians and the placing of the instruments, the set is bare. The background is white and the orchestra are dressed in formal, black suits. The impression is stark and the film makes no illusions about its focus. There are no distractions from the central figures on stage. The 'performance' of Malcolm Sargent matches this minimal staging. His dialogue is characterised by brevity and, after his opening, introductory speech, his comments function only to highlight the real 'characters' of the film, the musical instruments. This is achieved through voiceover commentary delivered by Sargent, during which he explains the sound and role of the instruments within the whole orchestra. After each sequence, delineated by the sections of the orchestra, he turns to camera and introduces the next section/sequence. However, the information is inconsistent since it includes both detailed facts about the instruments and qualitative statements which are not explained, leaving it to the audience to interpret or perhaps, the teacher to explain after the screening. For example, when introducing the woodwind section, Sargent's attention turns to the oboes as he states, "these instruments are played by blowing through two little pieces of reed which gives that pastoral tone so typical of the oboe." The practicalities of playing the instruments are explained visually throughout the film, using close ups of the reeds, keys, strings and so on, but concepts such as the

“pastoral tone” are not elaborated further. Although the dialogue of the film does not offer full explanations of the terms used, it is the presence of Malcolm Sargent and the London Symphony Orchestra which aim to convince us of the film’s veracity. The identities of the conductor and of the orchestra are signposted at the outset by their inclusion in the title sequence. We know that these are ‘real people’, engaged in their professional activities. This fact, combined with the visual and aural evidence of their playing, identifies them as the ‘experts’ and the film relies strongly on this technique of realism. *Instruments of the Orchestra* is a ‘factual’ account of the work of individual musicians and the conductor in bringing Britten’s score to “glowing life” (Shore, 1946, p.3). Despite the lack of any live audience and the contrived nature of the staging in the concert hall, the film aims to convey a realistic impression of the experience of a concert orchestra. However, the realism in this film does not stem solely from the inclusion of the real life ‘characters’, but from the film’s reliance on our belief in the expertise they impart and embody. Nevertheless, the interruptions by Sargent to explain each of the musical instruments clearly define the film as ‘educational’ since the musicians are instructed by Sargent to pause and perform on cue, and our attention is directed to the relevant sections.

While the plot is straightforward and the commentary and Sargent’s direct address to camera/the audience is sparing, there is great variety in the framing of the film. The camera moves continually through the diegetic space and the framing changes from shot to shot. The cinematography incorporates a redundancy of the visuals, which is in marked contrast to the films in the production experiment

which fall within the episodic, expository sub-group. Long shots are only used at the beginning and end of sequences, as establishing shots, to show the entire orchestra, before cutting to the next relevant musician/instrument. Close ups are used, not only to show the detail of the instruments but also to add rhythm to the editing, which is cut to the music. The film displays a poetic use of editing in some instances, whereby the relationship between shots centres on a visual or aural match so that the structure of the film is governed by the musical score over and above the clarity of visual information or as a means to forward the plot. The editing is relatively slow at first, but builds in tempo according to the section of the orchestra on which the camera focuses. For example, when the film shifts from the harpist to the brass section, there is a noticeable increase in tempo to match the rhythm of the music and the ‘personality’ of the instruments. The harpist is seated to play a few bars of the variation and the camera moves slowly through this sequence. The following shot reveals four horns and the image cuts between them as they play. After the horns, the film turns to two trumpet players and their piece is much faster in tempo. The camera cuts quickly between the two musicians in time with the rhythm of their playing, before revealing them both side by side at the end of the piece. The combination of editing and cinematography throughout the film actually reveals more about the instruments than we can ascertain from Sargent’s explanations. We learn the practicalities of how they are played through the visuals, and the match between the narration and the rhythm of the music enlivens and animates the playing, so that we can ‘appreciate’ the differences between the instruments’ contribution to the whole musical piece.

Since the concept of ‘appreciation’ was the main objective of the film, the stylistic devices would appear to have been successful in achieving this aim. However, while the combination of visuals and musical score do have the effect of introducing the instruments to the audience and revealing their place within the orchestra, the dialogue and commentary add little to the explanation. The production began with the score, to which the commentary was added by Benjamin Britten and Malcolm Sargent, and the imagery was developed by the Crown Film Unit retroactively (Jones, 1946). The lack of detail in the explanations given by Sargent throughout the film means that the audience must rely on the accompanying Teachers’ Notes to fully expand upon the subject matter. The film also displays a range of assumptions about the prior knowledge and understanding of the audience. The technical aspects of producing music are made clear both in the commentary and visually, as well as in the Teachers’ Notes, but the more abstract concepts seem to be left to the interpretation of the audience. Given that the film was made for school pupils with the deliberate intention of teaching them about the orchestra, this approach appears to rely heavily on the teacher for their input, which brings into question the role of the film in the teaching.

On the one hand, the creative use of cinematography and editing is more overtly filmic than the majority of the other films, with the exception of *Near Home*, yet the performative form of the film with limited explanatory detail brings into question the decision to produce a film on this subject at all. The film could have been substituted for a sound recording, with pictures or objects to illustrate, since

the ability of the synchronised sound to inform the imagery is underused. The lack of pedagogical rationale informing its production is perhaps at the centre of this issue and it is not clear what contribution this film makes either to the syllabus or to the visual unit experiment. The somewhat vague aim to encourage an ‘appreciation’ of music lacks pedagogical rigour and while the film is engaging there is little we have learned that we could not have discovered through an alternative medium.

### **Reflexive, Instructional Nonfiction: *Science in the Orchestra***

*Science in the Orchestra* is the supplementary film for the visual unit *Instruments of the Orchestra*, yet its formal structure differs greatly from the central production. As with *Instruments* and *Near Home*, the film is so unlike any other in the Ministry of Education’s production programme that it comprises a ‘sub-group’ of its own, and its construction in terms of form and style is unique. The film is explicitly divided into three distinct parts, entitled *Hearing the Orchestra*, *Exploring the Instruments* and *Looking at Sounds*, which were only slight variations from the original titles given to the treatments and each deals with a separate aspect of the physics and biomechanics of sound production and reception (Realist Film Unit, 1947a; 1947b; 1948a). The first part, *Hearing the Orchestra*, deals with the physics of the vibration of air set in motion by the production of sound waves caused by the instruments, and the biology of the ear which enables the subsequent reception of these waves. The second part, *Exploring the Instruments*, focuses on how the various sections of the orchestra produce the vibrations through the actions of bowing the string instruments,

blowing through the brass and woodwind and hitting the percussion instruments. The final part, *Looking at Sounds*, investigates the physical properties of sound waves that produce variations in volume and pitch.

The three parts of *Science in the Orchestra* are all structured as demonstrations, using scientific apparatus alongside the musical instruments to explore the range of concepts under discussion. The first part is 450 feet in length, the second is 408 feet and the final part runs for 365 feet so that they each fit on a single reel of 16mm film for projection in the classroom. The decision to divide the content into self-contained films reflects the greater attention paid to the pedagogical aims of *Science in the Orchestra* than to *Instruments*. While the main film displayed a lack of educational justification for its structure, the construction of *Science in the Orchestra* was based entirely on the intention of Realist Film Unit to produce a film that would function as a substitute for classroom experiments to support both the Music and Science syllabus, taking into consideration the specific role of nonfiction film as an educational resource (Realist Film Unit, 1948b). *Science in the Orchestra* can be defined as an ‘instructional’ film, according to Nichols’ definition since it is “strictly devoted to conveying factual information and consolidating our grasp of an undisputed subject rather than coloring or inflecting our very understanding of the concept itself” (Nichols, 2010, p.101). The film, through its onscreen narrator, leads us through various scientific concepts, at increasing levels of difficulty, and the flow of information is dictated by the range of explanatory devices used to ensure our understanding of the science at work.

*Science in the Orchestra* also differs fundamentally from *Instruments of the Orchestra* in terms of its nonfiction mode. While *Instruments of the Orchestra* is performative, *Science in the Orchestra* is characteristically reflexive in both form and style. The film is self-conscious and deliberately references its own construction throughout, using techniques such as the direct address of the conductor/narrator and the inclusion of an onscreen 'audience' to highlight the artifice of the diegetic action. The self-consciousness of the film, rather than bringing the audience into the shared discourse, at times results in a sense of 'ostranenie'. The term derives from the Russian Formalists and refers to the distancing effect of the film's revelation of its own construction (Nichols, 1991). In one sequence during *Exploring the Instruments* the conductor refers to a sketch book which is placed on the lectern and a close up reveals that the book contains a storyboard with directions for the cinematography and the conductor's dialogue. The inclusion of the storyboard demonstrates to the audience that this is a construction, not reality, and that the action we witness has been pre-determined for the specific purpose of illustrating and explaining certain aspects of the world. The film's reflexivity highlights the process of production so that we are always aware that we are watching a film, and engage with the text at an emotional and epistemological distance from its created world which, in turn, heightens its evidentiary impact. We are not being 'duped' by the artifice of the film or by its central protagonist. The artificially created profilmic world is an aspect of the text which *Science in the Orchestra* shares with the main, sound film *Instruments of the Orchestra*. Both orchestra films are set in an imaginary diegetic space, constructed specifically for the films which the audience is encouraged to understand as representing the real world. The rest of the films in the Ministry of



Education's production experiment use the real world to construct the profilmic, as a technique of realism in order to establish an association between the film and the 'real'. *Science in the Orchestra* and *Instruments of the Orchestra* instead rely upon the presence of real world people to convey the sense of realism.

### **Explanatory Formal Structure**

There is some overlap between the formal structure of *Science in the Orchestra* and the 'episodic', historical group of films in the organisation of the film's three distinct parts. Each part is organised according to an explanatory structure. The concepts are first explained by the conductor, a role taken by Muir Mathieson who also directed *Instruments of the Orchestra*, then demonstrated using scientific equipment, such as a bell jar to create a vacuum around a gong and prevent the production of sound waves in *Hearing the Orchestra*. Following the demonstration, the physical processes are illustrated using animated diagrams or models, for example the movement of air particles to create the sound waves or the workings of the middle and inner ear in the first part. After the diagram/model of the process, the films include a further explanation in the form of an analogous animation or demonstration. The flow of sound waves causing the vibrations of air particles in this example are likened to a row of balls fixed to a rod, so that when the first ball is set into motion the movement flows through the entire row. The explanation then returns to the 'reality' of the physical processes with more diagrams or animations so that the actual science is made clear to the audience, rather than the analogy. The Crown Film Unit, who produced *Instruments of the Orchestra* fell into dispute with Realist Film Unit

regarding the form and style of *Science in the Orchestra* during the pre-production stage since they held opposing beliefs regarding the formal and stylistic conventions of nonfiction film. Crown Film Unit felt that animation was the appropriate technique for dealing with scientific processes, while Realist believed that it would introduce an element of fiction into the film, which was to be avoided (Forman, 1948b; Grayson, 1948a; Grayson, 1948b). The filmmakers at Realist believed the animation would be confusing and not aid the audience of pupils in understanding the scientific concepts, and that models would be a more 'realistic' technique for dealing with the complex physical principles (Grayson, 1948a). The summaries by Mathieson therefore appear to have been included at the end of each section to ensure that the audience of pupils fully grasped the film's factual content.

There is a further, stylistic device included to both ensure the clarity of the factual information imparted visually and verbally, and to function as a technique of realism in order to heighten the film's association with nonfictional 'reality'. Throughout the separate parts of *Science in the Orchestra* there is an onscreen 'audience' of children present who observe the action and fulfil the role of diegetic pupils towards whom Mathieson directs his explanations. The set of the film is again the stage of a concert hall and the conductor speaks directly to the camera, however he also addresses the children, asking questions and eliciting the required responses. The children are positioned to the side of the stage and offer their own answers to the conductor's questions such as how the vibrations are caused by the instruments. They participate in the experiments by, for example,

holding pieces of paper against the musical instruments to demonstrate the movement caused by the vibrations. The effect of the onscreen audience is two-fold. In the first instance it brings the film audience into the action by demonstrating how the diegetic experiments relate to the pupils in the classroom. Furthermore, the audience of children works to underline the ‘reality’ of the action. Since the film audience can identify with their diegetic counterparts who perform the tasks, the action is made more believable and therefore convincing. We see the children bear witness to the action and observe their response and are thereby drawn into the filmic world by association. The presence of these ‘objective’ participants who are new to the subject matter proves the ‘evidence’ put forward by the film and highlights the expertise of the narrator/conductor.

### **Audio-Visual Clarity of Information**

The cinematography, editing and mise-en-scène of the film is also constructed around the desire of the filmmakers to represent the ‘reality’ of the scientific experiments. The characters of “Mr Watkins” and his assistant, “Sam”, are introduced and carry out the experiments into sound. The two men are dressed in white lab coats and operate the various equipment required for the demonstrations, such as an audio-spectrometer, sound booth and waveform generator. The equipment is placed on the stage around the orchestra in full view to draw the audience’s attention to the complex mechanisms required for these experiments. The presence of Mr Watkins, Sam and the equipment denote the scientific, ‘factual’ account which Mathieson describes. The amount of machinery and technical ‘experts’ imply the evidentiary qualities of the film and

align the commentary with scientific ‘truth’. The camerawork highlights the processes and activities that would be difficult to recreate in the classroom, due to the scale of the equipment, and the framing and editing function for clarity of information, rather than being used artistically or to construct narrative association. For example, in the third part, *Looking at Sounds*, the conductor introduces the concepts of loudness and pitch and Mr Watkins sits at an audio-spectrometer to measure the sounds produced first by the conductor’s voice, then a tuning fork, before introducing various instruments. The camera cuts between Mathieson explaining the concepts, close-ups of the microphone, tuning fork or instruments, Mr Watkins at the audio-spectrometer and finally to the waveform produced on its screen. The association between the shots is structured around the level of detail required for the explanation. Mathieson is filmed in medium close up, the instruments in close up and the waveform in extreme close up so that it fills the screen. The framing is therefore dictated by the level of information the filmmakers wish to convey and the shots are combined for the sole purpose of revealing detail. The sound of the film functions in a similar manner. The film incorporates synchronised sound, as we would expect, and the soundtrack includes diegetic dialogue and music, as well as the voiceover narration of the conductor but, significantly, all of the sound stems directly from the diegetic action. For example, there are instances during which sound effects seem to have been added in post-production, but these are later revealed to have been produced by the musicians in the film. During one sequence where the impact of sound waves is analogously demonstrated, the image onscreen shows a child’s bedroom and through the drawn curtains we see flashes of lightning. Thunder crashes and Mathieson’s voiceover narration asks us to note how quickly the thunder reaches

us after the lightning strikes. The image then dissolves to a long shot of the orchestra, who finish playing the ‘thunder’. While the information conveyed by the film displays a high level of redundancy through the repetition of concepts using a range of filmic devices, the only sound produced is directly associated with the events depicted and, although the soundtrack includes many elements, there is never any overlap between them. In a feature film, for example, there might be dialogue, non-diegetic music and effects all combined in any one scene to create an atmosphere or tone while conveying narrative information. In *Science in the Orchestra*, the elements of sound are combined only for the purposes of clarity of information to support the visual explanations of the scientific and musical concepts and processes.

Despite the high level of technical information included and the explanatory structure, the voice of the film is humorous and, at times, conspiratorial. Mathieson’s role is to direct our attention to the relevant information, introduce technical ‘experts’ for demonstrations and to lead the orchestra through the experiments. All of this is carried out explicitly for the benefit of the film audience. Mathieson speaks direct to camera, his dialogue and voiceover commentary repeatedly ask us questions and give instruction, but the film lacks the dryness of the historically-based productions in the Ministry of Education’s programme. Mathieson makes jokes at the expense of the musicians, who follow his direction and join in with the light-hearted banter. In one sequence during which the action has moved from the concert to a sound stage, lines are superimposed over an image of a chimney pot to demonstrate the movement of air

over the chimney on a blustery day. The camera pulls back to reveal a man dressed in an overcoat, standing on a darkened street. The man turns, and the sound of the wind whistling is revealed to have been produced by his flute playing. The film then cuts to the flautist, who is now seated back with the rest of the orchestra and wearing his dress suit, laughing along at the joke as he watches himself on a screen which has been placed at the back of the stage. The humour in the film is shared, not only by the musicians but also by the diegetic ‘audience’ of children, implying the response expected from the film audience in the classroom. We are encouraged to participate in the film, rather than just passively watch.

The screen erected onstage is a noteworthy aspect of the *mise-en-scène* which is used repeatedly in all three parts of the film, and is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it brings the ‘results’ of the scientific experiments into the action of the film by displaying the audio-spectrometer screen for the onscreen characters to view and analyse as Mathieson offers his explanation. In addition, the inclusion of a screen within the screen shows the ‘expert’ using visual aids to impart information as a matter of course. The projection of detailed imagery for the benefit of the children in the film is a deliberate reference to the ‘benefits’ of visual education, which again underlines the film’s reflexivity. We as the film audience are introduced to the concept of film as a teaching resource and shown how it can contribute to learning and teaching, so that *Science in the Orchestra* functions as an instructional resource as well as an audio-visual advertisement for its own production. The combination of direct address, visual aids such as the

scientific equipment, diagrams and models, and the film-within-a-film device, added to the onscreen audience of children suggests a strong consideration of the targeted audience and the pedagogical rationale behind the film. The film's reflexivity therefore functions not only to bring the audience into the profilmic world by demonstrating its role as 'evidence', but also to underline the 'value' of the Ministry of Education's experiment as a whole.

**Narrative, Instructional, Poetic: *Milk From Grange Hill Farm*, *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* and *Primitive Iron Smelting*.**

The final two sub-groups of films sponsored by the Ministry of Education are similar in one, fundamental element of film form, yet sufficiently varied to warrant division into separate categories. The six films, all of which were produced as subsidiary material to the main films of the visual units, are silent and use intertitles to impart information to the audience. The first of these silent groups comprises *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* and *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge*, produced for the *Local Studies* unit, and a third film, *Primitive Iron Smelting*, which accompanied the main, sound film for *The Beginning of History* unit. The three films depict the manufacturing process from raw material to finished product for each of the respective industries outlined in the titles. *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* tells the story of how milk arrives from the farm to the table, including feeding and milking cows, pasteurisation, bottling and delivery to the home, and was filmed on location at the dairy farm visited by the children in *Near Home*. Similarly, *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* was filmed on location at another of the *Near Home* field trips around the Bishop Auckland area. It

depicts the process of producing moulds for mining cart wheels, through conversion, whereby the pig iron is heated to a molten state and oxygen is added to the furnace to produce steel out of which the wheels are cast. *Primitive Iron Smelting* differs slightly from the other two films, but only really in terms of its setting. The film is set in Bugufi in South West Africa and, rather than detailing contemporary manufacturing processes in Britain, it shows how the Bantu people hand-produce tools from iron ore. The opening titles of the film explain that, “their methods are useful as a comparison with the possible methods of the Britons of the iron age” so that the film functions to illustrate one of the ‘historical’ processes depicted in *The Beginning of History*.

Despite the differences in geographical setting and the allusions to historical rather than contemporary Britain, the films display a characteristic structure and use equivalent stylistic devices in conveying information to the audience. The films all last approximately 12 minutes, or the equivalent of a single reel of 16mm film, on which they were produced. *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* and *Primitive Iron Smelting* run continuously and are punctuated only by the intertitles which describe the action or events taking place onscreen, whereas *Casting in Steel* includes three, approximately equal parts. However these denote the various stages of the production process and function to move the action on to the next location within the steelworks, rather than dealing with separate subject matter. The result is that the film functions as a whole and the division into parts serves to provide each stage with a title to encompass the action, such as “Part 2 Melting and Converting”, as opposed to suggesting a break in viewing. The intertitles are



indicative of the formal organisation of the films. All three titles fall within what Nichols defines as 'instructional' films, classified as "non-documentary", within the realm of nonfiction (Nichols, 2010, p.146). Nichols argues that for instructional films, the "interest as documentary is close to nil" (Nichols, 2012, p.101). The assertion that the films hold no interest may appear dismissive however, Nichols is referring to the rhetorical function of documentary film, claiming that instructional films do not convey any social argument. It is the lack of rhetoric which Nichols argues renders the films' interest as 'close to nil'. It is true that the films make little overt commentary on the social world, and therefore cannot be defined as 'documentary' according to Nichols' classification, however an argument is identifiable, but it exists in the context surrounding the films rather than strictly at a textual level. The argument of this group of films centres on the educational status of the material and the emphasis is on the 'factual' representation of real life as it is lived. In addition, the form of the films implies a comprehensive depiction of this 'real life', since the presence of a narrative suggests a completeness to the story with a defined beginning, middle and end that refutes any questions of an alternative 'real'.

As well as being instructional, the films can also be defined as narrative. In all three titles, each process follows the previous in a cause-effect relationship so that the story of the industrial practice, whether mechanised or hand-made, is detailed as a progressive activity through a continuum of time, and narrative space. The concept of 'narrative space' is important since it would be inaccurate to suggest that each setting logically follows the previous. The action moves across different

areas of the dairy, steelworks or Bugufi region, however the space exhibits verisimilitude and the action is chronological, and can be logically understood as the site of subsequent action. The narrative in this instance hinges on the presence of people in the films, since their actions link the processes from one stage to the next. Without the human element, the processes would be isolated instances rather than occurring in a causal chain of events. The combination of narrative and instructional forms demonstrates a markedly different technique to the majority of other titles in the production experiment, which are overtly dedicated to a more functional, non-narrative delivery of information without the inclusion of a story of events.

### **Foregrounding the Visual**

Despite the lack of synchronised sound and inclusion of intertitles to explain and define the action, such as pasteurisation and conversion in *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* and *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge*, the onscreen text does not include a high level of description. Instead, the majority of 'factual' information giving context to the films' content is consigned to the teachers' handbook which accompanied the *Local Studies* visual unit. The handbook contains lengthy descriptions of the processes and the importance of each of the activities to that particular industry (Ministry of Education, 1948a). By contrast, *Primitive Iron Smelting* barely features in the notes accompanying *The Beginning of History* and the lack of detailed intertitles is therefore more difficult to justify (Ministry of Education, 1948b). While the two *Local Studies* titles were produced by Basic Films, the same company as *Near Home*, *Primitive Iron Smelting* was produced

by Robert Kingston Davies, a filmmaker employed by the Colonial Office who made a number of films in Africa. The film seems to have been made opportunistically, rather than as a central element of the visual unit since there exist few records of its production, and no associated teaching material to aid in its screening in schools. Despite their differing production histories and possible educational contexts, the films have this lack of onscreen, real time, written information in common. The implication is that the teacher would have added further facts and figures for the pupils. This further suggests that the films might well have functioned in the mode of 'visual aids', more in keeping with the 1930s screening of film in the classroom, before the Ministry of Education undertook the production experiment. However, rather than resulting in a confused or uninformative collection of films, the lack of reliance on intertitles to explain the action actually works to foreground the visuals, which are sufficiently expository, and noteworthy in the use of 'poetic' cinematography.

The poetic mode of nonfiction filmmaking emphasises visual association and rhythm as a means of organising the film's structure and, while these three titles demonstrate a clear, narrative form as the central principle of organisation, the cinematography is focused on an aesthetic rendering of the action. The camera is static on the whole, but the framing is clearly attended to so that each shot highlights the beauty of the image. For example, *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* includes an extended sequence at the bottling plant, during which the camera is tilted slightly so that the conveyor-belt of bottles appear at an angle, perpendicular to the lines of machinery in the background. The sequence lasts over a minute

and it is clear that the audience would have gathered sufficient ‘information’ from a much shorter length of time. The shot is held and framed in this manner as a purely cinematic device. Similarly, *Casting in Steel at Wilson’s Forge* and *Primitive Iron Smelting* include long sequences depicting the smelting and conversion processes, and the beating of molten iron ore into tools, respectively. In both films, the camera holds on the sparks that fly from the molten metal and, at times, the image is framed in such close up that the fire and metal lose the surrounding context. We are encouraged to enjoy the image as much as, if not more than, the industrial process depicted.

The structure of the editing also contributes to the ‘artistic’ filming of these titles through the inclusion of long takes which hold on the images for a considerable length of time. In addition, while these films can be defined as ‘instructional’, the association between shots and sequences follows the continuity system, whereby each shot or sequence has a spatial and temporal link to the next, stemming from the narrative form (Bordwell and Thompson, 1997). For example, *Casting in Steel* moves through each element of the production of steel mining cart wheels in order and, although it does not take place in real time, the sequences are chronological. Continuity editing is usually associated with fiction films, since the structure aids the audience in understanding the flow of story events. The majority of films sponsored by the Ministry of Education were instead structured around an evidentiary system of editing in which the sequences were associated by the flow of the argument/information rather than spatio-temporal continuity. The cinematography, minimal intertitles and continuity editing combine to create

three films which, on viewing, appear less like ‘teaching’ films and more generally ‘educational’ than the titles previously discussed. The audience is informed of certain facts about the industries, places and roles of the people in performing their allotted tasks which we witness taking place, however, the pace of the films and the emphasis on carefully chosen imagery aligns the films more closely with a newsreel shown before the main feature than a short, instructional classroom ‘aid’.

### **The ‘Real’ World of Work**

Nevertheless, regardless of the cinematic appearance, the instructional form is asserted strongly by the voice of the films which, combined with the mise-en-scène, makes it clear to the audience that the purpose of this group is to teach the ‘facts’ about certain industries. The real world settings and characters performing ‘daily’ tasks reinforce the films’ aim to bring ‘reality’ into the classroom. In contrast to the majority of the other Ministry of Education films, the characters are included in medium close up and we are situated in a privileged position whereby we are shown the furnace, milking, Bantu people as if observing from within the specific locations of their activities. In addition, *Casting in Steel at Wilson’s Forge* and *Primitive Iron Smelting* include either diagrams or maps to anchor the action in an identifiable place or with ‘scientific’ explanation of the processes. *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* does not include this type of labelling, but the extreme close ups of machinery, such as during the pasteurisation sequence, enable us to read the data displayed on the dials and thereby understand the technical aspects which, in this manner, function as diagrams to illustrate

detail and ground the filmic action in the ‘real’. Furthermore the cursive intertitles do not invite questioning, and the combination of minimal written explanations with the observational style and instructional form is didactic. The events happened as depicted and these are the authentic working practices of dairy farm, steelworks and iron smelting. As discussed previously, the films do not strongly assert a social argument, but take the rhetorical stance that the moving image is capable of presenting the real world, even if ‘poetically’, and of instructing pupils ‘truthfully’ about the function of certain individuals within that world.

**Non-narrative, Illustrative, Instructional: *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn, Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham and The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth.***

The three titles which comprise the final sub-group can also be defined as instructional films (Nichols, 2010), yet they differ from the previous group in that their organising structural form is non-narrative. Again, these films are silent and were produced as additional, subsidiary material for the main, sound films in the respective visual units. *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* and *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth* were produced to accompany *England’s Wealth From Wool*, and *Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham* functioned to support *Near Home* in the *Local Studies* visual unit. As the titles suggest, *Cloth* and *Yarn* are closely related in content, one following the other, and display an almost identical formal structure. *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* details the historical processes of shearing sheep, teasing wool,

carding and combing to remove tangles and impurities, and spinning into lengths of yarn. The invention of the spinning wheels of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated, showing the resultant increase in efficiency, before the 'modern', mechanised equivalents of each process are demonstrated through a sequence set in a contemporary, 1940s textile mill. Similarly, *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth* deals with the historical processes of preparing warp, winding bobbins for the shuttle, threading healds, weaving, mending, washing, fulling and milling, cropping, raising and folding that were required to produce woollen cloth by hand, before the advent of mechanisation. A brief section at the close of the film shows each of these processes carried out by machinery on a mass-produced scale as a comparison to the hand-produced methods. The two films are sequential and, while the above description may suggest a narrative structure in that each process must logically follow the previous, the processes are not associated causally within the text, in much the same way that the various historical eras depicted in *The Beginning of History* are not causally linked. For example, the process of cropping is not an *effect* of milling, is it simply the next stage in producing cloth, and the characters present in the films do not provide any kind of narrative bridge between the distinct activities.

The third film, *Cine Panorama*, is far simpler in form and content than the other two titles and lasts only four minutes, compared to the 13 minutes of *Yarn* and approximately 19 minutes of *Cloth*. The film depicts the view from a hilltop overlooking the countryside of County Durham, shot in a slow panorama from the South West through to the South East. The town of Bishop Auckland is situated

in the distance and can just be distinguished amongst the fields and trees. The same panorama is repeated, this time using an infrared camera which gives the visual effect of a 'negative' version of the first sequence. Although on the surface, *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth* and *Yarn* appear to differ greatly to *Cine Panorama*, it is the instructional structure and illustrative form which associates them. These films all function as visual aids, illustrating the information outlined through intertitles. None of the films are making a social, 'documentary' style comment on the world, instead they function as visual 'evidence' of historical and geographical 'facts' which the audience are required to assimilate, and the distanced, observational style renders the material more pictorial than filmic.

### **Primacy of the Word**

Whereas the previous group of silent films included sparse intertitles to explain the narrative, it is the onscreen text which actually provides structure to the action in these non-narrative films. In *Yarn* and *Cloth*, the descriptive text stays onscreen for approximately 10 seconds and is followed by a further 10 seconds of static imagery showing the process in action. The decision to hold on the intertitles for such an extended period may have been motivated by the necessity to allow pupils sufficient time to read and understand the concepts. However, the decision to edit the films in this manner highlights the focus on the written information conveyed rather than informing pupils of a particular subject matter through visual exposition. For example, one sequence in *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth* begins with the words, "when enough threads to make up the



width of the cloth to be woven have been measured, the warp is removed in a way that will prevent it tangling” and is followed by a weaver demonstrating the removal of warp as described. Although *Cine Panorama* encompasses just two shots, one a direct repeat of the other, but with an infrared camera, the titles inform the audience of exactly what we are about to view, just as in *Yarn* and *Cloth*. There are no surprises or unexpected visuals and the structure of all three films is dominated by the written information. The films are equally centred on written, as opposed to visual, language as those discussed in the expository and chronological groups, such as *The History of Writing* and *Houses in History*, however the ‘script’ is displayed onscreen rather than through a voiceover commentary. The pace of the films is therefore dictated by the rate at which the information can be expressed through the intertitles and the exposition is slow as a result. The films are observational, as defined by Nichols (2010), and the lack of intervention of the camera/filmmaker creates a distance between the audience and subject matter. We are not invited to respond to the film emotionally, only to understand and assimilate the information conveyed through the titles, and the visuals function to illustrate this information. The camerawork and framing of the films are static and the visuals, particularly the shot scale, are dictated by the level of detail in the titles, enhancing the slow pace of the viewing experience. Close up shots are only used in *Yarn* and *Cloth* when further detail is required to illustrate a point. For example, the sequence in *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* which compares the early form of hand-spindle with one attached to a spinning wheel reveals both items side by side in an extreme close up to allow us to appreciate their similarity. *Cine Panorama* comprises two extreme long shots of the countryside, to show us the features labelled on a map at the start

of the film. The cinematography is as unobtrusive as possible to ensure that we are taught the information included in the films and not distracted by the mechanism of its transmission.

### **‘Objective’ Mise-en-Scène**

The close association with the ‘real world’ and a strong reliance on the perceptual realism of the visuals are the central means by which the films aim to convince us of the ‘objectivity’ of the statements conveyed through the intertitles. *Cine Panorama* is set in the real world, and the only ‘characters’ are the landscape and the two cameras used to film the scene, both ‘naturally’ and with infrared technology. The film includes a map and annotations, which ground the imagery in the real, identifiable world. We believe that this really is County Durham, because the ‘objective’, ‘scientific’ technology informs us of the ‘fact’. Conversely, *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* and *Cloth* do include people in a form of reconstruction as men and women carry out the processes described. However, there is no suggestion of ‘fictionalisation’ and the characters’ actions are more of a demonstration than a reconstructed ‘version’ of events. Their actions function simply to show us the historical methods of producing either cloth or yarn, rather than re-presenting historical events as stories. In addition, *Yarn* and *Cloth* also include ‘present day’ sections to relate the actions to contemporary life so that we can appreciate the changes brought about by mechanisation and understand that the methods described are ‘true’ renditions since we recognise their ‘present day’ incarnations. It is the presence of the real world which carries the implication of ‘truth’.

The ‘objective’ distance of the observational imagery, combined with the direct, ‘factual’ detail which omits any opinion or social implications result in illustrations of ‘real’ life as it was lived in the *Wool* films, and the landscape as it existed in the present time in *Cine Panorama*. None of the films include any suggestion of the social or cultural implications of the context to the information. For example, *Cine Panorama* does not explain the reasons why the landscape appears as it does, such as the placement of farms, towns, roads and so on, and neither do *The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* and *Cloth* give any indication of the living conditions or place within wider society of the workers depicted. The functional, unquestioning tone of the written text, which organises both the structure and our understanding of the action, asserts an informational, dry and didactic voice. These films are merely visual ‘evidence’ that does not ask questions of the audience and instead makes written statements that are reinforced by the almost static imagery, calling into question the decision to use moving image media over any other form of classroom resource in order to teach this particular subject matter.

### **Ideological Authority**

The above analysis demonstrates the range of subject matter for the Ministry of Education’s sponsored films, as well as the wide variety of formal structures and stylistic devices used in their production (see Table 2, Appendix Four). However, despite the disparate approaches to producing ‘educational’ moving image material, which may imply a lack of cohesion to the experiment, the films all

exhibit a number of central elements in terms of form, style, content and thematic strands that indicate a shared ideological project behind the production and intended reception of the material. While at the outset, the term ‘educational film’ may not have been defined, there was clear agreement on what the films should not be; they should not be fiction. There was never any progression from the belief that fiction did not belong in the classroom, with the result that the most fundamental shared characteristic of the Ministry’s sponsored films is their nonfiction status. Furthermore, the concept of ‘objectivity’ was an explicit concern of the films’ sponsors, since it was believed to be essential in avoiding bias and presenting factual information in such a manner that would remove any concerns over the potentially ‘harmful’ effects of film on pupils (Hawkes, 1948c; Jenkins, 1944). The implication was that educational films must exist separately from the entertainment provided by the cinema, and that nonfiction would enable the ‘objective’ and unbiased dissemination of information required for the new technology to contribute to the education of secondary pupils effectively.

The films all rely heavily on perceptual realism in order to convey a sense of the ‘real world’ that in turn implies a ‘truth’, not only in the subject matter but also in the information transmitted. The visual, and in most cases, audio-visual language is constructed as ‘evidence’ of certain, mainly historical, ‘facts’ about the ‘reality’ that aim to instil a complicit belief in the audience. This is not to suggest that we are passive viewers, but that the films use these specific techniques of realism in order to force us into a position of acceptance of the filmic world as a reliable source of factual information. However, many of the films incorporate a

contradictory approach to re-presenting historical information through the inclusion of dramatic reconstructions, which run counter to the Ministry's stated aversion to fictionalisation. Yet even these are constructed in such a manner as to dispel any doubts we may have over their authenticity. This is achieved through the language and tone of the voiceover commentary which structures the action, and which also represents a significant theme that exists across the entire production experiment. Despite the differences in nonfiction modes, the films are all organised around verbal, or written in the case of the silent films, language. The value placed on written language is further emphasised by the inclusion of *The History of Writing*, *The Story of Printing* and *The Story of Papermaking* in the visual units, since the three films deal with the importance of the written word to society, culture and, importantly, the attainment of wealth for Britain. This logocentric approach impacted heavily on style, in terms of how information was presented through cinematography, sound, use of character and so on, but also on the films' voice.

Even in those films which are reflexive or participatory to some extent, such as *Instruments of the Orchestra* and *Science in The Orchestra*, the direct address and didactic tone of the commentary strongly emphasises the hierarchical, authoritative voice of the films, making it clear that the audience is positioned submissively and receptively. There is no suggestion of a divergence of opinion from those stated in the texts, we need only listen and learn the 'factual' information, not question its veracity or interpretation. The opening titles credit the Ministry of Education as sponsors, thereby indexing the films and establishing

the expectations of the audience from the outset. The material has been pre-defined as 'educational' therefore the audience expects to learn the 'objective truth'. However, the specific use of language through the inclusion of subjective opinion, or more covert implication, highlights a tendency exhibited by the films, which runs counter to the 'objective' claims. For example, the "horrid, cheap little houses" built to accommodate workers during the industrial revolution, portrayed in *Houses in History*, is a clear statement of opinion regarding terraced streets of the inner cities. By contrast, the *primitive* iron smelting in South West Africa is merely labelled as such, without further explanation as to why this term applies. The descriptor is loaded with socio-cultural bias and the industrial practices of the Bantu people in producing tools to work the land are thereby ordered into a hierarchical relationship with 'our' industry.

Furthermore, the use of language in this manner, whether explicit or more covert, along with the selection of subject matter, gives us some indication of the ideological project behind the films. The majority, with the exceptions of *Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham* and the two *Orchestra* films, focus on history, the attainment of wealth through industry, and the benefits of mechanisation to the British economy. Apart from the clear promotion of industrialisation and the advantages which it can afford, it is the notion of 'Britishness' conveyed by the films that raises a number of issues. The Britain that we see appears to value the accrual of wealth, represented through the inclusion of merchants, grand architecture and international commerce, and implies that the economy is more important than society through a marked lack of

discussion of the impact of trade and industry on people. This bias away from addressing social concerns in tracing the historical developments of the printing press, pre-historic settlements, the supply of water, the wool trade and, significantly, housing demonstrates a purposeful negation of any human element to the stories and instead forces us to view history through an economic lens. The films construct a particular kind of 'Britishness' that is Anglocentric, exclusive and aspirational, rather than reflective of the majority of the population in post-war Britain, and represent a hierarchical society based on elitism and monetary gain. The discourse which surrounds these nonfiction films is characterised by authority, control and an ideological project advocating for a hierarchical society. In striving to define educational films that were relevant to secondary school pupils, the only commonality achieved by the Ministry of Education production experiment related to how the films should *not* be defined, and the attitudes and opinions that it was possible to promote.





## **Chapter Seven: Evaluation and Distribution**

### **Introduction**

The critical responses submitted by teachers, Local Education Authorities and pupils in relation to the film elements of *Houses in History* and *The History of Writing* included detailed information which enabled the Ministry to produce a summary report that assessed the educational ‘value’ of the moving image material. These were the only two films which received anything close to a full evaluation and thereby function as case study examples that enable analysis of the findings of the Ministry of Education’s production experiment and provide an indication of the aims, objectives and rationale of the experiment itself. In the following chapter, I analyse the evaluation and distribution strategies as well as the feedback received from the pupils, teachers and Local Authority personnel engaged in the pilot programme.

### **Distribution and Participation**

Before production of the Ministry of Education’s sponsored films began, the intention had been to focus on Secondary Modern Schools, since it was believed this was where the moving image material would be most beneficial (Crossley, 1946). However, although these schools formed the majority of targeted educational establishments, the audience was broadened out to include Grammar Schools, Technical Colleges, adult education institutions and teacher training

colleges (Crossley, 1946; Marcousé, 1946b; Ministry of Education, 1946a). In a letter to Divisional Inspectors written in August 1945, Jacquetta Hawkes outlined the Ministry of Education's intention to select schools within those Local Education Authorities (LEAs) with the highest levels of interest in visual education and access to the best technical equipment to participate in the film production experiment (Hawkes, 1945n). In 1947, Hawkes reported that just 2-3000 of 30,000 schools surveyed had film projection equipment and there were only 11 projectors available in Divisional Headquarters for use by the Inspectorate (Central Office of Information, 1947). There was clearly a disparity between the numbers required and those available to ensure the widespread use of the films in the visual units. As a solution, HM Inspector Dance advised that the Ministry of Education should also supply the appropriate projectors (Dance, 1945a). This was agreed and a sound projector, screen and filmstrip projector were included as part of the unit, thereby removing any practical barriers for those schools which did not already possess the relevant facilities (Ministry of Education, 1946a). This approach also altered the selection criteria so that LEAs which did not already possess the appropriate technical equipment could still participate in the experiment. The selection of LEAs and expansion of schools from Secondary Modern to all types of post-primary education therefore appeared to have been more pragmatic than pedagogical since the Ministry were less concerned with targeting any specific demographically determined audience, and more with ensuring participation.

## **The Evaluation Strategy**

The evaluation of the visual units by teachers who used the material in the classroom had been a central element of the production experiment from its beginnings. The Ministry intended to use the production programme as an opportunity to establish the educational ‘value’ of film, and the visual units more widely, that would serve as guidance on the future production of educational films (Richardson, 1945; Roseveare, 1946b). As had been the case with the production decisions which informed the form and style of the films, the practicalities of evaluating the experiment was a collaborative process, involving Ministry personnel, HM Inspectors and Local Education Authorities. The Ministry developed a strategy for organising the involvement of schools which utilised the networks of HM Inspectors and Central Office of Information (COI) personnel around the country to ensure the dissemination of resources and information. After Local Education Authorities and Training Colleges had been selected, the HM and Staff Inspectors for each of those areas were invited to screenings of the films and viewings of the additional visual unit material, before calling a meeting of teachers to discuss their use (Marcousé, 1946b). The LEAs were then expected to nominate an officer to organise the experiment in their area, who would invite HM District Inspectors, the Regional Officer of the COI and other LEA officers to a meeting to select 10 schools from the area to take part in the experiment. A further meeting would then be called, this time including teachers from the selected schools, to discuss the needs of the experiment. The next stage was for COI officers to visit the schools and exhibit the visual units for a second time. The Organising Officer from the LEA would then co-ordinate a conference of all the teachers involved to discuss the requirements of the feedback report and

another, end of project, conference to discuss the individual schools' reports, before submitting the final, collated document to the Ministry (Ministry of Education, 1947d). The strategy was incredibly detailed and demonstrated a comprehensive approach to supplying the material and disseminating information regarding its use however, there were concerns over more pragmatic issues.

There was an immediate problem with the relevance of some of the films to schools outside of England, which impacted on the willingness of Local Education Authorities to participate. Mr Macdonald of the Scottish Education Department was consulted on the treatment of *Houses in History* and remarked that he noticed the film was at that time referred to as *An Englishman's Home* and that all the examples used throughout the film were specific to England. Macdonald commented that the film would be useful "so far as England goes", but that it would not be appropriate to use in Scotland. Although he provided a list of amendments that would counter this difficulty, including the suggestions that the film should depict some example of Scottish architecture and the maps detailing historical developments in housing ought to at least include Scotland, Hawkes replied that it was too late in the production process to make any changes in the shooting locations so that none of Macdonald's suggestions could be implemented (Hawkes, 1945j; Macdonald, 1945). In addition to overlooking the needs of Scottish schools in this example, the Ministry also failed to make any concessions to Welsh speakers. There had been a Welsh language version of *Local Studies: Near Home* planned, but this was later abandoned after discussions with a Welsh HM Inspector who agreed that the difficulties in lip-synching the

film were too great to warrant the production, and the film was abandoned (Hawkes, 1946b). So while the targeted audience of the experiment had been expanded to include more schools than just the Secondary Moderns, the actual production of the films did not take the specific educational requirements of LEAs outside of England into account, with the result that the visual units were perhaps not as relevant to pupils across Britain as had been hoped.

### **Evaluation Reports**

While a great deal of attention had been paid to the details at a strategic level, there was still the issue of the exact contents of the reports to finalise. The Ministry had initially taken responsibility for devising a questionnaire on the visual units which would form the basis of the reports from schools, but in 1946, the Ministry of Education decided that the overall purpose of the experiment would be left to 'Area Groups' to plan. These Groups included HM Inspectors, LEAs and teachers involved in working with the material in each of the Authorities selected to participate. In a draft of the information that was to be circulated to the Area Groups, Mr Roseveare of the Ministry suggested the purpose might include the "critical examination and evaluation of the component parts of the sets of material ... examination of the educational efficiency and convenience of the various forms of material [and the] use of the material to investigate the techniques and problems of visual methods generally" (Roseveare, 1946b, p.1). The advice gave a useful overview of the objectives of the evaluation, but such a generalised statement did not assist the Area Groups in drawing up the details of the reports' contents. The shift in responsibility from

the Ministry to the Area Groups demonstrated a recognition of the local expertise and educational requirements, however the oblique references to carrying out a “critical examination” and ascertaining “educational efficiency” actually resulted in reports that differed across the Local Education Authorities that took part in the experiment, so that the amount and detail of information recorded varied according to the participants (Ministry of Education, 1945).

More attention was paid to the feedback required on the sound films, which comprised the central element of the visual units. The Ministry circulated a document to all Chief, Divisional and District Inspectors of the LEAs which outlined the desired information. The questions which formed the basis for this feedback ranged from factual information such as the dates and times during which the moving image material was screened and the available equipment, to an analysis of the form and content of the films. The feedback focused more on the production of the film medium than on its place within the syllabus or any detail regarding its pedagogical application or benefits to pupils (Roseveare, 1946b). For example, there were questions relating to the division of films into sections and whether this was useful or appropriate, and whether the sound was clear and the tempo correct, while the question, “is there any need to stop the film for detail study?” was the only, brief, reference to the practicalities and pedagogical aims of screening films in the classroom (Roseveare, 1946b, p.3). The Ministry did not elaborate on this question further and it appeared to have been left to the Inspectors and/or teachers to define what the “study” should comprise and how to evaluate the films’ contribution to its efficacy. The document did include some

reference to the pupils in obtaining ‘evidence’ that would guide future productions, but this was limited and the focus was mainly on obtaining the opinions of teachers. While the lack of any strict guidelines to determine the details of the feedback may have indicated the Ministry’s desire for the experiment to function according to the pedagogical needs of the specific schools selected within each region, it also demonstrated a lack of rigour in ensuring a consistent methodology that would have enabled a cohesive evaluation.

### **Case Studies**

While the Ministry of Education had clearly made some strategic decisions with regards to ensuring participation in the visual unit production experiment, and established complex mechanisms to enable the practical considerations of sharing information and gathering feedback, there is little recorded evidence of the evaluation that had been planned. Reports for only two of the eight visual units are held within the government paperwork. It is difficult to speculate as to the reasons behind the reduction of the evaluation from eight to two visual units without further information, but given the delays in production and the extension of the programme from 12 months to approximately seven years, it is possible that the Ministry simply had no time, budget or personnel who could be assigned the task of collating the information and producing a final report.

### ***The History of Writing***

In November 1948, HM Inspector Dance produced a document to be circulated to HM Inspectors nationally, outlining the visual unit *The History of Writing*, in

which he requested suggestions for geographical areas for participation. The HMIs were to recommend areas that had suitable equipment available or which had already established study groups in visual education. In addition, “special suggestions” were requested for areas not covered by these two provisos (Dance, 1948b). It was not made clear how these additional areas should be selected, however, the first two categories demonstrated a preference for including schools in the experiment which were already familiar or at least had the technical capacity for working with film and other visual aids. There were 30 copies of the films along with 300 copies of associated filmstrips, charts and leaflets available for distribution and Dance suggested that these should be distributed to groups of ten, neighbouring schools. Each group would receive one print of the sound film, to be shared between them, and any technical difficulties could be overcome locally by the appointed COI officer (Dance, 1948b). Evidently, the Central Office of Information had also researched suitable Local Authorities, since the Visual Aids Officer Mr H.C. Strick wrote to the Ministry of Education just a day after Dance had produced his document, with a complete list of suggestions from the COI Film Officers. However, the advice given by Strick for selecting LEAs differed greatly from Dance’s. Strick asked that recommendations should be made for areas which were “backward” in visual education and needed encouragement, rural areas that lacked facilities which could be provided by the experiment or areas where the material “would be put to outstanding good use” (Strick, 1948, p.3). There is no recorded definitive list of the areas or schools that eventually took part in the experiment using *The History of Writing*, so it is not possible to determine which viewpoint exerted the greater influence over selection, however the opposing advice given by the two organisations,



represented a fundamental divergence of opinion towards the objectives in defining the 'educational value'.

Despite the intention to distribute *The History of Writing* to approximately 300 schools across the country to evaluate the material, reports were gathered from just eight secondary institutions. Feedback was submitted by three Grammar schools, three Secondary Moderns, one independent and a Technical College, so that although the information was sparse, there was some variation in terms of the syllabus to which it was applied. The analyses did not follow any prescribed format and each of the schools submitted their opinions in varying forms. Some of the feedback comprised a simple letter from the teacher who had used the film, detailing his or her own feelings on the matter, while others incorporated comments from their pupils, and all incorporated specific analysis of the film (Alderson-Brooke, 1949; Barrow, 1950; Wallasey Grammar School, 1949). One of the schools even enclosed short essays by each of the children of one class, which described their own experience and opinions of working with the film (Grubb, 1949). Regardless of the lack of parity between the forms of their response, each of the schools provided information relating to a number of distinct thematic strands. The evaluations by the teachers each dealt with the issues of the film's form and style, its content, the pedagogical application of the material and its educational 'value'. In addition, the information provided by the pupils of Westonbirt School in Tetbury incorporated a cross-section of opinions from across these four strands so that there was a balance of opinion between the teachers and the pupils involved in the experiment.

### **Formal Structure and Stylistic Devices**

*The History of Writing* was an episodic film, divided into four explicit parts which were delineated by titles at the beginning and end of each section. In addition, the parts were structured similarly and comprised an opening visual of a map, denoting the historical location of inventions and developments in writing, followed by dramatic reconstructions, illustrative visuals of museum artefacts and finally, diagrammatic summaries of the main concepts or processes depicted. The film was organised around the voiceover commentary, which dictated the pace of the film, and included onscreen titles to summarise the main points of each of the parts, so that the information reached the audience in a number of different ways. These formal and stylistic techniques which characterised the production were at the centre of both criticism and praise of the film. One Headmistress described the tempo as, “slow enough to allow all grades of intelligence to follow the argument” and felt the onscreen text which summarised the sections was useful in reiterating the main points of the film so that the children would understand (Barrow, 1950). Another agreed that the structure of the film enabled the pupils to follow the information, and that the content was “very clear” (Crosswell, 1950). However, reports received from other teachers and, significantly, pupils indicated that the formal and stylistic techniques were actually detrimental to the film’s reception. The feedback from Wallasey Grammar School highlighted the summaries as one of the negative aspects of the film. In his correspondence to the Ministry of Education, the teacher included the criticism that, “the number of interruptions by way of captions and chapter headings seems excessive and is irritating to minds which are quick in apprehending a point” (Wallasey Grammar

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School, 1949). The pupils at Westonbirt School, who provided narrative feedback on the film, were in general agreement regarding the film's form, describing its structure as "repetitive", "babyish", "juvenile", "boring" and "monotonous" (Blakeborough, 1949; Chassels, 1949; Clair, 1949; Howell, 1949; Macdonald, 1949; Selby, 1949; Sich, 1949). The formal structure of the film and the inclusion of a range of stylistic devices to present the same information actually decreased these pupils' engagement with the subject matter, rather than ensuring that each process or historical development was articulated clearly. Nevertheless, although there was a consensus that the repetitive structure made for a "boring" film, the feedback did include reference to the clarity of the information which two of the pupils felt made the film more interesting than verbal description or text-books on the subject (Chassels, 1949; Clair, 1949). Westonbirt was an independent school for girls and there is not sufficient feedback available from pupils at other schools, such as Technical Colleges or Secondary Moderns, to determine whether their negative responses comprised a more general criticism by all secondary school audiences. However, the opinions expressed implied a less than enthusiastic reception on the part of pupils and hinted at the possibility that the audience had not been taken into full consideration when determining the structure of the film.

### **Teaching *The History of Writing***

Four of the reports from teachers and pupils on *The History of Writing* also included negative comments regarding the pedagogical application of the film. The criticism centred on the content, which was considered insufficiently well

explained for the film to function as a classroom resource in its own right. For example, Mr Carruthers, a Lecturer in Calligraphy and Writing within the School of Art at Huddersfield Technical College, believed that, “either the visual side should be sufficiently well done as to make it unnecessary to issue notes on the subject, or that the notes should be really complementary to an easily understood film” (Carruthers, 1949). Ms Barrow, Headmistress of Barr’s Hill Secondary School in Coventry, also emphasised her concern that the material was difficult to use for teachers who did not possess the specialised knowledge required, since it was not self-explanatory (Barrow, 1950). The responses were not entirely negative however, and another Headmistress argued that the film was actually “extremely good for teaching purposes”. She had used the film to summarise project work, screening it after pupils had worked through the leaflets, filmstrips and recommended books on the subject in order to emphasise information they had already learned (Arscott, 1949). The feedback suggested that the educational ‘value’ of *The History of Writing* was entirely dependent on the specific pedagogical objectives of screening the film, as determined by the teacher, rather than any intrinsic ‘value’ of the material itself since it was believed to be unsatisfactory in isolation.

Some of the teachers were also critical of the amount of syllabus time that should be devoted to *The History of Writing* visual unit, since it was not a required subject. The report from Wallasey Grammar School outlined the reasons for rejecting the visual education experiment and made some suggestions as to where the material was more suited stating, “It may be that in a Secondary Modern

School, there would be more time available, but in a Grammar School with responsibility for teaching the classical subjects of the syllabus to a satisfactory standard of depth and attainment, it would be unfair to deprive them of time in order to give the visual unit the full chance provided by the long series of lessons” (Wallasey Grammar School, 1949). The Masters of Wallasey Grammar School clearly felt that there was no place within the Grammar curriculum for this form of experimentation with visual education, since the classical subjects which formed the core of Grammar education still took priority over any new intervention. The issue of fitting *The History of Writing* into the syllabus was also raised by other types of secondary school, so the problem was not confined to the Grammar curriculum. One of the girls at the independent, Westonbirt School commented that since the subject of writing, “was not normally given in schools [it was] moderately interesting, but not very useful” (Bridgeman, 1949). A number of teachers and Heads of schools reiterated this sentiment. For example, the Headmaster of Samuel King’s School in Cumberland, a mixed Secondary Modern, claimed the theme was “too academic” and that the resources would have been put to better use on a different subject such as Geography or Science. In addition, he believed that while the pupils, especially those in the senior school, appreciated the film, he was not convinced that they “derived anything of real value from them” (Swales, 1949). The lack of relevance to these few examples of schools does not prove a widespread failure of the pedagogical application of the film, but the comments are indicative of the problems which teachers faced in incorporating the material into an already defined curriculum, and the lack of willingness to adapt the syllabus around the film. Whether the argument was based on the level of difficulty or the alignment between the

subject matter and formal curriculum, none of the various types of school that offered analysis felt the film was wholly appropriate for their teaching and learning requirements.

All of the feedback from education practitioners focused on the relevance of this particular film to the curriculum; there were no comments from teachers, either positive or negative, expressing their views on the educational potential of film as a medium. However, the girls at Westonbirt were keen to offer their own take on whether film should be used as an educational resource, quite apart from the subject matter of this example. The judgements of the pupils divided into two camps, with some of the girls believing that screening films in the classroom was an effective means of raising motivation and interest levels (Clair, 1949; Furness, 1949). Other pupils felt that the inclusion of film in the syllabus was detrimental to their health, moral principles or education. Two of the pupils raised the concern that the act of viewing films would strain their eyes, which they believed was unhealthy for children in particular (Springett, 1949; Wilson, 1949). Another pupil doubted the success of visual education since she believed it unwise to encourage learning through film as it might have the knock-on effect of encouraging a liking for films more generally and “thus make pupils enjoy ‘going to the pictures’”(Wilson, 1949). She did not elaborate on the specific dangers she foresaw in encouraging cinema-going, however the implication of her remark was that the cinema was to be avoided on moral grounds, and that film had no place in education. A classmate was in agreement regarding the inclusion of film in education, but expressed her dislike for the idea on pedagogical rather than moral

reasoning, and included a rather more far-reaching consequence of the introduction of visual education. On viewing *The History of Writing*, Miss Blakeborough felt that, “Apparently the new idea is not to make children think at all which I think is a bad idea as if we did not think what would happen to the Nation?” (Blakeborough, 1949). Since the teachers opted to participate in the Ministry’s experiment, it is likely they already believed there was potential for film to function as a beneficial classroom resource and so did not feel the need to comment on the matter. However, some of the children who took part in the experiment clearly still believed there to be a dividing line between education and film, so that the introduction of the medium into the curriculum may well have faced opposition on moral and pedagogical grounds from a perhaps unexpected source, the pupils.

### **The Educational ‘Value’ of *The History of Writing***

Given the limited number of respondents to the Ministry’s request for feedback on *The History of Writing*, it is difficult to form any conclusive evaluation of this element of the experimental programme. Nevertheless, the information received from education practitioners and pupils raised interesting questions in relation to the film’s form and style, the pedagogical objectives motivating its screening in the classroom, and therefore its ‘value’ to secondary education. There were conflicting opinions regarding whether the formal structure of the film was effective in aiding understanding, or if the repetition actually diminished the pupils’ interest in the subject matter and engagement with the film. The subject itself was considered an issue which impacted on the ‘value’ of the film, since it

was not clear to any of those who responded, regardless of the type of secondary school they were from, how it would fit within the syllabus. The difficulty in applying the film to the curriculum appeared to be the main cause for concern since, although the teachers were not unwilling to use the material, the lack of instruction, and distinct targeted age group or level of education resulted in the feeling that the film was not wholly appropriate to any of the different audience groups that were trialled. The ambivalence of the teachers and pupils in this instance was unfortunately matched by the Ministry of Education even in advance of receiving some of the feedback. In a document outlining the distribution of the units, with reference to *The History of Writing* in particular, the Ministry admitted it may have been a mistake to make a film on this topic, but that the completed film was “as good ... as might be expected and they should be offered to schools because some teachers might find more good in it than appears on the surface” (Ministry of Education, 1949, ref. 3.2). In addition, the Ministry conceded that the material had been produced without a defined purpose and it should therefore be left to the teachers to decide whether to use it or not (Ministry of Education, 1949). These admissions by the Ministry of Education may well have signified the root cause, not only of the confused pedagogy and consequently diminished relevance and value to the curriculum, but also of the lack of concerted response to the need to evaluate the material. Since teachers were not actively persuaded to use the visual unit, it seems unlikely that they would also have been forcefully encouraged to provide their opinions. The Ministry’s own viewpoint on *The History of Writing* was distinctly underwhelming, and it seemed that even the film’s sponsors were not convinced of its educational ‘value’.



### ***Houses in History: in England and Wales***

The distribution and evaluation of *Houses in History* was considerably more widespread than was the case for *The History of Writing*, and the information received from teachers, Heads of Schools and HM Inspectors was far more comprehensive. The selected Local Education Authorities had already expressed their willingness to work with the Ministry of Education in the evaluation, having previously received information on the experiment via the HM Inspectors (Ministry of Education, 1950a). By the summer of 1948, the visual unit was complete and there were 20 sets ready for distribution across 20 specified areas of England and Wales (Ministry of Education, 1950a). Scotland was notably excluded from the experiment, perhaps due to the previously asserted opinion of the Scottish Education Department that the material was unsuitable as a result of its focus on English architecture (Macdonald, 1945). The Authorities taking part covered a good deal of England and Wales and included a range of urban and rural locations. In the North and Midlands, the Authorities comprised West Hartlepool, Northumberland, Leeds, the North Riding of Yorkshire, Manchester, Barrow in Furness, Derby, Nottingham, Stoke on Trent and Birmingham. Two Authorities, classified as “Metropolitan” were selected from the South, namely London and Middlesex, along with Essex, Hertfordshire, East Sussex and Kent in the South and East. In addition, Exeter and Bristol were included from the South West and Cardiff and Pembrokeshire from Wales (Roseveare, 1946b). Across these areas, *Houses in History* was piloted in some 200 schools, which included a few primary schools, Secondary Moderns for boys and for girls, Grammar Schools, a number of Technical Colleges and one part time day release College,

which enabled the Ministry to establish a range of classroom applications for ages 10 to 18 (Ministry of Education, 1950a).

### **Evaluating *Houses in History***

In 1946, the Ministry made some suggestions for how *Houses in History* should be used in schools, in terms of its relevance to various subjects of the curriculum (Marcoucé, 1946b). The overall aim of the material was for pupils to develop an interest in the subject before undertaking a study of local examples (Ministry of Education, 1947c). It was recommended in a memorandum circulated around the department that the topic of houses and architecture should be first introduced to the class through the visual unit as a whole, and the film, filmstrip and wall chart elements should each function as introductions for different age groups, although the details were left unspecified. The suggestions regarding the unit's relevance to curriculum subjects included its capacity to stimulate verbal expression and understanding in English, to encourage a greater sense of form in Art and develop an increased understanding of social conditions in History (Marcoucé, 1946b). Despite these broad suggestions, made early on in the process, the Ministry offered no further guidance on the material, or conveyed any more detailed advice regarding the pedagogical objectives. Instead, the responsibility for these decisions was handed to the HM Inspectors to discuss with the Authorities in each area. The various Authorities took slightly different approaches, but typically the outcome was for individual schools to determine exactly how the material would be used and for what purpose, according to their own ideas, the targeted age

group and type of school (Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; London County Council, 1950; Moore, 1949).

The Ministry requested that a report from each LEA should be compiled and submitted by December 1949. By early 1950, almost all of the reports had been received, along with accompanying further information written by the Head of each school (Ministry of Education, 1950a). There were no official guidelines from the Ministry for the format the report should take, and only an outline of the content, such as the schools taking part, the name of the Regional Officer of the COI, whether teachers had produced a plan and finally, whether any action by the Ministry was either useful or necessary. The final query related to the organisation of project work and whether any further information had been requested by teachers (Roseveare, 1948). Other than these cursory details, the writing of the report was left to teachers in each of the areas, who then forwarded their information onto the Local Education Authority to compile and submit to the Ministry. Each Authority took charge of co-ordinating the form and content of the report to be handed to the Ministry for evaluation. In Hull, the Local Education Authority took the decision to issue guidance notes by way of assisting schools in drawing up what they believed to be useful feedback. It was decided that each school should complete its own report, including information on the age groups, gender and numbers of pupils, along with the amount of time allocated to the experiment, both in class and out of school. In addition, the schools were to include information regarding the teaching methods used, such as project work, and any curriculum work which fitted in with the visual unit, as well as any

modification of the curriculum which was required to assimilate the unit into classroom activity. The Authority also requested details on the role each element of the visual unit played in the work that took place and other visual aids that were required to support the material. Furthermore, the schools in Hull were instructed to submit a critical examination of each of the component parts, detailing their contribution to the unit as a whole as a teaching or learning aid and the extent to which the material contributed to the curriculum effectively. The final questions set by the Authority focused on whether the material could be considered “educationally sound” and whether the teachers felt the work attributed to the experiment had any “formal value” (Moore, 1949). The approach taken by the Local Education Authority in Hull exemplified the particularly rigorous attention paid by the schools taking part in the experiment to the pedagogical rationale and implications of including the visual unit material in the secondary classroom. Other Authorities, such as Manchester, Hertfordshire and the North Midlands, issued questionnaires to be completed by teachers, that incorporated much the same queries as were put to teachers in Hull, focusing on both the details of classroom and out of school work, the relevance and usefulness of the material and the effects on pupils in terms of interest and educational development (Auty, 1949; City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Hertfordshire County Council, 1949). While the Ministry may not have issued strict guidance on its application, nor the specific information required to assess its efficacy, the questionnaires and requests for feedback formulated by the Authorities demonstrated that both they and the schools involved took the inclusion of these visual aids in classroom work seriously and were keen to evaluate the educational ‘value’ of so doing.

### **Feedback on the Film**

The feedback all included specific comments on the film element of the visual unit, covering the formal structure, stylistic devices and content, as well as its relevance to the syllabus and overall contribution to the pupils' education. Many of the reports included comments from the pupils who had worked with the material, so that a balance was struck between the responses from education practitioners, Local Education Authority personnel and the children for whom the film formed a part of their schooling. The bulk of criticism, both positive and negative, focused on the film's style and content, rather than its form. There was no feedback regarding whether the nonfiction mode or the chronological, associational structure was effective in conveying information in the film, however, the lack of division into distinct chapters or parts was considered by some to be detrimental to its use in the classroom and the subsequent understanding of pupils. The subject matter was considered too large in some instances and the lack of any definitive chaptering meant that the whole film had to be projected in one sitting, which prevented the teacher from emphasising any particular aspects of the film for further study (Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Peters, 1950).

### **Static Cinematography**

The cinematography of *Houses in History* was considered by some respondents to be too static for a film, comprising a series of stills rather than utilising the medium to its fullest advantage. It was remarked that the moving image material

could have been replaced by a filmstrip since there was little actual movement within the frame, other than occasional panning shots (Ministry of Education, 1947a; Peters, 1950; West Hartlepool Grammar School, 1949). In addition, a number of teachers, Authorities and pupils claimed the camera angles were in some instances too obscure or “unusual” to convey the subject matter with enough clarity for the intended audience (City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Trent Bridge Girls’ Secondary Modern School, 1949). One teacher even remarked that certain shots in the film “disturbed large numbers of students”, giving the example of a close up which focused on a tree trunk before tilting up to reveal the brickwork of a house (Pascal, 1949). Whether the camerawork can truly be considered ‘disturbing’ on a wider scale is difficult to ascertain, however the teachers and pupils alike were clearly uncomfortable with the film’s cinematographic style, finding the imagery too impenetrable to communicate the film’s subject matter in an appropriate manner for the audience. Interestingly, only one of the many school teachers who responded to the request for feedback commented on what might be assumed to be the most obvious aspect of the cinematography, namely the use of black and white film. Ms Abbett, from Knowle Park Secondary School for Girls, remarked in her hand-written comment sheet that “many would have liked colour” (Abbett, 1949). This brief, and tentative, criticism of the use of black and white film stock is the only instance of any comment being passed on the film’s colour and is itself only mildly negative. The evaluation papers do not offer any suggestions as to why so few of the audience commented on this aspect of the film’s style, yet the lack of any comprehensive response is significant. It may simply have been due to the historical period during which the experiment

took place and the widespread understanding that colour film stock was prohibitively expensive for educational production, however, there is an alternative interpretation of the lack of critical response. It is possible that both the teachers and pupils had formed expectations regarding the 'look' of educational film that excluded any consideration of colour for this particular category of nonfiction. Whatever the reasoning, the limited amount of feedback in this regard demonstrated that few people, whether teachers or pupils, were concerned with whether black and white or colour systems were more appropriate for educational film.

### **Confusing Editing and “Unnecessary” Sound**

The editing and soundtrack also received adverse criticism. Despite the teachers' efforts in explaining the film in advance of screening, many in the audience felt that the editing was too fast, and that shots ought to have lasted longer to enable pupils to absorb the details within the frame. The overall organisation of the film was also criticised for the order of sequences since it was believed the association between them was not sufficiently explained for pupils to understand the connections between different historical periods. (Abbett, 1949; Auty, 1949; Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Dyke House Boys, 1949; Elwick Road Secondary Modern School, 1949; Ministry of Education, 1947a; Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). Furthermore, the use of sound bridges over many of the cuts was thought to be confusing by one Local Education Authority since the sound of the commentary did not match the visuals exactly (City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949).

The voiceover narration was a further focus of criticism, although opinions were mixed regarding its content, delivery and whether a commentary should even be included in an educational film. The feedback from Leeds reported that one of the teachers praised the commentary, believing that its “value ... cannot be underestimated” (Peters, 1950). However the same report included a contrary opinion expressed by a teacher in a different school, who much preferred silent films for the classroom and argued that “the blare of the sound film is an abomination” (Peters, 1950). Many of the other respondents agreed with this particular teacher and felt that the film would have been preferable had they been able to add their own commentary or had instead been supplied with filmstrips, to which they could add verbal explanation (for e.g. Elwick Road Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949; West Hartlepool Grammar School, 1949). In addition, the language of the commentary caused some difficulty for the pupils at Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern, who found the narrator's accent as well as vocabulary problematic. One of the pupils complained that since she was unfamiliar with the narrator's voice, she actually missed a lot of the explanation throughout the film (Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). The arguments regarding the editing and commentary are interesting since they all point to the possibility that the producers had not considered the audience in enough detail for the film to be effective. The pace of the editing and the commentary appeared to have caused some issues on viewing, and the pupils' concern regarding the narrator's accent is particularly pertinent. While the voiceover was delivered in Received Pronunciation, which might suggest a level of neutrality, this was clearly not the case for those pupils living outside of the South-East of England who were



immediately put at a disadvantage. The relatively advanced language used also reflected a lack of attention paid to the varied age and educational levels of the intended audience and too broad an approach to producing an educational film.

Equally controversial was the inclusion of music on the soundtrack to *Houses in History*. Two of the pupils at Knowle Park Secondary School praised the musical score on the strength that it appropriately matched the visuals (Abbet, 1949). However, they were in the minority. The overwhelming opinion from many of the schools and Local Authorities was that the music was disliked, entirely inappropriate and should have been cut from the film, since it was considered unnecessary and distracting from the main, informational points made through the film's commentary (City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Elwick Road Secondary Modern School, 1949; Ministry of Education, 1947a; Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). The feedback from Middlesex County Council Education Committee emphasised the fact that the negative criticism of the music had been a generalised complaint of the schools involved in the experiment, and stated that while the "introduction [of music] into an instructional film is, of course, common. It is none the less an error" (Pascal, 1949). The strength of feeling in relation to the music is in keeping with Jacquetta Hawkes' assertions during the pre-production process of the visual units (Hawkes, 1946a). It is interesting to note that although both Hawkes and Helen de Mouilpied (1946a) of the COI had warned against its inclusion, the lack of any strict policy advising against musical

soundtracks resulted in the producers taking the decision that a score would be beneficial, to the apparent disappointment of many of the teachers.

### **Mise-en-Scène: Absent Characters and Biased Settings**

Criticism of the mise-en-scène was confined to two aspects of the film. Firstly, the absence of any characters who could lend the film some level of human interest and reference to the social aspects of the housing portrayed was considered a disadvantage (Auty, 1949; City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Dyke House Boys, 1949; Elwick Road Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). The report sent from schools in Leeds also noted that both teachers and pupils believed the inclusion of people would have given the film a greater sense of time, which would have been advantageous in lending clarity to the explanations of the different historical periods (Peters, 1950). The second aspect of the mise-en-scène which generated a large number of critical comments was a fundamental element of the film's production. Teachers and pupils alike argued that the choice of settings throughout the film was an issue and the architecture selected to convey the history of housing in Britain was not widespread enough to cover the subject matter in sufficient detail. There were three separate issues raised with regards the choice of housing. The first related to the previous concern regarding the lack of people, and it was noted that the film did not deal with the social conditions in each of the selected examples of housing, or the activities of the inhabitants (Elwick Road Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949; Peters, 1950). The second criticism centred on the geographical locations of the architecture depicted.

Teachers in Derbyshire made the point that the examples were too focused on the South of England and that including housing in the North would have increased the pupils' levels of interest in the film (Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Weaver, 1950). The report from Leeds also suggested that houses in other countries ought to have been included in the film to broaden pupils' understanding of differences in housing and architecture (Peters, 1950). While these Local Authorities may have been in the minority in lodging this particular complaint, the argument is worth highlighting since it demonstrated the film's bias towards Southern England, which had also been noted in reference to the voiceover commentary. The third aspect of the film's setting which drew complaints from a number of the participants in the evaluation concerned both the style and overall content of *Houses in History*. Teachers, pupils and Local Authorities all mentioned the film's overwhelming focus on the houses of wealthy people, and recommended that it ought to include examples of 'ordinary' housing (Pascal, 1949; Peters, 1950; Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). One of the pupils who gave their feedback remarked that, "they ought to show us houses in which the poor lived" and a Headmaster suggested the film should be re-named "Mansions in History" (Abbett, 1949; Elwick Road Secondary Modern School, 1949). The Head of Lady Margaret High School in Cardiff offered a particularly cutting assessment of the film's emphasis on affluence, writing,

The script writer should keep in mind the multitudes whose houses are unsatisfactory; one such said in bewilderment "they are not ugly, Miss, they're like palaces, they have gardens." One well-orientated girl dismissed the whole experiment in an early essay concluding with the phrase "I live in a working class district" (Cardiff C.B. Lady Margaret High School, 1949).

At a meeting of members of the Birmingham Teachers' Film Society organised to discuss their response to a screening of *Houses in History*, criticism of the focus on wealthy architecture went even further. The meeting had been organised shortly after production was completed, before the experiment had even begun, and teachers offered their initial feedback. The minutes recorded that there was concern that the film's concentration on "well-to-do" architecture "might arouse class hatred" (Ministry of Education, 1947a). These strongly negative criticisms were particularly significant since they focused on the most fundamental aspect of the film and highlighted the social stance taken by the film's producers and/or sponsors. Not only were the houses of the film's 'history' considered a narrow example of architectural styles, but there also existed a genuine concern that the bias towards more affluent housing was potentially inflammatory. The lack of attention to the inhabitants meant that the film did not approach the social context of the houses and the issue of class difference which the grand architecture had come to represent was ignored, much to the displeasure of the audience. While some aspects of the film's form and style were praised, the setting, which due to the subject matter comprised its overall content, drew nothing but condemnation.

### **The Educational 'Value' of *Houses in History***

Regardless of concerns relating to the socially divisive subject matter, *Houses in History* still proved to be of some merit as a classroom resource, though this was again tempered by adverse criticism. The Ministry of Education's summary report stated that one of the most encouraging aspects of the experiment was that the material instigated a range of project-based activities such as visits to libraries,

modern and historic buildings, and practical work such as model-making. In addition, the report claimed that, with just a few exceptions, the visual unit “stimulated the children and aroused a general interest in this topic, both on the part of the children and of the teachers” (Ministry of Education, 1950a, p.1). *Houses in History* was also praised for its capacity to instil an appreciation of the subject matter as well as wider historical and social issues (Ministry of Education, 1950a). While the visual unit may have been claimed as a success, the mixed reviews received in response to the sound film, which had been its central resource, were not entirely encouraging. It was not a complete failure, and drew many positive comments from teachers and pupils, one of whom described it as “better than a boring lesson by a teacher”, although this may actually have said more about the teaching in her school than the film itself (Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). A teacher from Leeds also offered the, not wholly negative, opinion that “it grows on one” (Peters, 1950). There was other, less understated, praise for the film, and it was commended for the classroom work and educational skills that resulted from its screening, such as raising interest levels, extending reading and generating class discussion which indicated the film did contribute significantly to the development of essential learning objectives (Abbett, 1949; Peters, 1950; Stretton, 1949). However, despite these considerably positive outcomes, the feedback tended to concentrate on the less ‘successful’ aspects of the film, which one Headmistress described as a “blurred yet pedantic affair” (Cardiff C.B. Lady Margaret High School, 1949). The form and style of the film generated negative criticism, due to the commentary, music, lack of social relevance and the bias towards wealthy housing which characterised the content, but it was not only the manner of its production which caused

concern. According to many of the Local Authorities that submitted reports, the film was considered too complex for the Ministry's targeted age range of 12 and over. For example, having been tested in a range of streams from 'C' in Secondary Moderns to 'A' in Grammar Schools, the report from Leeds concluded that the film "generally appeared to do most good with older and brighter children" and that it was only suitable for pupils over the age of 13 (Peters, 1950). The feedback from Manchester supported this claim and reported that the film was too difficult to be screened to all schools, and that only the 'A' stream in Modern and Grammar Schools benefited from viewing (Auty, 1949). The report from the Leeds Education Authority also recommended that in future, rather than producing a single film, visual units should contain a range of films so that teachers could select the material they considered most appropriate for their class. It was argued that the variety of film material would assuage the difficulties of the teachers' negative response to the particular form and style of *Houses in History*, since the films could incorporate different formal and stylistic techniques to suit a wider audience (Peters, 1950). It appeared that the Ministry's efforts in widening the targeted audience of secondary pupils had the effect of lessening the film's relevance, rather than broadening its impact, since the specific age range of pupils needed to be more closely delineated for it to function effectively as a classroom resource.

A final issue which was reported back to the Ministry of Education and which impacted on the educational 'value' of the film concerned the question of whether the medium should even be considered as an educational resource appropriate for

secondary school pupils. While those who commented on this particular query were in the minority, it is worth highlighting that, contrary to the analysis of *The History of Writing*, there was some feeling amongst education practitioners that film should be confined to entertainment rather than education, or was in some way morally questionable. For example, the report from Ryland Road Secondary Modern impressed the need to have access to the film for longer periods of time so that it could be studied in detail on several occasions and not be seen as a novelty. The teacher argued that “To gather a class in a blacked-out room to see a film run through once or twice seemed to create an atmosphere of entertainment rather than of serious study” (Ryland Road Secondary Modern, 1949). The Headmistress of Lady Margaret High School was again forthright in this regard, warning against the “mental torpor produced by regular cinema going” (Cardiff C.B. Lady Margaret High School, 1949). It appeared that while some of the teachers, and pupils, were keen to embrace the relatively new medium as a useful addition to the range of visual aids produced for secondary schools, there were those who were still unconvinced that film deserved any place in the classroom.

### **Evaluation ‘Conclusions’**

While the planned evaluation of the visual units was incredibly detailed on a strategic level, utilising a wide network of personnel in order to share information and distribute the films to the greatest possible number of schools, the strategy did not generate the desired amount of findings and feedback was received for just two of the eight units. The lack of direction from the Ministry of Education regarding the specific feedback required to enable a thorough evaluation of these

units meant that not only were there few respondents, but also that the information gathered was sporadic and inconsistent across the various Local Education Authorities. Nevertheless, the critical responses submitted by teachers, Local Education Authorities and pupils in relation to the film elements of *Houses in History* and *The History of Writing* included detailed information which enabled the Ministry to produce a summary report that assessed the educational 'value' of the moving image material. Overall, the experimental screenings and associated classroom work was met with a mixed response and the feedback highlighted a number of issues which indicated that the film production was not a total success. It is of course possible that, had the other films been fully evaluated, they would have produced markedly different results which would have led to the conclusion that on the whole the films were a beneficial addition to visual education resources. However, in the two case study examples available for review, the film element was considered to be beneficial in stimulating the interest of pupils, yet not wholly adequate as a classroom resource. Neither film was considered sufficiently relevant to the curriculum or to any specific age group or level of education to warrant dedicating class time to its screening and the criticism of the films' form, style, content and lack of targeted audience indicated that the films did not fulfil the educational requirements of pupils. The evaluation was intended to provide the Ministry of Education with guidance on the production of any further educational films, and it would appear from the feedback reports that the Ministry would need to develop a very different approach to film production in the future if the films were to be of benefit to the classroom.



## **Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

Having received the majority of the feedback on the visual unit *Houses in History*, the Ministry of Education compiled a summary report on the comments and criticisms expressed by the teachers, pupils and Local Authority personnel who had responded. The report gave an overview of the positive and negative aspects of the individual elements of the unit, such as the film, wall charts and teaching notes, as well as some indication of the pedagogical application of the material in terms of classroom activity and the curriculum subjects for which it was felt to be useful. This overview included some reference to the more successful aspects of the unit, such as achieving the aim to raise pupils' interest levels (Ministry of Education, 1950a). However, the report also contained comments which highlighted concerns that the visual unit did not adequately meet the demands of education. One such example, quoted from feedback received from a Local Authority, included the criticism that, "teaching is a specialist sphere that brooks no interference from technician or academic specialist ... The aims underlying the whole unit were too ambitious, too complicated and very academic" (Ministry of Education, 1950a, p.3). It would appear from this example that, despite the Ministry's efforts to distribute information via the HM Inspectorate and through the teachers' notes, the unit was still considered by some to fall short of the required levels of attention to the needs of the curriculum. The

reasons for the negative response to the *Houses in History* film have been discussed in some detail in the previous chapter, however, the accusation that the aims of the unit were “academic” and that teachers did not require this particular kind of “interference” in order to go about the business of teaching, brings the Ministry of Education’s visual unit experiment as a whole into question.

The following chapter is in three parts. The first part comprises an evaluation of the experiment, focusing on the Ministry’s stated aims, and the means by which the government department along with associated film production companies, HM Inspectors, experts and advisors intended to achieve those aims. In the second part, I discuss the further, ideological aims and outcomes, through analysis of issues of representation and the constructed discourse of the films as texts. The final section offers a discussion of whether my analysis of the Ministry of Education’s intervention into sponsoring the production of film as a classroom resource can offer any insight into how current film education strategies might achieve government recognition, the potential result of such recognition, and whether this aim is in fact desirable in the present educational and political climate.

## **Part A: Analysis of the Ministry of Education Film Production**

### **Experiment**

The Ministry’s stated aims of the visual unit experiment were to sponsor the production of films for the secondary classroom that would address the identified

lack of relevant material, and to provide training for teachers in the use of this new form of visual aid (Crossley, 1946; Wood, 1943). In addition, the production programme and associated classroom activity aimed to function as research into the educational ‘value’ of film, the results of which would inform the production of educational films in the future (Richardson, 1945; Roseveare, 1946b). A further aim, articulated in correspondence between Helen de Mouilpied at the COI and Jacquetta Hawkes at the Ministry, was to use this innovative programme of work in order to change the established curriculum by introducing project-based activity centred on the film and other visual aids (de Mouilpied, 1946d). In the year prior to the publication of the *Houses in History* summary report, the Ministry of Education had produced a document outlining the proposed distribution of the visual units (Ministry of Education, 1949). The document also included commentary from HM Inspectors, detailing some selected opinions on the sponsored films. The comments referred obliquely to *The History of Writing* film, but also offered criticism of the film production experiment as a whole, and were entirely negative in outlook. One opinion expressed by an HM Inspector is particularly relevant to an evaluation of the Ministry’s production programme, with regards the methodology used by the government in producing, distributing and attempting to gather feedback on the results of screening the films. The comment read,

Since films, filmstrips, and other media are the implements by which an educational purpose is carried out, the choice and application of the implements should follow an examination of and decision about the purpose. The reverse procedure, of deciding to make films and then of casting about to discover a reason for

making them, seems always to be likely to create difficult situations (Ministry of Education, 1949, 4.5).

This statement hints at the issue which I would argue existed at the centre of the Ministry of Education's film production programme, and which impacted on the 'success' of the experiment; namely that the flawed methodology which characterised the process resulted in a programme of work that cannot accurately be defined as an 'experiment' at all.

The Ministry of Education's aims were articulated clearly in correspondence with the Central Office of Information (COI) film production staff and HM Inspectors brought in to advise on the programme. The opinion that film was in some way 'educational', as had been argued in the 1925 Report by the Cinema Commission of Enquiry (Low, 1971), was not developed further by the Ministry in advance of the production programme. There had been some suggestion that film could assist in the teaching of "dull and backward" children during the inter-war years (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932, p.68), a view which was reiterated by The Arts Enquiry in 1947. However, the Ministry never expanded on the means by which this opinion might be confirmed, or produced any rigorously defined objectives that would enable the development of detailed research questions that the 'experiment' sought to answer. The result was that there was no theoretical hypothesis which the 'experiment' was designed to test.

The lack of consideration of the overall objectives of the 'experiment' was matched by an equivalent lack of exploration of the content, form and style of the

films that were intended to achieve these aims. At the outset, the selection of subject matter for the films was seemingly arbitrary, and based on suggestions made by Ministry employees or HM Inspectors who either felt that a particular subject required film to support teaching, with little or no justification for this requirement, or had a personal interest in the subject (for example Hawkes, 1944l; Hawkes, 1946k; Richardson, 1944a; Richardson, 1948). The pre-production stages that followed the initial selection of film titles involved a good deal of discussion between production companies, the COI and the Ministry of Education, but at no point were policy guidelines circulated by the Ministry that would inform the style and structure of the film material. In terms of defining the form and style of 'educational film' that could inform future production, the Ministry had already made assumptions that pre-determined the scope of such an investigation. While there were significant differences in the approach taken by the production companies in structuring the films, all of the moving image material was nonfiction. This stipulation had been articulated by the Ministry of Education before production even began, so the range of potential 'educational film' was already narrowed in advance of any 'experimental' use of the medium. The Ministry had claimed that documentary would accurately convey information in an "objective" manner (Hawkes, 1948c), however, the association between documentary and 'objectivity' was never interrogated. There had been discussion during the production process regarding whether fiction might be a more appropriate form for teaching films. HM Inspector Adams offered the opinion that documentary did not have the capacity to teach the subject of history effectively, in relation to the treatment of *The Beginning of History*, and that a fictional re-telling of past events was a more appropriate means to progress

(Adams, 1944). This advice appeared not to have been taken up, yet some of the films, for example *The Story of Printing* and *The Story of Papermaking*, included historical reconstructions of events using actors, blurring the boundaries between fiction and the apparently characteristic ‘objectivity’ of nonfiction. The only suggestions regarding style were that music should be omitted and sound should be ‘natural’, however both of these recommendations were either ignored by the production companies, or led to lengthy negotiations which amounted to the same result, and both music and non-diegetic sound effects featured in many of the films (for example de Mouilpied, 1946d; Hawkes, 1946d; Wright, 1945). It could be argued that the intention was to test a range of differing approaches to nonfiction film in order to establish the appropriate form and style of ‘educational’ films in order to inform future production. However, I would argue that the lack of attention paid to establishing guidelines in advance of pre-production stages when the film treatments were written and filming locations sourced, actually demonstrated a lack of a theoretical model. No conclusions were drawn regarding whether, for example, the inclusion of technical devices such as maps and diagrams would be effective in conveying information, or if a voiceover narration was more pedagogically sound than ‘live’ dialogue in aiding understanding. The resultant range of interpretations of the documentary form produced a wide variety of formal structures and stylistic techniques, as discussed in Chapter Six. The disparate collection of films which resulted from the absence of any clear thesis would, in turn, have prevented any comparison of the educational ‘value’ of the medium since the films employed different techniques in order to convey varying levels of information.

In addition to the lack of any overall objectives for the experiment, the Ministry failed to articulate any specific pedagogical objectives that the visual units were either designed to meet or had been intended to pilot, so that the concept of educational ‘value’ was never defined. The teachers’ notes which accompanied many of the visual units explained that the material aimed to encourage project work. However, this ‘project work’ also lacked definition, beyond the assertion that it should be cross-curricular and include such activities as visits to museums and local industries (for example Ministry of Education, 1946b; Ministry of Education, 1948c; Scientific Film Association, 1947). There were no specific objectives outlined in advance of filming that explained how either the project activity or the films would contribute to the curriculum, or the learning outcomes that would result from working with the material, so that the Ministry had little option but to ‘cast about’ for pedagogical rationale only after production was complete. There was also no justification for why the medium of film was more appropriate for instigating project work than any other classroom resource. Despite the Ministry having aimed to research the educational ‘value’ of film, the production process was not informed by any specific pedagogical rationale which would have enabled the assessment of this ‘value’.

The approach to defining the target audience for the films also lacked strict guidelines from the beginning. The range of pupils thought to benefit from the films covered secondary through to further and adult education as well as teachers in training and, at times, the age range was adapted throughout the course of production (for example Dance, 1945b; Ministry of Education, 1950b; Pearson,

1944). For example, it was decided after test screenings that *The Story of Printing* should be made available to Grammar Schools, Art and Printing Schools and Evening Institutes, as well as the Secondary Modern Schools originally intended (Ministry of Education, 1950b). The consequent diversity of pupils, students and teachers who were intended to view the films may have contributed to the lack of a defined pedagogical theory informing the films' exhibition, since it would have been difficult to outline classroom activities that were appropriate to all age groups. The Ministry's strategy may have been to produce films that would serve a multitude of educational needs, across a broad range of schools and adult learning institutions. However, the feedback received from pupils, teachers and Local Authority personnel with regards *The History of Writing* and *Houses in History* was critical in relation to the relevance of the form, style, content and limited pedagogical guidance to the age range of pupils and focus of the curriculum. This criticism existed across all types of school which participated in the piloting, which comprised Secondary Modern, Grammar, Independent and Technical Colleges (for example, Bridgeman, 1949; Carruthers, 1949; City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949; Wallasey Grammar School, 1949). While it is difficult to establish whether the other 14 films would have attracted the same level and detail of critical comment, I would argue that the lack of pedagogical rationale and policy on film production, which existed across the programme, indicates that it is highly likely that the other material would have received similar negative feedback. Furthermore, the range of respondents and the lack of any wholly positive feedback suggest that the production programme was not sufficiently relevant to address the previous lack of educational films for schools. The Ministry of



Education therefore failed to achieve one of the central aims of the experiment due to the lack of a theoretical basis and the subsequent absence of defined pedagogy.

Once production was complete, the Ministry of Education needed to locate educational institutions within which piloting of the material could take place. Analysis of the Ministry's plans for distribution and evaluation actually reveals confusion within the strategies, and further underlines the Ministry's lack of attention to a rigorous methodology in undertaking the 'experiment'. The COI and the Ministry of Education both outlined a process for selecting schools to participate in a pilot study of *The History of Writing*. However these were contradictory, a fact which only came to light after the schools had been chosen. While the COI targeted Local Authorities within which there was little technical equipment or experience of visual education, the Ministry selected school districts which were either familiar with using film in the classroom, or had the technical capacity for screenings (Dance, 1948b; Strick, 1948). There was no agreed upon methodology for producing a sample group of schools by, for example, taking into account geographical areas, type of school, prior experience of working with film, in order to generate a specific data set. Furthermore, there was no control group that would have provided an opportunity to measure the outcomes of working with the films that might, for example, have carried out similar project work without access to the visual units. This would have enabled the Ministry to evaluate the extent to which the films actually contributed to the pupils' educational development rather than external factors, such as that which derived

from the activities carried out during the project work. The Ministry also failed to record any information regarding the prior learning experiences of the pupils involved, or of the experience of the teachers, so that it would not have been possible to make a clear assessment of the extent to which advances had been made, either in the pupils' knowledge and skills, or in the teachers' ability to teach through 'visual education'. In fact, the visual education itself was never tested. There were no records of, for example, observations of teaching activity, nor was any of the evaluation strategy designed to assess whether education practitioners had learned through the experience, and what the impact on their teaching had been. The feedback from teachers, pupils and Local Authorities also pointed to another flaw in the Ministry's visual education 'experiment'. Many of the teachers outlined the classroom activity which had taken place based on the film and wider visual unit (for example Abbett, 1950; Peters, 1950; Stretton, 1949). My analysis of the information received regarding *The History of Writing* and *Houses in History* revealed that while there were similarities in the teaching that took place in terms of completing the project work which had been encouraged, there was no parity between lessons or teaching techniques. The limited pedagogical advice offered by the Ministry of Education, precluded any possibility that teachers might adopt specific teaching strategies in response to the new visual aid. This is to be expected to some extent, as teachers would have adapted the material to the needs of the pupils, and according to his/her expertise. However, the 'experiment' was also supposed to have included teacher training to support the pedagogies required for working with this 'new' technology. There are no records held within The National Archives detailing any training activity undertaken by teachers as part of the experiment, which would have aided

practitioners in adapting their own teaching strategies according to the pedagogies required for the 'new' technology. While this does not preclude the possibility that training took place, the amount and detail of record-keeping by the Ministry and COI relating to the experiment, and the omission of any information regarding the professional development of teachers suggests that this training programme never materialised. The resultant variety in classroom methods would have prevented comparison between the learning which took place as a result.

The Ministry of Education did produce some guidelines for evaluating the 'benefits' of screening the films in the classroom and associated project work activity. However, the composition of questionnaires and report design was assigned to the Area Groups, comprising HM Inspectors, LEAs and teachers within each of the selected geographical regions (Roseveare, 1946). Without any evaluation framework or template from the Ministry, the Area Groups each designed differing questionnaires for circulation to teachers, with the result that the feedback was inconsistent (for example, Auty, 1949; City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Grubb, 1949; Hertfordshire County Council, 1949). The range of feedback models resulted in a wide variety of information. While the feedback all focused on a number of recurrent themes, such as the films' form and style and the pedagogical 'value' of the material, the Ministry of Education would have struggled to reach any definitive conclusions through an analysis of the evaluation reports since the broad array of questions invited a corresponding array of answers. Furthermore, the Ministry received only limited response to the call for feedback, which attracted just eight reports from the 300 participating

secondary schools for *The History of Writing*. The result displayed some interesting trends, but the low number of respondents could not be considered a complete evaluation since there are no records from over 99% of participants. The lack of consistency across the evaluation strategy combined with the ill-defined pedagogy informing the production and exhibition of the films, so that the feedback was relevant only to the specific examples outlined, rather than contributing to a more general ‘conclusion’. Further criticism received in the feedback reports pointed to the difficulties felt by teachers in applying the films to the established curriculum. This criticism related to the relevance of the subject matter to the syllabus, and the number of lessons required for working with the material which took time away from the core subjects, particularly within the Grammar Schools (for example Bridgeman, 1949; Wallasey Grammar School, 1949). Although the feedback stems from just two case studies of the visual units, the comments were significant to the experiment as a whole. The desired project work did take place in a number of the schools, however, only to the extent that teachers felt it to be appropriate within the bounds of the syllabus, and not as a replacement for, or alternative to, the established schemes of work already in place. The production programme therefore did not ‘change the curriculum’ as had been intended.

The above analysis demonstrates the Ministry’s lack of rigorous methodology in undertaking the visual unit production programme. The process lacked the defining characteristics of an ‘experiment’ in that there were no research questions or detailed objectives, and little pedagogical rationale informing the

film production and targeted audience/s. In addition, there was no method that would enable the creation of a sample group of schools, or a control group for comparison. The lack of policy informing the form, style and content of the films resulted in a varied approach to producing ‘educational films’, and the indistinct aim to establish the ‘value’ of film meant that any evaluation of the ‘benefits’ of the medium proved uncertain. Furthermore, the distribution and evaluation strategies were chaotic and the resultant findings incomplete. The Ministry of Education’s film production programme thereby failed to reach any definitive ‘conclusions’, since the process did not adhere to any strict methodology that would have enabled the comparison and analysis of findings. The result was that despite the significant time and resources expended on the ‘experiment’, the ‘value’ of film to education remained inconclusive.

A reason for this apparent lack of control over the parameters of the ‘experiment’ can be found through an analysis of the process of co-ordinating the production programme. The film production and piloting of the two films for which the Ministry of Education received feedback took over seven years to complete. Throughout this time, there was some consistency brought about through the presence of Jacquetta Hawkes at the Ministry and Helen de Mouilpied at the COI who corresponded regularly and retained an overview of the process. However, in addition to these two women, there was an abundance of individuals and organisations invited to offer advice and shape the programme. These included HM Inspectors, teachers, COI personnel, colleagues within the Ministry of Education, and the film production companies. In addition, expert opinion was

sought across a range of fields in order to obtain advice on the particular subject matter of each of the films. For example, Professor Glanville of University College who contributed to *The History of Writing* script; composer Benjamin Britten who was tasked with producing the score and developing the treatment alongside Sir Malcolm Sargent for *Instruments of the Orchestra*; and the sister of a Professor who had published a book on the subject of England's wool trade (Bentley, 1946; de Mouilpied, 1945a; Hawkes, 1945g; Jones, 1946). This process may appear rigorous in the levels of consultation achieved and guidance acquired, however the opposite was actually the case and the production process suffered from delays and continual changes as a result of the number of opinions sought (for example Hawkes, 1946n; Wales, 1946). Each of these individuals and, in some cases, organisations who had formed panels of their own experts to contribute to the debate, exerted an influence over the progress of the production programme. Instead of a clear line of questioning, the programme was overtaken by a culture of personalities, each asserting authority over the specific details at every level of production and reception. The sheer number of personalities involved, combined with the lack of pre-defined policy, resulted in continual shifts in production practice and of the Ministry's aims. Nevertheless, despite the delays and confusion caused by conflicting opinion, the production programme was completed, albeit six years after originally intended. The persistence of the Ministry of Education in accomplishing this pioneering intervention into visual education suggests that the 'experiment' was considered of such importance as to warrant the sustained effort and considerable expense. Analysis of the ideological project informing the production programme and conveyed through the films will enable interrogation and definition of this importance.

## **Part B: The Film/Discourse Production Programme**

The discourse of nonfiction film is defined not only as a “function of the assumptions and expectations brought to the process of viewing the text” (Nichols, 1991, p.24), but also as the “actual *construction* of social reality” (Nichols, 1991, p.10). The ‘educational’ status of the visual unit films along with the formal structure and stylistic devices, results in the assumption of the presentation of ‘factual information’, and forces the viewer into a position of submissive recipient of these ‘facts’. However, the previous discussion of the films’ form and style in Chapter Six, demonstrates the use of realism effects to imply an objectivity which was not actually present in the texts. While we expect there to be some form of rhetorical standpoint in any discourse, and therefore account for elements of subjectivity, the issue at stake here is that these films were produced with the specific intention of *teaching*, which leads us to question the nature of the discourse being taught. The selection, ordering and emphasis on particular information and subject matter, and voice of nonfiction film enable us to analyse the means by which the film/makers make claims or assert ‘truths’ about the real world (Plantinga, 1997). The concept of ‘truth’ is worthy of some exploration at this point. Foucault defines ‘truth’ as central to the notion of power, “produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint” (Foucault, 2000, p.131). By which, Foucault is arguing that the concept of ‘truth’ is itself subject to social and political influence; there is no such concept as absolute truth. What is regarded as ‘true’ depends on the context of the statement, for example, the presence of evidence of falsity, the accountability and value placed on the

speaker, the relative status of the listener. Within any society, Foucault argues, there exists a “regime of truth ... the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true” (Foucault, 2000, p.131). Society therefore understands a discourse as ‘true’ if it meets the criteria society has defined as ‘truthful’. Furthermore, ‘truth’ exists “in a circular relation with systems of power that produce and sustain it” since the existence of ‘truth’ in any discourse would result in dominance over those who would oppose the statement (Foucault, 2000, p.132). Truth is therefore a mechanism and means of power. As a result, these ‘regimes’ are dominated by political concerns since the dominance it affords serves and is constructed by political ideologies that structure/lead society. For example, in a capitalist society, the discourse most usefully understood as ‘true’ by members of that society would reflect and serve the economic ideologies of capitalism. Analysing the inclusion and, importantly, the omission of certain information and concepts, and the manner in which they are represented and articulated, enables discussion of the nature of the ‘social reality’ which the Ministry, and associated production companies, HM Inspectors and ‘experts’ tasked with the production, saw fit to construct. Furthermore, this social reality offers an indication of the ideological standpoint of the ‘regime of truth’ which informed and was advocated through their exhibition.

### **Filmic Discourse as Social Propaganda**

Despite the variations in form and style, along with the range of subject matter, there is commonality in the values which the films promote, whether explicitly through the opinions expressed in the commentary or implicitly through the



selection and/or omission of particular themes, concepts and content. There are a number of central values which recur in all of the films, to a greater or lesser degree. The first is the focus on history and ‘tradition’. While not every film is directly focused entirely on ‘history’ as, for example *The Beginning of History* and *Houses in History*, the majority do include the re/presentation of past events such as the sequences in *The History of Writing*, *The Story of Papermaking* and *The Story of Printing* that deal with the production processes of the past. The two *Orchestra* films, while not set in the past or describing past events, include sequences or commentary on early instruments and even *Near Home* which takes place in a contemporary school is entirely *about* the past. The children undertake a local study in which they source ‘evidence’ to discover information about the history of their town. The historical aspects of the films are straightforward to identify, however the notion of tradition is somewhat more elusive but can be recognised through the voice of the films. The presence of historical information, either delivered through the commentary or using shots of, for example, museum pieces as illustration, highlights the notion of ‘tradition’ which the film/makers communicate. *The Story of Printing* and *Houses in History* articulate the ‘tradition’ with which the films are concerned explicitly. The final, contemporary sequence of *Printing* depicts a ‘modern day’ printing press at work, showing the large scale on which the printing of newspapers takes place and the high volume of printed material which the presses were capable of producing. Earlier in the film we had been asked, “So printing today has become a big, mechanised industry. But what about the old problem? Can things be both mass-produced and well-designed?” and as a conclusion, the commentary now informs us that, “today we can combine mass production with good printing ... so, things can be

both mass-produced and well-designed. Indeed, mass production makes designs all the more important.” The point here is the distinction made between mass production and quality, or “well-designed”, “good” printing. In emphasising the ‘fact’ that it *is* possible to produce quality on a large, industrial scale, the film implies the fear that the opposite had been suspected. The overall connotation is a mistrust of mechanisation and nostalgia for the past. *Houses in History* is even more explicit in deriding the modern world, focusing on the grandeur of Bath, Cheltenham, Hatfield House and so on, while the commentary later describes terraced streets of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as, “rows and rows of horrid, cheap little houses all jumbled up with factories” before turning our attention to the “endless ugly suburbs”. The tradition with which the voice of the films forces us into alignment is pastoral, and ‘classical’.

Aside from the overt comment made in reference to a potential lack of ‘quality’ in the mass-produced, modern age, there are further implications regarding the nature of the ‘tradition’ which the films promote. Tradition here refers to both the practices and institutions of the past and the conventions and beliefs which are recognised as in some way superior. The endorsement of industry is a recurrent theme across the films however, it is not the concept of industriousness which we are encouraged to admire, but the ‘value’ of industry in raising the individual above the masses of society, and Britain above its competitors. Furthermore, it is the extent to which industry has the capacity to achieve this ‘value’ through the generation of income and the acquisition of ‘status’ which is at the centre of the films’ arguments. *England’s Wealth From Wool* is the prime example of this

thematic strand, as denoted by the title. We are encouraged to admire the grand houses and public buildings in which the wealthy merchants invested as a result of international trade, and to recognise how far removed this architecture and display of status is from the crofter's houses we are shown in the Highlands of Scotland. The implication is that industry is not concerned with production, but with the attainment of wealth. While the *Orchestra* films do not deal with industry in the same manner as the rest of the films, the concept of status is at the centre of both texts. This time, however, the display of wealth is more covertly revealed to the audience through the dress code of the musicians and the clipped tones of the conductor introducing the orchestra. The concept of status in these films implies a further thematic strand present in all of the Ministry of Education sponsored films; that of class.

While the diverse range of subject matter included in the films, from the wool trade, printing, writing, the supply of water, the study of a town, housing and music, to geographical history, may appear to imply a 'neutral', classless vision of Britain, all of the films in the production programme exhibit a bias towards middle and upper class ideals or society, conveyed through the audio-visual language constructed to tell the story. The bias is evident in the selection of content, for example the greater emphasis placed upon wealth and grandeur in *Houses in History* and *England's Wealth From Wool* and the decision to construct the films intended to support the music syllabus around the London Symphony Orchestra as opposed to, for example, a jazz or colliery band, but also exists in those films which do not focus explicitly on signs of wealth. Each film deals to a

greater or lesser extent with trade and industry, which immediately suggests a focus on work, and therefore the working classes. However, the films all construct the stories from the perspective of consumers, of those who benefit from work, rather than those whose efforts go to provide the resources, commodities and profits. For example, the narrative of *Water Supply* depicts the processes involved in bringing water from the Thames into the home. There is a brief, very long shot (VLS) of one of the sewage plant workers cleaning a filtration bed, but the film opens and closes on the results of his labour. In the opening sequence, we see the picnics and parasols of families enjoying an afternoon on the riverbank upstream from London, and the final image is of an anonymous hand pouring water from a tap which we assume to take place in one of the semi-detached houses of the wide street we have just been shown. *Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* offers us a glimpse of skilled labour as we witness steelworkers producing mining cart wheels, but again, these men are anonymous and the emphasis is on the benefits of production, not on the individual. This approach is characteristic of the discourse of the films. It is not solely the inclusion of particular content which demonstrates a middle class bias but, and perhaps more importantly, the omission of others. The lack of any focus on the social world, which received negative feedback from teachers and pupils with regards to *Houses in History* (for example Auty, 1949; City of Nottingham Education Committee, 1949; Derbyshire Education Committee, 1949; Peters, 1950), results in a vision of work that omits the worker. In *Milk From Grange Hill Farm* we do not see the families of the farmhands, only the well-fed toddler enjoying his glass of milk in the suburbs.

Further omissions from the films enable us to identify the nature of the discourse constructed. All of the films focus on a certain conception of 'Britishness' which, because of its consistency across the varying films, is indicative of the ideological project informing and structuring the discourse. The films' visual representation of 'Britain' is not Britain at all, but England, with the occasional shots of Welsh mountains and Scottish glens. Yet defining the films as Anglocentric is not sufficiently precise to explain the specific point of view conveyed and, through the films' voice, advocated. There are few examples of regional diversity and, despite their presence as the central protagonists of *Near Home*, the children of Bishop Auckland have to be taught by a newcomer from the South East. The characters, where present, are white and, with the exception of some of the *Near Home* children, the contemporary printers at the end of *The Story of Printing*, the harpist of *Instruments in the Orchestra* and an elderly weaver in *England's Wealth From Wool*, male. Given the overwhelming lack of exploration of any of the people who feature in the films, none of whom are identified other than Mr Richards and a handful of children in *Near Home*, the disproportionate number of women to men may not seem an important issue. However, the relative scarcity of female characters, which is exacerbated by the male voice delivering the commentaries in Received Pronunciation, does give an indication of the features that define the films' discourse. Furthermore, the only instances of 'outside' influence on this particular concept of society is through the historical depictions of inventions in writing, printing and papermaking in Asia and the subsequent developments in North Africa and Europe. However, these are tempered by the films' emphasis on the 'primitive' nature of these developments, which are only articulated in respect of the impact they had once arriving in England where they

could be exploited to their full extent. *Primitive Iron Smelting* is an exception in dealing only with the Bantu people and their own industrial processes, but the title again gives away the superior stance taken by the film/maker and, by extension, the opinion we are encouraged to form as viewers. The discourse of the films is characterised by an ideological standpoint that promotes an Anglocentric vision of 'Britain', constructed from the perspective of white, male, middle class society, with an emphasis on history and the attainment of wealth through trade thereby re-asserting the 'traditional' values of the elite in pre-war British society.

The focus on, and representations of, this particular kind of 'Britain' combines with the voice of the films to promote a hierarchical vision of society. The films thereby function as social propaganda, commending the traditional values of the middle classes to the audience. The term 'propaganda' here refers to the application of information, in this case, the discourse of the films, as a means for persuasion and specifically political persuasion, rather than any implication regarding the distortion of 'truth' (Carroll, 1996). However, the notion of 'truth' is still pertinent to this discussion. These 'regimes of truth' were intentionally constructed as 'objective', nonfiction representations of events in order to convince the audience of secondary pupils of the veracity of the information. In terms of the explicit content of sound and imagery depicting handwriting, dairy farming, smelting, architectural achievements and so on, this is not a particularly contentious issue. There is the possibility that pupils would misunderstand certain processes or historical periods, but this could presumably be rectified by the teacher in the classroom. The ideology conveyed through the texts is

however, more problematic. The original intended audience for these films was Secondary Modern pupils (Crossley, 1946), the majority of whom came from the working classes (for example Douglas, 1964; Taylor, 1963). It would appear, therefore, that the ‘regimes of truth’ and the ‘traditional’, middle class ideology which they promoted were intended to persuade the working classes of the ‘value’ of maintaining a hierarchical society in Britain. The ‘new’ technology of film fulfilled the role of relaying this ‘value’ through the ‘objective’ medium of nonfiction which, by using realism effects was constructed to encourage a complicit belief in its ‘truth’.

Foucault’s theories of power offer an analytical model for the Ministry of Education’s decision to sponsor, and persistence in producing, moving image material for the classroom, which enable exploration of the ideological rationale behind such a decision and the importance to the Ministry of pursuing this unique intervention. Foucault argues that power should be analysed in terms of “*struggle, conflict and war*” (Foucault, 1980, p.90), and it is the concept of struggle which is significant to discussion of the Ministry of Education film production programme. The idea of ‘power’ had previously been defined in terms of repression, by philosophers such as Hegel, Freud and Reich however, Foucault argues that this definition was not sufficient in explaining the mechanisms of power, nor its effects (Foucault, 1980). The argument follows that the existence of repression alone does not signify the presence of power; it is the presence of a resistance to repression which demonstrates the effects of power, since if an individual does not resist – struggle against – the apparent repression, then this is

not really repression at all; the two parties are necessarily in agreement. Therefore, it is not possible to identify who holds the power. Whereas, if control is exerted over an individual who resists this attempt at repression, the two parties are in opposition, thereby placing one in a position of power over the other as the struggle takes place. Furthermore, Foucault denies that power itself is a repressive force. The existence of successful assertions of power show us that the force cannot centre only on prohibiting individuals from particular actions, since the individual would not simply acquiesce to prohibition without seeking an alternative. Rather than functioning as a purely preventative regime, power works because “it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression” (Foucault, 1980, p.119). Power is therefore a dynamic force, shifting across opposing parties as each asserts its own will to act; the result of this conflict is not prevention of the act, but creation of new forms of object, language, discourse.

The relevance of Foucault’s theory to the Ministry’s film production programme lies in the context of the historical circumstances of the education system in which it took place, and the dynamics of the Secondary curriculum at that time. As discussed in Chapter Two, the post-war curriculum underwent enormous changes as the introduction of the Secondary Modern Schools and associated syllabus fought to compete with the established traditions of the Grammar Schools for parity of esteem (for example Jones, 2003; Simon, 1991). In addition, the



relatively late introduction of formal qualifications for those pupils attending the Secondary Moderns, in the form of the CSE introduced in 1965, that would enable pupils to be entered for equivalent examinations to those available in the Grammars, resulted in a lack of equality between school leavers in terms of employment and Higher Education opportunities (Jones, 2003; Taylor, 1963). The struggle over the curriculum existed on a number of 'levels', engaging teachers, pupils, schools, unions, research organisations and the government (for example Jones, 2003; Lowe, 1988; McCulloch, 1998; Richmond, 1978; Simon, 1991). The shape and content of the Secondary Modern curriculum changed over the course of the two decades before comprehensivisation, and tensions existed between the syllabus of subjects defined as 'vocational' and those considered to be 'academic' (Ministry of Education, 1947b; Lowe, 1988; Jones, 2003). The struggle did not only exist in the classroom, its impact reached beyond the physical site of education and into society as a whole. For example, working class parents struggled to reconcile their children's education with their own, middle class parents aimed to wrest control of the Grammar Schools, pupils strived to pass the 11+ in order to access a higher status education and the government fought to justify the existence of the Modern Schools, in which efforts they were supported by those defending the Grammars (Douglas, 1964; Jackson and Marsden, 1966; Jones, 2003; Lowe, 1988; McCulloch, 1998; Taylor, 1963). Each party attempted to exert control over aspects of the curriculum and was met with a network of opposition that both intensified the struggle and pointed to the presence of power on all sides. The 'struggle' did not exist between two opposing bodies, but instead was dispersed across a wealth of organisations and individuals, with no simple dividing line between each 'side'.

The result of this struggle was the incremental development of new forms of examination to evidence ‘achievement’ within the newly created curricula, and the continual shift of power so that no one direct trajectory of gain can be evidenced for any of the bodies engaged in the struggle; only relative advancements. The creation of new examinations, organisation of parents and teachers into bodies of opposition and the development of new forms of expression for the resistance to government directives and attempts at re-organisation, such as the Black Papers published in 1969 (Simon, 1991) all represent the formation of “knowledge” and “discourses” that Foucault argues are produced by power (Foucault, 1980, p.119). I would argue that the film production programme can also be understood as a discourse produced by the struggle within the education system. Furthermore, the internal discourse of the films reflected that of the discourse surrounding the struggle for the curriculum, i.e. the traditional, ‘academic’ education of the Grammar Schools striving to maintain dominance over the ‘vocational’ education provided by the Secondary Moderns (Davis, 1967; Jones, 2003; Lowe, 1988). The grand architecture of *Houses in History* represented the ‘academic’ Grammar education, and the terraced, workers’ housing represented the ‘vocational’ education provided for the working classes of the Secondary Modern Schools. The Ministry explicitly stated that the films were intended to change the curriculum and introduce new approaches to teaching through project work so that subjects would no longer be taught in isolation, evidenced by the accompanying notes for teachers outlining potential projects that could be carried out in response to viewing (de Moulpiéd, 1946b and for example Ministry of Education, 1946b; Ministry of Education, 1947c; Ministry of Education, 1948c; Scientific Film Association, 1947). The

discourse of the Ministry of Education films represented an articulation of the government's 'regime of truth'; the discourse produced as a result of the Ministry of Education's will to assert control over teacher activity and alter the shape of the curriculum. These two ideological aims offer an indication of why the visual unit production programme was considered to be of such importance to the Ministry of Education, and the rationale behind why it took place at this particular moment in educational history.

The visual unit production programme was opportunistic in its timing. The availability of Ministry of Information (MOI) film production resources, and access to the filmmaking expertise of the associated production companies was due in part to the end of the Second World War when the MOI production unit was no longer required for propagandist and training films. The Ministry of Education took the opportunity to employ the services of the COI in co-ordinating production, when the more pressing demands of the MOI wartime service had subsided (Bamford, 1946; de Moulpiéd, 1946e; Manvell, 1947). The timing of the production programme was also influenced by the introduction of the 1944 Education Act (Hawkes, 1943). The developments in secondary schooling represented significant upheaval as new schools were built and increasing numbers of pupils gained access to secondary education. The Ministry's plans to encourage teachers to incorporate visual education into the classroom as a means to alter the curriculum would therefore have been a relatively small adjustment to teaching in comparison with the greater changes of pupil numbers, the new Secondary Modern syllabus and the evolving examination system. The timing of

the 'experiment' within an education system undergoing a period of evolution was therefore paramount to its acceptance.

Throughout the production stages of the 'experiment', the Ministry of Education was keen to involve the film production companies in developing this 'new' classroom resource. The aims of the programme reflected a genuine enthusiasm for the film medium and optimism for ensuring visual education was recognised as a 'valuable' addition to teaching. The Ministry was also keen to ensure the films were produced to the highest possible quality, sponsoring the production of costly 35mm films and ordering re-writes and edits where they were felt to be necessary (for example Dance, 1947; de Mouilpied, 1946b; Hawkes, 1946a; Williams, 1948a). This optimism for proving the educational 'benefits' of film did not amount to a wholly successful programme of work, but the completion of 16 film titles demonstrated considerable intensity of purpose. However, the ideological project, as evidenced through the textual analysis of the discourse produced by the power/struggle over the curriculum, implies that this assertion of control was an attempt by government to reinforce the stratification of the tripartite system, at a time when the Secondary Modern Schools and the social divisions inherent in the education system were being called into question. There is no evidence to support the argument that the films were actually screened in such a singularly propagandist manner, and the feedback from teachers and pupils suggests that there was resistance to the films' ideological standpoint (for example Cardiff C.B. Lady Margaret High School, 1949; Pascal, 1949; Peters, 1950; Trent Bridge Girls' Secondary Modern School, 1949). Nevertheless, I

would argue that the social values which informed and were conveyed through the films demonstrated the Ministry of Education's intent, and highlight the importance to the government of this audio-visual intervention into the education system. The filmic discourse which was produced as a result of the power/struggle for the curriculum was intended as a means to reaffirm a social hierarchy based on class.

### **Part C: Contemporary Film Education and the Struggle for Government Recognition**

The British Film Institute's education plan outlined in *Film Forever* (British Film Institute, 2012c) addresses a number of issues which had been at the centre of national film education initiatives in the previous decade. The three-tiered education offer includes an online platform of moving image media and associated teaching resources, and film education activity designed to increase the number of specialist practitioners (British Film Institute, 2012d). By incorporating evaluation into the plan in order to demonstrate its relevance to formal education, *Film Forever* aims to "advocate for the value of film education" to Government (British Film Institute, 2012d, p. 9). The objective is for government recognition of this 'value' that will result in film education becoming embedded within the curriculum. Advocacy for 'value' and the call for film education to be recognised as an integral aspect of literacy in the statutory curriculum have been recurrent aims of film education strategies and research in recent years. For example, the BFI's own Lead Practitioner Scheme which took place in 2004 (Marsh and Bearne, 2008), the *Charter for Media Literacy* (Media

Literacy Task Force, 2005), *Impacts of Moving Image Education* (Bazalgette, 2009) and *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009). The continuing articulation of this aim demonstrates the significance it carries for those organisations and individuals involved in developing strategy for, and carrying out delivery of, film education practice. The Ministry of Education ‘experiment’ of the 1940s and early 1950s shows that government involvement in the educational use of film, through the sponsorship and distribution of ‘visual units’, has been achieved in the past. My analysis of the visual unit production programme and subsequent distribution and evaluation of the films, offers a number of explanations as to why government recognition for film education has not been achieved in recent years.

Discussions held before the Ministry of Education instigated the production of films for secondary education identified there were potential benefits – and dangers – of the film medium to young people (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). The Commission on Educational and Cultural Films’ report (1932) demonstrated the growing interest in this ‘new’ medium and its impact on the social and cultural life of children, which it was argued could be harnessed for educational purposes, provided the films were markedly different in style and tone from those available at the Saturday matinees. The Ministry built on these opinions and aimed to address the identified lack of ‘suitable’ films for the classroom (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932; Crossley, 1946; The Arts Enquiry, 1947). There were nonfiction films already in existence, produced by companies such as Gaumont-British Instructional and the Shell Film

Unit, which were screened in schools because they were considered to be broadly 'educational' (Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, 1932). However, the production of educational material specifically for schools was not considered financially viable by these companies since there was not sufficient demand from educational institutions to warrant expenditure (Buchanan, 1951). The widespread lack of appropriate projection equipment prevented the majority of schools from screening films in the classroom, and the British Film Institute made recommendations regarding the number and type of projectors that should be supplied in order for educational institutions to take full advantage of the 'new' visual aid (Board of Education, 1937; British Film Institute, 1934; Manchester Guardian, 1937). The Ministry's investment in production was therefore intended to meet the pressing need for films that would exploit the medium's potential to convey information to a school audience and, by providing projection equipment as part of the visual unit loan service, the Ministry aimed to overcome the technical barriers identified (Crossley, 1946; Wood, 1942). These two issues – the lack of film and the lack of a means to screen the films – were the central instigating factors that brought about the Ministry of Education's involvement in visual education in the post-war years. The issues also give an indication as to why government recognition has not been achieved by film education strategies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In 2013, the technological landscape is significantly different from that which faced the Ministry of Education in the 1940s. 16mm film projectors are no longer required to view moving image material in the classroom and celluloid acetate

film has made way for subsequent video, DVD and online versions of ‘film’ footage. Moving image media has increasingly been made accessible via industry and educational websites, so that examples from over 100 years of film history can be searched online and streamed in the classroom or downloaded by teachers to be incorporated into planned lessons. For example, the British Pathé website provides free access to low resolution versions of the company archives which, while not the highest quality copies of the material, does provide teachers and researchers with a searchable database of 90,000 newsreels dating from the 1890s to the 2000s ([www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com)). The increase in availability, and decrease in cost, of digital media content and technologies has not only made viewing moving image media easier, but has also enabled simplified and widespread production so that anyone with access to a mobile phone and a laptop can record, edit and play back a ‘film’ within a matter of hours. This democratisation of access and production extends to young people, so that through digital technologies, moving image media form an increasingly central aspect of the lives of children in and outside of school. The ‘Henley Report’ (DCMS and DfE, 2012) for example, an independent review of cultural education commissioned by the UK’s Coalition government, finds that “access to the digital world makes it more straightforward for young people themselves to engage, create and critique products, events and activities” (DCMS and DfE, 2012, p10-11). The wealth of content and relative ease of access in 2013 go some way to circumventing the difficulties felt by teachers in embedding visual education into the formal curriculum in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the instigating factors which brought about the Ministry of Education’s intervention. We no longer require the



government to employ production companies with the 35mm or 16mm filmmaking equipment and expertise.

Nevertheless, this does not address the issue of whether the moving image media to which teachers and young people can easily gain access can be considered 'suitable' or 'relevant' to education. However, this issue has itself been overcome in recent years through the work of film education practitioners and organisations, by providing curated content online which includes supporting information for teachers and pupils. The curators combine film history knowledge with educational expertise so that the task of searching a large-scale website such as British Pathé for appropriate material, before designing suitable learning strategies to meet the needs of the curriculum has been made more straightforward. For example, the BFI's Screenonline website combines selected film and television material from the British Film Institute National Archive with historical and cultural background information and, in a section of the resource dedicated to education, suggested activities for the classroom ([www.screenonline.org.uk](http://www.screenonline.org.uk)). The aim in part is to enable teachers to select 'suitable' moving image material that meets National Curriculum learning objectives. The site is free to access for schools, colleges, universities and libraries, but requires users to register to stream the moving image media content. In the 2011-2012 financial year, the BFI received 80,000 video stream requests (British Film Institute, 2013b). The figure does not enable interrogation to determine the extent to which individual requests resulted in classroom activity, or the nature of the educational setting in which any activity may have taken

place. However, the number of requests for that year demonstrates a high demand for and uptake of the resource, in stark contrast to the 300 schools across Britain that the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films (1932) found to screen films in the classroom in 1930. Screenonline is just one of many dedicated online resources for teachers to access and learn about working with film. For example, the National Media Museum ([www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk](http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk)), the English and Media Centre ([www.englishandmedia.co.uk](http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk)) and Film Club ([www.filmclub.org](http://www.filmclub.org)) all provide access to moving image media alongside advice and guidance on classroom activities. The existence of such websites demonstrates that advances in technology have not only increased the availability of film education resources, but also the potential audience through the relative ease of access compared with the requirement for 16mm projectors. Digital technologies have effectively removed the barriers of 'suitable' content and the availability of equipment which were the two instigating factors behind the Ministry of Education's visual education intervention.

The circumstances which brought about the post-war government's support of visual education therefore no longer exist in the present time. There is not the same level of demand for the production of films, or supply of appropriate screening equipment. Government recognition has not been achieved in recent years because there is no requirement for it to act. The existence of online resources and the high rates of use demonstrate that the work is already taking place, so from the point of view of the government there is no need to intervene. The argument for government recognition is therefore obsolete. Furthermore,

there is a danger that achieving government recognition of film education would have a detrimental effect. My previous analysis of the ideological project informing and conveyed through the Ministry of Education's visual unit films demonstrates that in this particular historical example, visual education was turned over to political purposes. Through the representation of concepts of 'Britishness', the promotion of middle class values and the focus on the attainment of wealth and status, the films advocated for a hierarchical society based on class division. The risk that film education would undergo similar political manipulation is particularly pertinent in 2013.

Since 2010, the UK has been led by a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. The current Secretary of State for Education is the Tory MP Michael Gove, and the previous Labour Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has, under the Coalition, become the Department for Education (DfE). While on the surface this re-branding of the department responsible for education within the UK may appear to be an arbitrary change of title, the 'new' name signifies a more deep-seated culture change that is indicative of the current Government's approach to education policy. The more inclusive style of education encompassing the wider social and cultural impact on communities and homes, implied by the title "DCSF", has been replaced by a singular organisation of schooling that has at its centre the vision for a "highly educated society", facilitated through new 'Academies' and an alternative teacher training programme through School Direct (Department for Education, 2013). The rhetoric of the Coalition Government includes references to 'traditional'

values such as “restoring discipline” and improving the “quality of teaching”, and Gove has argued that schools are ‘failing’ to educate children due to a “culture of excuses and low aspirations” (Gove, 2013). The Secretary of State has come under criticism recently over the announcement of GCSE reform in England. Coursework will be replaced by a single, un-tiered examination, with the exception of Science which will still include a practical coursework element, so that the GCSE in England will resemble the structure of O-Levels in the years before the introduction of the National Curriculum (Adams, 2013). The move is Gove’s fourth attempt at examination reform and, while there are some developments in response to current issues, such as the introduction of climate change into the Biology and Geography curricula, the overhaul reflects the traditionalist values of Gove and the wider government. For example, the History curriculum is to include a greater focus on British history and/or the history of Wales, Scotland, Ireland or England, set at a minimum of 40% of teaching (Adams, 2013). Apart from the implication of ‘traditional’ values this focus on specifically British history implies, the GCSE reform is also aimed at addressing another of this Government’s central concerns; the economy. The UK is experiencing high unemployment, reported at 2.52 million in the period January to March 2013 (Office of National Statistics, 2013), recession and reduced public funding. Gove’s statement to the House of Commons that, “by making GCSEs more demanding, more fulfilling, and more stretching we can give our young people the broad, deep and balanced education which will equip them to win in the global race” (Adams, 2013) demonstrates what the Coalition believes to be the function of education. This current incarnation of examination reform is designed to ensure the British economy not only competes internationally, but wins the

‘global race’, and it is the pupils of secondary schools who are to function as the competitors. These examples of the singular control which the government has over the shape and content of the curriculum demonstrate the risk which I believe exists at the centre of the aims of the BFI’s education plan, *Film Forever* (British Film Institute, 2012c). If the plan achieves its aim of demonstrating the value of film education to Westminster in order to embed the practice within the National Curriculum, the Coalition may well assume the same centralised coordination which has been effected over the History syllabus. The risks in such a situation would be whether the ‘3Cs’ of the Media Literacy Strategy (Media Literacy Task Force, 2005) would remain intact and the recent aims of incorporating ‘21<sup>st</sup> century literacy’ skills within wider concepts of literacy would remain at the centre of film education, or if the Coalition government’s emphasis on more ‘traditional’ education overtakes these aims. The levels of control which the government holds over the National Curriculum could effectively alter the central objectives of recent strategies such as *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009) to the point that the learning outcomes which have been identified through its evaluation are no longer achieved in practice.

The above discussion regarding recent film education strategies has focused on the challenges of advocating for the ‘value’ of film education to government and the potential result of achieving this aim. I have argued that the impetus which brought about government intervention in the post-war years no longer exists due to technological advances. The result is that the need for the government to take charge of producing and distributing films for educational users has been

superseded by the availability of film education resources and the ability of teachers – and learners – to source and appropriate moving image media to meet their own learning objectives. I have also argued that the risk of embedding film education in the National Curriculum is the potential for state control of its aims, objectives and teaching which could effectively overcome the ‘3Cs’ of the *Charter for Media Literacy* (Media Literacy Task Force, 2005) in favour of the ‘traditional’ education advocated for by the Department for Education. While these issues have formed the basis for my arguments against seeking government recognition (for example, Available Light Advisory, 2012; Bazalgette, 2009; Marsh and Bearne, 2008), I would further argue that there is a more fundamental barrier to ensuring that young people are ‘21<sup>st</sup> century literate’. In addition to the potential dangers of embedding film education in the centrally-controlled National Curriculum, linking film education strategies to government policies, while logical and strategic in terms of aiming to achieve government recognition, also leaves the strategy open to the vicissitudes of government re-organisation and evolving political priorities. The recurrence of the aim to demonstrate the ‘value’ of film education and the subsequent analyses that argue this has not yet been proven, imply that it is the concept of ‘value’ itself which is preventing any conclusive proof. This is not to suggest that all these recent initiatives have ‘failed’, or that the Ministry of Education’s production programme was erroneous in its endeavour, only that perhaps the focus on ‘demonstrating value’ has distracted us from the task at hand, i.e. learning.

Looking again to Foucault for a means of analysis, the term ‘value’ implies a hierarchy of ‘usefulness’ (Foucault, 2002b). An object of value holds a function which we as society and as individuals respect and can quantify. However, the concept is dynamic and exists in relation to “men’s appetite, desires, and need” (Foucault, 2002b, p.214). The ‘value’ of film education only exists in relation to the overarching values of society which, by definition, a democratic government aims to serve. In a press release announcing the launch of *Film Forever*, British Film Institute CEO Amanda Neville stated that, “we are investing where we think we can most make a difference, where we see potential for creative excellence and where we can be the supportive catalyst for change, innovation, business growth and jobs” (British Film Institute, 2012b). The significance of this remark can be identified when placed in the context of the current government’s education policies. It is clear through the references to ‘excellence’ and the economy that the BFI’s *Film Forever* initiative is inextricably linked with the objectives of the Coalition Government. When these objectives are altered or assume varying levels of importance – to society and, significantly, the economy, the value of film education will react in response and renewed efforts will be required to demonstrate its relevance to the new value system. It is implausible to suggest that film education should exist outside of societal values, since education itself is a social concern. However, in order for ‘value’ to be conclusively demonstrated, the ‘benefits’ of film education need to be linked to pedagogical theory and not to current government policy. As argued by Bazalgette and Wall (2011) and Marsh and Bearne (2008), national film education strategy and policy is required, however these should be developed on pedagogical grounds, which are removed from government agendas. The result would be a ‘value’ defined by

the learning which takes place, rather than by a reactive response to a reformulated hierarchy of “men’s appetite” centred on economic recovery, regeneration or global competition.

Removing the aim of achieving government recognition does, however, introduce a further difficulty for current and future film education strategies. Without support from government, strategists and practitioners will continue to struggle for funding to carry out this work, since there would be no possibility that the Department for Education will recognise the need to financially support learning programmes that effectively exist outside of statutory education. Therefore film education policy-makers would need to develop new business models that ensure the educational objectives of ‘21<sup>st</sup> century literacy’ are met while still retaining control over the pedagogical rationale and outcomes. The logical and, I believe, most effective means for ensuring the work can continue in the future, would be to involve teaching training institutions in its development. In recent years, the diversity of practice, due in part to the wealth of terminology and approaches to film education, lack of attention to learning progression, and insufficient evaluation, have all been argued to have contributed to the inadequate generation of ‘evidence’ to support the case for film education (Bazalgette, 2009; Bazalgette and Wall, 2011; Marsh and Bearne, 2008). Marsh and Bearne (2008) argued for research into learning progression and the long-term impact of film education, as well as calling for a national policy that would inform practice and incorporate training for practitioners. Subsequent strategic and practice-led initiatives such as *Impacts of Moving Image Education* (Bazalgette, 2009) and *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century*



*Literacy* (UK Film Council, 2009) responded to these recommendations and included research and piloting of the learning outcomes resulting from film education, yet still concluded that the evidence gathered was insufficient to attract government recognition. My findings based on the Ministry of Education ‘experiment’ indicate that this could be overcome through the development of a theoretical basis in advance of formulating strategy and co-ordinating activity. Theoretical modelling would strengthen any attempt at producing a comprehensive evaluation and, along with a detailed methodology, would provide a framework for the generation of research data and analysis of outcomes. This analysis would then enable the publication of national policy on film education, based on rigorous research data and supported by pedagogical theory, rather than a reactive response to disparate practice. Building partnerships with teacher training institutions would enable evolution of film education based on rigorous academic practice-based research, incorporate teacher training, and open up new funding streams for its implementation. Shifting the strategic focus of film education from the government to academia would thereby safeguard the future of ‘21<sup>st</sup> century literacy’.

The previous discussion and recommendations regarding the current and potential future film education initiatives highlight the unique contribution to knowledge that this thesis seeks to make. I have argued that the methodology of the Ministry of Education’s film production ‘experiment’ was flawed and resulted in few advances in visual education policy and practice in the immediate aftermath. Nevertheless, the debates surrounding the ‘value’ of film to education have

continued throughout the intervening 70 years until the present day. There has been no previous research into the Ministry of Education's role in the development and evolution of the relationship between film and education in post-war Britain and my thesis builds a new history on the subject by assembling previously disparate events to form a narrative which draws on several fields of enquiry, using methodologies from the study of Film, Education, and social and political History. Through the selection and interpretation of archival resources, and subsequent insertion into other histories/discourses, this research generates a new interpretation of past events set against a range of inter-disciplinary contexts. The result is a thesis which combines a number of methods, methodologies and epistemological approaches to develop a new discourse surrounding past events that had remained previously unexplored from these perspectives.

The analysis of the films functions as a practical example of the application of my historical research to building knowledge in the present. While all the titles pertaining to the Ministry of Education experiment are held within the British Film Institute (BFI) National Archive, the curators were not aware that the films formed a complete 'collection' i.e. the products of a set of related events. The titles had been treated as singular examples of educational productions and, prior to my research at The National Archives during which I discovered the extent of the Ministry's film sponsorship programme beginning in 1943, the relationship between the films was not known and therefore not recorded by the BFI. The films' status as a collection within the BFI's holdings means they can be analysed according to this association, bringing further context and theoretical and critical

approaches to bear on the moving image material which, in turn, will enable further interpretations in the future. By adding this information to the BFI's catalogue and background files, future researchers and audiences will be able to build on the research and offer further interpretation and analysis of the material.

My research into the Ministry of Education's post-war intervention into visual education functions in the same manner. While no conclusions were drawn regarding its efficacy at the time, the practical, social and political implications of the 'experiment' have relevance now. My thesis offers some insight into the future development of film education policy and strategy that could avoid the pitfalls of past attempts at embedding its practice in the formal curriculum.



## **Appendices**



## **Appendix One: *Milk From Grange Hill Farm***

**Title:** *Milk From Grange Hill Farm*

**Year:** 1945

**B&W**

**Format:** 16mm

**Sound:** silent

**Length (ft):** 414

**Length (m:s):** 11:30

Title: The Milk from Grange Hill Farm. Made at Grange Hill Farm and at the Co-operative Society's Dairy, Bishop Auckland, County Durham.

Title: This film is part of the Ministry of Education visual unit on Local Studies. Grange Hill Farm is the farm visited by the children in the film "Near Home".

Cows in a field are herded into a barn.

Title: The cows are coming in to be milked. The cowshed has been washed down and fresh straw put in the stalls. After the cowman has cleaned the cows' hindquarters and washed their udders, he starts milking.

The cowman fixes a small, mechanical pump to a cows' udder, then walks away while she is milked.

He returns some time later with a fresh pail, removes the pumps from one cow and fixes them to another, and to the empty pail. This done, he removes the full pail of milk from next to the first cow and leaves.

He empties the milk into a bucket which hangs from a scale and measures the amount. Then he returns to the cow, milks some more by hand and empties this into the weighing bucket.

The cowman empties all the milk into another pail, puts a lid on top then completes the 'daily herd record sheet' which is pinned to the wall.

He then carries two lidded pails of milk from the cowshed across a yard to another building, where he pours the milk down a chute.

A woman pours off some milk from the vat using the tap at its base, fills a churn and drags this out to the yard, where two others already stand awaiting collection.

A truck laden with churns backs up. Two men get out of the truck and load the three additional churns onto the back before driving away.

After driving through the countryside the truck pulls in at the dairy where the churns are unloaded. They are lifted off the truck and the milk later poured into a vat, where the volume is recorded.

Title: The milk is now cleaned by pumping it through steel cylinders fitted with cloth filters. It is then led to a large storage tank.

A worker stands monitoring the milk flow into the tank.



Title: Next the milk passes through special equipment where it is heated in order to destroy all harmful bacteria. This process is called “pasteurization”.

A man adjusts some dials on the pasteurisation pipes.

Title: After pasteurisation, the milk passes into another tank where it is stirred continuously to prevent the cream collecting on the top. It is now ready for bottling.

Milk is stirred mechanically in large tanks.

A young man oversees the bottling machine. Empty bottles are placed by machine onto a conveyor belt in batches of seven. The conveyor belt transports the empty bottles to a pump, where they are filled with milk.

Once full, the woman removes the bottles from the belt and places them in crates, which are loaded onto a trolley and taken out of the dairy.

Outside, a young man arrives on a horse and cart, which is loaded up with crates of milk bottles.

The milkman leads the horse and cart around residential streets where he delivers the bottles, leaving them on the doorsteps of people’s homes.

A toddler sits at the breakfast table and is poured a glass of milk, which he drinks.

Title: The End. A Basic Film for the Ministry of Information. October, 1945



## **Appendix Two: *Instruments of the Orchestra***

**Title:** *Instruments of the Orchestra*

**Year:** 1946

**B&W**

**Format:** 35mm

**Sound:** comopt

**Length (ft):** 1813

**Length (m:s):** 20:08

**Condition:** good, clean print. Occasional scratches. Low level of warping.

**Cast**

The London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Malcolm Sargent

**Credits**

Produced by: Crown Film Unit

Producer: Alexander Shaw

Director: Muir Mathieson

Sound recording: Ken Cameron

Camera: Fred Gamage

Editor: John Trumper

Art Director: Edward Carrick

Unit Manager: Diana Pine

Asst Director: John Spencer

Music: Benjamin Britten

Sponsored by: Ministry of Education

### **Related films**

*Science in the Orchestra* (1950)

### **Viewing Notes**

Title: A Crown Film Unit Production

Sound of the orchestra tuning up.

The full orchestra tune up as seen by a concert hall audience. Malcolm Sargent enters to applause from the orchestra. Titles are superimposed over this image.

Title: Instruments of the Orchestra

Title: Introduced by Dr. Malcolm Sargent with Variations and Fugue on a theme of Purcell by Benjamin Britten

Title: Produced by Alexander Shaw. Directed by Muir Mathieson. Recorded by Ken Cameron.

Title: Photography ... Fred Gamage

Cutter ... John Trumper

Art Director ... Edward Carrick

Unit Manager ... Diana Pine

Asst Director ... John Spencer

Title: The London Symphony Orchestra

Sargent turns to the audience.

Sargent: Many of you may have heard and seen a symphony orchestra playing in the concert hall. Many more of you must have heard one over the radio. But today I want to take this great musical box to pieces – show you the various instruments – and let you hear their own particular sounds. It is not usual for a conductor to talk during a concert, but this time I am going to name these instruments and tell you something about each before it is played. And I've placed them so that you might see them clearly.

Sargent finishes his opening speech and turns to the orchestra, picks up the baton and opens his score.

Sargent stands to the right. In the background are the orchestra, seen behind the first violins, as Sargent gives his first down beat.

The woodwind section prepares to play.

The whole orchestra plays the opening piece.

Medium shot from front of the stage, followed by a crane shot of the woodwind section.

Commentary: Now, of the blowing instruments, some are made of wood, and they, naturally, are called the woodwind.

Crane shot from left of the brass section.

Commentary: The other blowing instruments are made of brass and are called the brass.

A crane shot of the strings shows the distinctive layout of the various groups of stringed instruments.

Commentary: Now for the scraping instruments. These are played with a bow or plucked with the fingers, and are called the strings.

Medium shot from the right, shows the percussion section.

Commentary: Finally, the banging instruments – the percussion.

Sargent is filmed on his own, from the orchestra's point of view, as he turns from the percussion to bring in the full orchestra.

Medium close up of Sargent, followed by a pan across the woodwind section.

Commentary: Now listen to the instruments which make up these groups. First, the highest of the woodwind instruments – the flutes, and their small brother – the piccolo.

Shot of two flutes, from the right, held upright on knees. Extreme close up of the piccolo player. The flute players lift their instruments and blow, working the keys. The piccolo player takes the instrument from inside his jacket pocket and the flute variation begins.

Close up of the piccolo, followed by shots of the flute players.

Commentary: Next the oboes. These instruments are played by blowing through two little pieces of reed which gives that pastoral tone so typical of the oboe.

Two oboe players sit, ready to play.

Commentary: Not unlike the oboes to look at – the clarinets. Those are played with only one reed which gives a more velvety tone.

Close up of four clarinets standing on the floor. Two hands enter the frame, select instruments, raise them, remove the metal covers from the mouth pieces to reveal the single reed, and play the first five and a half bars of the clarinet variation.

Medium close up of both clarinets playing the last five bars of the variation.

Commentary: The bassoons are the largest and lowest of the woodwind and, like the oboes, are played with a double reed.

Two bassoon players hold their instruments upright, resting on the floor, then lift them to play

Medium close up of two bassoons to finish the variation.

Commentary: Now for the strings ... and here are the highest – the violins. As stringed instruments are smaller in tone, we need lots of them to balance the orchestra. The violins are divided into two parts – first violins and second violins.

Long shot of the strings, showing them divided into two sections.

Slow tracking shot along the front of the first and second violins.

Medium close up of two violins.

Crane shot of the violas.

Commentary: The violas. These are slightly larger than the violins and so are deeper in tone.

Close up of the bow and bridge of a viola.

Crane shot of the violas.

Commentary: The cellos are much larger, too large to hold under the chin.

Tracking shot of the cellos.

Close up of a double bass with the bow on the strings, tracking back until 6 basses are in shot.

Commentary: And now the largest of the strings, and lowest in sound, the double bass.

Track in to a medium close up of the top of one double bass and the musician, to reveal the left hand fingering of the final run and crescendo.

Close up of the sheet music. A harpist sits at her instrument then, on cue, leans it against her shoulder and begins to play.

Commentary: Now for a different type of stringed instrument – the harp. Not played with a bow, but simply plucked with the fingers.

The harpist tunes up then plays six bars of the variation. Close up of the harpist's hands playing.

Commentary: Now we come to the brass instruments. First of all the horns with their twelve foot of coiled tubing.

Medium shot from the side of four horns; one adjusting the tuning valve, one testing a valve and one emptying water out of the instrument. As the musicians begin to play the camera cuts between each before returning to the four playing together.



Commentary: Now the trumpets.

Medium close up of two trumpets for 16 bars, followed by a close up of a single trumpet. Each musician is shown in turn, cut to the rhythm of the music, before finally revealing both trumpet players together.

Commentary: Next you are going to hear the trombones, and an instrument which so often plays with them – the tuba.

Medium shot of Sargent conducting. Close up of three trombone bells. The camera tracks back diagonally, then swings onto the tuba. Track back to reveal the three trombones and the tubas.

Commentary: Then there are the percussion instruments. We start with the kettle drums or tympani as they are called. The bass drum and cymbals. The tambourine and the triangle. The side drum and the Chinese block. The xylophone. The castanets and the gong. And before they all play together – the whip.

Each of the instruments described are played in turn.

Medium close up of Sargent as he turns to the camera and speaks.

Sargent: Having taken the orchestra to pieces we must put it together again, so here's the Fugue – in a Fugue each instrument plays the same tune but not all at the same time - they come in one after another. First each member of the woodwind family, then each section of the strings, and onto the brass and the percussion. At the end you will hear Purcell's grand tune played on the brass while the rest of the orchestra continue to play Britten's Fugue. So now we have again all the instruments blowing, scraping or banging – each making his own

individual sound but all blending together to make the noble music of the full symphony orchestra.

The camera tracks left to right along the woodwind.

A crane shot pans from the first and second violins to the violas, cellos, basses and onto the harp.

Crane shot starting on the horns and panning along the back row of instruments. As it approaches the tuba, it tracks back.

Long shot of the whole orchestra.

The whole of the last piece from the beginning of the Fugue to the end of the tune is played through.

Title: The End

**Appendix Three: Table 1: The Ministry of Education Visual unit  
Production Experiment and its Constituent Films.**



**Table 1. The Ministry of Education Visual unit Production Experiment and its Constituent Films**

Visual Unit	Title	Date	Length (m:s)	Colour /B&W	Sound /silent
Local Studies	Local Studies: Near Home	1947	23:50	B&W	Sound
	Local Studies: Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge	1945	11:58	B&W	Silent
	Part 1: Making the Mould		04:38		
	Part 2: Melting and Converting		04:26		
	Part 3: Pouring and Finishing		02:54		
	Milk From Grange Hill Farm	1945	11:30	B&W	Silent
	Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham	1945	03:58	B&W	Silent
Houses In History The Beginning of History	Houses in History	1946	21:00	B&W	Sound
	The Beginning of History	1946	47:18	B&W	Sound
	Chapter 1		11:07		
	Chapter 2		21:04		
	Chapter 3		15:07		
	Primitive Iron Smelting	1949	11:20	B&W	Silent
	Water Supply	1951	19:05	B&W	Sound
Instruments of the Orchestra	Instruments of the Orchestra	1946	20:08	B&W	Sound
	Science in the Orchestra	1950	33:56	B&W	Sound
	Part 1: Hearing the Orchestra		12:28		
	Part 2: Exploring the Instruments		11:20		
	Part 3: Looking at Sounds		10:08		
The History Of Writing	The History of Writing	1947	29:08	B&W	Sound
	Part 1		07:38		
	Part 2		08:05		
	Part 3		06:17		
	Part 4		07:08		
The Story of Printing	The Story of Printing	1948	44:30	B&W	Sound
	The Story of Papermaking	1948	15:14	B&W	Sound
England's Wealth From Wool	England's Wealth From Wool	1948	34:15	B&W	Sound
	Part 1: How the Wool Trade Began and Brought Wealth to England in the Middle Ages		11:30		
	Part 2: How England Grew Rich by Making Cloth From Wool		13:30		
	Part 3: How Machines Made Tremendous Changes in the Cloth Industry		09:15		
	The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn	1948	12:40	B&W	Silent
	The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth	1948	18:58	B&W	Silent



**Appendix Four: Table 2: Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Visual  
Unit Films.**





**Table 2: Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Visual Unit Films**

Film/s [visual unit]	Formal Structure	Nonfiction Mode	Voice	Predominant Stylistic Conventions			
				Cinematography	Sound	Editing	Mise-en-Scène
THE HISTORY OF WRITING [6]; THE STORY OF PRINTING [7]; THE STORY OF PAPERMAKING [7]; ENGLAND'S WEALTH FROM WOOL [8]; WATER SUPPLY [4]	Narrative. Episodic. Chronological	Expository	Authoritative. Didactic.	Illustrative. Distanced. Static. Perceptual realism. Used to maintain clarity of argument.	Non-diegetic. Voiceover commentary as primary means of conveying information. Direct address.	Evidentiary.	Real world settings. Dramatic reconstructions. Maps, diagrams.
THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY [2]; HOUSES IN HISTORY [3]	Non-narrative. Chronological	Expository.	Authoritative Subjective.	Illustrative. Distanced. Use of perceptual realism.	Non-diegetic. Commentary as primary means of conveying information. Direct address.	Evidentiary.	Real world settings.
LOCAL STUDIES: NEAR HOME [1]	Narrative. Plot-driven.	Expository / fictionalisation	Conspiratorial, inclusive, humorous.	Used for narrative clarity. Continuity	Diegetic: dialogue, music, effects. Non-diegetic voiceover narration. Direct address.	Continuity	Real world settings and 'characters'. Fictional characters.
INSTRUMENTS OF THE ORCHESTRA [5]	Non-narrative. Illustrative.	Performative.	Inclusive, humorous.	High redundancy of visuals. Dominant style. Artistic use of camera.	Diegetic: onscreen dialogue and music. Off-screen narration. Direct address.	Poetic, matched to music.	Minimal staging within constructed set. Real world 'characters' and 'props'.

**Table 2: Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Visual Unit Films**

Film/s [visual unit]	Formal Structure	Nonfiction Mode	Voice	Predominant Stylistic Conventions			
				Cinematography	Sound	Editing	Mise-en-Scène
SCIENCE IN THE ORCHESTRA [5]	Non-narrative. Instructional.	Reflexive.	Self-conscious, humorous, inclusive.	Visual clarity of information.	Diegetic: onscreen music, dialogue, effects. Off-screen narration by central protagonist.	Organised around clarity of information/explanation.	Scientific apparatus, diagrams and models. Real world 'characters' and 'props' within constructed set. Onscreen 'audience'.
MILK FROM GRANGE HILL FARM [1]; PRIMITIVE IRON SMELTING [3]; CASTING IN STEEL AT WILSON'S FORGE [1]	Narrative. Instructional.	Poetic.	Authoritative. Didactic.	High level of redundancy. Poetic.	Silent. Use of intertitles.	Continuity	Real world settings and characters.
THE MAKING OF WOOLLEN AND WORSTED YARN [8]; THE MAKING OF WOOLLEN AND WORSTED CLOTH [8]; CINE PANORAMA OF SOUTH-WEST COUNTY DURHAM [1]	Non-narrative. Instructional	Observational.	Informational. Authoritative.	Illustrative. Static.	Silent. Use of intertitles.	Evidentiary.	Real demonstrations in 'authentic' settings.

## Filmography

*Blade Runner* (1982) Directed by Ridley Scott. Los Angeles, Warner Bros. Pictures [Film: 35mm].

*Bowling for Columbine* (2002) Directed by Michael Moore. London, Momentum Pictures [DVD].

Brass Eye, 2. (2001) *Paedophilia*. London, Channel 4, 26th July [video: VHS]

*Bridges-Go-Round* (1958) Directed by Shirley Clarke. New York, Shirley Clarke [Film: 16mm].

*Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009) Directed by Michael Moore. Beverly Hills, California, Overture Films [Film: 35mm].

*Casting in Steel at Wilson's Forge* (1949) Directed by R.K. Neilson-Baxter. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*Cine Panorama of South-West County Durham* (1949) Directed by Kay Mander. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*England's Wealth From Wool* (1948) Directed by J.B. Napier-Bell. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) Directed by Michael Moore. Santa Monica, California, Lionsgate Films [Film: 35mm].

*Houses in History* (1946) Directed by H.M. Nieter. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*Instruments of the Orchestra* (1946) Directed by Muir Mathieson. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*Local Studies: Near Home* (1947) Directed by Kay Mander. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*London Can Take It* (1940) Directed by Humphrey Jennings. London, Ministry of Information [Film: 35mm].

*Lost in La Mancha* (2002) Directed by Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe. London, Optimum Releasing [Film: 35mm].

*Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) Directed by Dziga Vertov. Odesa, Ukraine, VUFKU [Film: 35mm].

*March of the Penguins* (2005) Directed by Luc Jacquet. Los Angeles, Warner Independent Pictures [Film: 35mm].

*Milk From Grange Hill Farm* (1945) Directed by Basic Films. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*Moana* (1926) Directed by Robert J. Flaherty. Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures [Film: 35mm].

*Nanook of the North* (1922) Directed by Robert J. Flaherty. Paris, Revillon Frères [Film: 35mm].

*Primitive Iron Smelting* (1949) Directed by Unknown. Produced by Robert Kinston-Davies. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*Pulp Fiction* (1994) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Los Angeles, Miramax Films [Film: 35mm].

*Roger & Me* (1989) Directed by Michael Moore. Los Angeles: Warner Bros [Film: 35mm].

*Science in the Orchestra* (1950) Directed by Alex Strasser. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*Sicko* (2007) Directed by Michael Moore. Santa Monica, Lions Gate Films [Film: 35mm].

*The Assassination of Richard Nixon* (2004) Directed by Niels Mueller. Berlin, Senator International [Film: 35mm].

*The Beginning of History* (1946) Directed by Graham Wallace. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*The History of Writing* (1947) Directed by John Martin-Jones. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*The Making of Woollen and Worsted Cloth* (1948) Directed by Basic Films. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*The Making of Woollen and Worsted Yarn* (1948) Directed by Basic Films. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 16mm].

*The Story of Papermaking* (1948) Directed by Peter Bradford. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*The Story of Printing* (1948) Directed by Peter Bradford. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*This is Spinal Tap* (1984) Directed by Rob Reiner. Los Angeles, Embassy Pictures Corporation [Film: 35mm].

*Water Supply* (1951) Directed by Andrew Buchanan. London, Ministry of Education [Film: 35mm].

*We Were Here* (2011) Directed by David Weissman and Bill Weber. New York,  
Red Flag Productions [Film: 35mm].

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