

Ambiguous Ambitions: The Social, Cultural and Visual Legacies of Granada Television

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis focuses on the visual, social and cultural legacies of the Granada Television Company, which quickly gained traction after it emerged in 1956, for its innovative programming and strong identification with the North of England. The work draws upon a range of archival material, as well as new oral history interviews, to map how Granada became known as the most radical and socially conscious of the commercial television companies established in Post-war Britain. Covering a period from the 1950s to 1990s, it attends to the significant legacies of the company's regional and cultural identity but complicates its reputation for 'difference' by historicising Granada through underexplored themes including gender, 'race', via its relationship to the visual arts in Britain, and via its representation of young people in its earliest years. The work also reflects on the more ambiguous ways the company was experienced by former employees, and by doing so, broadens an understanding of Granada's history, especially its legacies as a cultural powerhouse.

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Introduction

From its first broadcast, on the 3rd of May 1956, Granada Television emerged as the leading commercial television station of its day and created programmes which conveyed its commitment to rigorous journalism, regional writing and to a political and cultural output that sought to puncture the hegemonic London-centric media. The longevity of Granada's most successful drama and current affairs series, *Coronation Street* (1960 —) *World in Action* (1963-1998), and *What the Papers Say* (1956 — 2008), is testament to the company's early ambition to evince its credentials as a broadcaster committed to high quality programming, but also one that didn't shy away from commercial success and durability. Granada's headquarters in Manchester, built in the mid-1950s, was the earliest commercial building to be constructed in the city following the Second World War. Filled with paintings by local and international artists such as Sheila Fell, John Hoyland, Diego Rivera, and Francis Bacon, for many former employees, Granada's building was experienced as deeply enlivening place to work.

There has been minimal scholarly work on Granada's history and significance or on its social, cultural and visual legacies. But from its earliest inception Granada would project an anti-establishment image, which was also predicated on a narrative of exceptionalism. This narrative was reinforced in retrospectives and conferences that celebrated Granada's 60th anniversary in 2016, in which it was praised for its

‘difference’.¹ The following work broadens an understanding of the company to nuance and appraise how it sought to innovate political programming in its early history; how it refracted a regional identity via its significant modern art collection, and how it was experienced as a simultaneously ambiguous, frustrating, and stimulating place to work by former employees.

This introduction begins by giving an overview of the literature on Granada’s cultural identity and the archival difficulties this research has overcome. It maps the historical material I have collected to counter difficulties in accessing Granada’s institutional records. I also explore how histories of the company have been inflected with a narrative of exceptionalism and introduce Granada’s ‘difference’ from other commercial companies which commenced in the same period. This is developed in Chapter 1, which traces how Granada gained its reputation for provocative programming.

Histories of Granada have predominantly been drawn from personal memoirs written by those who held senior positions. This way of remembering, and of telling the company’s

¹ *Granadaland Conference: Celebrating 60 Years of Granada Television*, Manchester Metropolitan University, 7 May 2016, https://issuu.com/granadaland4/docs/12173_a5_granada_brochurev3 [accessed 13 December 2024]; *The Granada Difference: From the North*, British Film Institute, London, 2 October 2016.

history, was reinforced by two events in 2016. One was a celebration for its 60th anniversary held at Manchester Metropolitan University in May 2016 where accounts of Granada were almost all given from the perspective of former executives, directors of programmes or producers.² The other was at the British Film Institute (BFI) in October 2016, an event titled, 'The Granada Difference: From the North', where three former employees, one former programme director, and two former producers, were all invited to speak, but where the complexities of Granada's legacies in relation to gender or 'race' received minimal attention.

The media historian James Curran has observed that institutional histories too often leave 'the wider setting of society as a shadowy background' and to avoid this pitfall, the thesis explores how Granada was imbricated and responded to key debates over a period of the 1950s to 1990s.³ Helen Wheatley has claimed that 'thinking beyond the disciplinary boundaries of "television history" or "broadcasting history" or "media history" might bring the medium's history to new and interesting light', and while this thesis deploys historical methods, the lack of access to institutional records has meant

² See *Granadaland Conference*.

³ James Curran, 'Narratives of Media History Revisited', in *Narrating Media History*, ed. Michael Bailey (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

that it utilises a range of material to consider Granada's significant social and cultural legacies.⁴

⁴ Helen Wheatley, ed., *Re-Viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 5; see also: Michael Bailey, ed., *Narrating Media History* (London: Routledge, 2009); Andreas Flickers and Catherine Johnson, eds, *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach* (London: Routledge, 2012).

Literature review

The secondary literature on Granada television constitutes scholarly and popular histories, and an important research task has been to identify how memoirs, biographies, autobiographies and popular studies have shaped academic studies. These have focused on the way Granada's identity was closely associated with its founder, Sidney Bernstein, who figures centrally in the company's 'origin stories'.

Sidney Bernstein is presented as Granada's centre of gravity. Memories of him are admiring and respectful but also, at times, verge on hagiography. Former producer, Marjorie Giles, who worked at Granada from 1956 to 1983, described him as 'the architect who had supplied the foundations on which we had built our dreams and hopes'.¹ The two main published sources which are often cited in scholarly work on the company are a biography of Bernstein by his goddaughter, Caroline Moorehead, published in 1984, and a memoir by its former company chairman, Denis Forman,

¹ Marjorie Giles, *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Marjorie Giles and Michael Cox (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 42. See also Ray Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died: The Rise and Fall of ITV* (Leicester: Matador, 2008), p. 2.

published in 1997.² These books, written over a decade apart, offer very different portraits. Moorehead's biography is largely reverential while that by Forman, a close colleague of Bernstein's, is far more equivocal. Moorehead's work was an authorised version of Bernstein's life, and she suggests that, as a very private man who did not enjoy personal scrutiny, Bernstein was more comfortable with her; as she states: 'as the daughter of old-friends, my intrusions probably seemed less alarming'.³ Denis Forman disputes Moorehead's account of Bernstein's life, writing that 'the facts as I came to know them do not always agree with the authorised version of Sidney's life which was current within Granada and was later enshrined in Caroline Moorehead's biography'.⁴ Both books continually figure in academic and non-academic work on Granada and demonstrate how voices from 'the top' still occupy a fundamental space in the telling of its history.⁵

² Caroline Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984); Denis Forman, *Persona Granada: Some Memories of Sidney Bernstein and the Early Days of Independent Television* (London: André Deutsch, 1997).

³ Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein*, p. xii.

⁴ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 159.

⁵ See, for instance, Lez Cooke, 'Granada Television', in *A Sense of Place: Regional British Television Drama: 1956–1982* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) and Julia

My assessment of Bernstein's contribution to Granada Television's culture and identity over many decades, which is explored extensively in Chapter 1, owes much to Jonathan Bignell's article on the dominance and precariousness of 'origin stories' and myth-making in the writing of commercial television history (particularly in relation to ATV founder Lew Grade), where founder(s) too often become conflated with the companies they created.⁶ Bignell writes how the 'weave of historiographic writing in its multiple forms can be understood as a multi-dimensional space in which competing and complementary narratives overlap, coalesce and leave gaps'.⁷ This has been helpful in examining and contextualising these 'gaps' or absences in the company's history, and for exploring more diverse recollections and providing a 'multi-dimensional' understanding of the company's complex and frequently contradictory corporate culture.

Hallam's introduction to *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

⁶ Jonathan Bignell, 'And the Rest Is History: Lew Grade, Creation Narratives and Television Historiography', in *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years*, ed. Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), p. 68.

⁷ Bignell, 'And the Rest Is History', p. 68.

One of the aims of this thesis is to interrogate Granada's 'difference,' which is often written about in relation to the company and is something I explore in Chapter 1 to consider the extent to which this was perpetuated by the company or was, in fact, identified by other broadcasters.⁸ Given the centrality of the BBC in the history of the British media and academic studies about television, it has been necessary to analyse histories of the corporation to understand how Granada was viewed externally, and how and why it came to be perceived as the BBC's main rival in the early period of commercial television.

The most extensive institutional history on the BBC comes from Asa Briggs, whose five volumes on the BBC — the first published in 1961 and the last in 1995 — chart the shifts in attitude, legislation and politics at the corporation and how they affected its broadcasting output. Based on BBC archival material, they offer contemporaneous accounts from newspapers and periodicals as well as records from parliamentary debates. Briggs' account of the emergence of commercial television was, he writes: 'focused on what at the time was thought, said, and done about commercial television and its prospects, not on what has been thought, said and done since'.⁹ His last two

⁸ *The Granada Difference: From the North*, British Film Institute, London, 2 October 2016.

⁹ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, volume 4, *Sound and Vision 1945–1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 826.

volumes have been particularly useful for examining how Granada gained a reputation for being ‘more intrepid’ than other commercial companies.¹⁰

Jean Seaton’s later work on the BBC, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation 1974–1987* (again drawing on the BBC’s institutional records), supports Briggs’ findings that, as far as the BBC was concerned, Granada was ‘the only commercial company that really frightened it’.¹¹ Other authoritative studies of ‘independent television’ by Bernard Sendall (1982; 1983) and Jeremy Potter (1989; 1990) explore shifts in attitude, legislation and politics as they affected commercial broadcasting.¹² They are notable for their emphases on parliamentary processes and changes in television policy rather than for their analytical strength, since they are embedded in the institutional records of the Independent Television Authority, which governed commercial television. Sendall’s early

¹⁰ Briggs, *Competition*, p. 238.

¹¹ Jean Seaton. *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation 1974–1987* (London: Profile Books, 2015), p. 271.

¹² Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 1, *Origins and Foundation, 1946–62* (London: Macmillan, 1982); volume 2, *Expansion and Change 1958–68*; Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 3, *Politics and Control* (London: Macmillan, 1990); volume 4, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

histories, for example, were written from an insider's perspective, as he had been Deputy Director General of the Independent Television Authority (ITA) from 1955 to 1977 and was described by Jeremy Potter as somebody who 'could interpret, and often anticipate, the mind of the Authority'.¹³

These publications are important for what they reveal of the regulating body's attitude to Granada Television in relation to its original bid for a franchise, and for comparing Granada to other commercial television companies. They reveal the ITA's early support for and encouragement of the company's application. Sendall writes of Granada's desire to apply for a commercial television licence in 1954 as 'wholly understandable' and particularly attractive since, unlike the other companies, this was not a 'merger'.¹⁴

Potter describes London Weekend Television (LWT) (which was awarded a contract just over ten years after Granada, in 1967) as being closest to it in its ambitions as a broadcaster and for its 'high-minded' approach to programming.¹⁵ The ITA referred to the

¹³ Potter, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Sendall, *Origins and Foundation, 1946–62*, p. 73.

¹⁵ Potter, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p. 41.

LWT as being particularly strong due to the ‘concentration of talent’, whose strengths were in ‘current affairs, the arts, and children’s programmes’.¹⁶

Potter and Sendall’s studies were followed, in 2003, by a collection of reminiscences from former staff entitled *Granada: The First Generation*. Most of the reminiscences in this collection were provided by people in senior posts. Given that that most women worked in secretarial or administrative roles at Granada, as I explore in Chapter 4, there is a masculine bias that gives only a partial account of Granada’s internal corporate culture. In 2005 a further history, *ITV Cultures*, was published. This edited collection of chapters on different aspects of ITV aimed ‘to offer one of the first attempts to think across the history of ITV’ as well as to ‘to establish commercial television as a legitimate object of future enquiry’.¹⁷ It did not claim to provide a ‘comprehensive history’ but focused on ‘overlooked’ histories. Granada was omitted, although the editors observed how ‘the omissions’ were ‘as important as the chapters themselves for indicating future areas of research’.¹⁸ The book’s most prescient chapters for this thesis were Jonathan Bignell’s work on Lew Grade, and Rob Allen’s work on London Weekend Television. Allen, who was a producer at LWT in the 1980s, writes that, within its culture, ‘industry awards

¹⁶ Potter, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p. 68.

¹⁷ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*, p. 7.

¹⁸ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*, p. 8.

such as BAFTAS and the Prix Italia, were seen as particular identifiers of quality; ratings were not so highly considered'.¹⁹ While useful for understanding the cultural ambitions of commercial broadcasters, Allen's chapter is another reminder of how those who inhabited senior roles, such as producers, have often been primary sources in the histories of commercial television.

Other relevant works published in the 2000s include books on specific iconic series such as *Seven Up*²⁰ and *World in Action*.²¹ Rather than focusing on the day-to-day running of the company, these studies highlight the importance to Granada's identity of its current affairs output, *World in Action*. This current affairs series is widely acknowledged to have made a pivotal contribution to Granada's reputation for fearless, impactful and provocative programming. As Potter writes: 'Within ITV the most expert practitioners of the adventurous committed programme were to be found in Granada's *World in Action*

¹⁹ Rod Allen, 'London Weekend Television in the 1980s: Programmes, Public Service Obligations, Financial Incentives', in *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years*, edited by Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), p. 110.

²⁰ Stella Bruzzi, *Seven Up* (London: British Film Institute, 2007).

²¹ Peter Godard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, *Public Issue Television: World in Action 1963 – 1993* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

team [...] no single ITV series was the occasion of more discussion between Authority and company'.²² Nonetheless, Godard, Corner and Richardson's work reproduces the masculinist producer-focused histories that this thesis critiques, with no former women producers or directors interviewed for their book.

Cultural histories of Granada

The thesis highlights aspects of the visual, social and cultural history of Granada to draw out more complex themes in relation to its history and identity. Briggs acknowledged the role of cultural history in the preface to his work, *Competition*, where he writes: 'having myself been engrossed in the BBC archives, I am as well aware at the end of my researches as I was at the beginning that there is a social and cultural dimension [...] to this volume as a whole, a dimension which, while not missing in the earlier volumes, acquired a greater depth during the 1950s and the 1960s'.²³

The thesis argues that concentrating on this 'social and cultural' dimension allows a more complex understanding of a duality in Granada's legacy. The company is often celebrated for its cultural identification with 'the North', and Granada would come to be strongly identified with the city of Manchester. However, Turnock and Johnson have

²² Potter, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p.116.

²³ Briggs. *Competition*, p. xx.

described the underlying prosaic and technical necessities that influenced the choice of location of each new ITV network and have suggested that these decisions owed more to where the transmitters themselves were situated 'rather than on the assessment of cultural regions.'²⁴ Chapter 1 explores the literature on Granada's cultural identity and output, and how the company interpreted and represented region and class, especially during its embryonic years as a broadcaster.

The Granada archive

Unlike the BBC, which has one of the largest broadcast archives in the world, the early commercial television companies have left relatively few archives. Significantly, there was no remit for commercial companies to retain material for archiving purposes until the Broadcasting Act of 1981, and this has inevitably affected what can, and has been, written on commercial television history, including Granada.²⁵

The ITV archive, based in Leeds is not open to the public and grants only limited access to researchers. However, more recently (as of Summer 2023) it is currently on the move

²⁴ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*, p. 7.

²⁵ Jamie Medhurst, 'Piecing Together "Mammon's Television": A Case Study in Historical Television Research', in *Re-Viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. Helen Wheatley (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 136.

to the John Rylands Library in Manchester as part of its British Pop Archive (BPA) collection.

The fragmented nature of Granada's institutional records adds to the complexity of writing an institutional history, which is why, to some extent, the pervasiveness of 'totemic' figures in ITV's history are still so influential. While the ITV archive does, in fact, hold a substantial amount of material on Granada, including records of its previous theatre and cinema franchise, besides some of Sidney Bernstein's personal archive, this is nonetheless fragmentary, often making it necessary for television studies to incorporate various methodological approaches, as suggested by John Corner's assessment of the medium as a 'multi-faceted object of study'.²⁶ Indeed, Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock argue that any study of ITV is contingent on seeing 'the impossibility of providing a comprehensive history', suggesting that this can be overcome and made an asset by incorporating several methodological approaches, in order to express the 'plural' identity of ITV.²⁷

The fragmented nature of the Granada material in the ITV archive is compounded by the tightly controlled nature of archive visits. Gaining access to the Granada archive via ITV

²⁶ John Corner, 'Finding Data, Reading Patterns, Telling Stories in Television Historiography', *Media, Culture & Society*, 25 (2003), p. 273.

²⁷ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*, p. 7.

was a lengthy process that ended when all access was stopped in 2018, due to lack of facilities for researchers and changes in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws which came into effect the same year. As a result, the Broadcasting History Collection at the University of Bournemouth played a vital part in this thesis, since this is where the archives of the Independent Television Authority (ITA) and now the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) are held and are easily accessible for researchers.

The Broadcasting History Collection retains documents that include committee minutes and papers, correspondence between former Director-Generals of the ITA and programme contractors, and policy files and financial records. Material in relation to the very early history of the company, specifically between 1954 and 1955, reveals the answers that Granada gave in response to a questionnaire drawn up by the ITA for prospective contractors in 1954, enquiring about their ability to provide programming, facilities and funds to cover the costs of running such a station. These evince how, in this early period, Granada conceptualised television as an extension of its background in the cinema and theatre industry, of which it had an extremely good reputation, and is

explored in Chapter 1.²⁸ The application placed emphasis on wanting to provide ‘versatility’ in its programme output but also sought to provide a range of entertainment including ‘high art’, such as ballet and opera. Emphasis was also placed on Sidney Bernstein’s previous partnership with Alfred Hitchcock, with whom he jointly ran the production company *Transatlantic Pictures*, founded in 1946. It suggests that Granada’s links with the film industry were viewed favourably by the ITA when they first sought a television franchise.

BBC archives

The BBC archives are easier and more straightforward to access. They are important in illustrating how the corporation regarded the emergence of commercial television companies. Indeed, in his history of commercial television, *Competition*, Asa Briggs notes, for example, how the BBC Archive kept a file entitled ‘The Competitor’ (1955) that was ‘quick to catch what could be gleaned by way of gossip concerning the build-up and plans of the new companies’.²⁹ It was also ‘crammed with colourful information that has

²⁸ ‘Granada Contract 1954’, Independent Television Authority, Independent Broadcasting Authority Archives and Cable Authority Archives, University of Bournemouth. IA 2462 – IA 2464.

²⁹ Briggs, *Competition*, p. 8.

now long been forgotten'.³⁰ A notable discovery from the BBC archives during this research was the extent to which Granada was, from the outset, keen to create a legacy and its own archive of material. Several files feature the voice of Granada's first archivist Janet Wadsworth, who was also the only daughter of A.P. Wadsworth, former editor of the *Manchester Guardian*.³¹ Janet Wadsworth's name as the company's archivist is not mentioned in any of the key texts on Granada, although historian Bernard Sendall does describe her role in assisting with Granada's religious programming, commenting that: 'Granada had their invaluable Janet Wadsworth', which suggests how her significance was recognised by those outside the company.³²

Elizabeth Shepard has commented how: 'If the archivist does not speak, then other archival narratives are suppressed, confined to what Gérard Genette (1997) called the "paratext" [...] archivists become footnotes, obscure, shadowy, hidden, and elusive, almost invisible, silent, not apparent and lacking materiality.'³³ Wadsworth's presence

³⁰ Briggs, *Competition*, p. 8.

³¹ A.P. Wadsworth edited the *Manchester Guardian* from 1944 to 1956.

³² Sendall, *Origins and Foundation*, p. 360.

³³ Elizabeth Shepard, 'Hidden Voices in the Archives: Pioneering Woman Archivists in Early 20th-century England', in *Engaging with Records and Archives: Histories and*

and role at Granada is opaque in literature on the company, although the origins of her post are visible in the BBC archives. In August 1960, for example, she wrote to the BBC's Controller of Television, Kenneth Adams, telling him that she had recently been appointed to the staff of Granada and described her responsibilities as being 'in charge of organising the reference library and keeping records about programmes and the company'.³⁴ Wadsworth continued that she was keen to learn how to build a referencing system for the material: 'I am coping with the problem of how to keep a visual and written record of the programmes we produce. I was wondering whether anyone at the BBC could give me help or advice about this. You have been at it all so much longer and must have come up against these problems'.³⁵

There is no evidence of Kenneth Adams' letter in response to Wadsworth, but these records are important in conveying Granada's clear intention for its history to be remembered, which contrasts with the lack of archive material that is currently accessible. While Wadsworth's name is absent from any literature on Granada, her

Theories, ed. Fioella Foscarini, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak and Gillian Oliver (London: Facet Publishing, 2016), p. 87.

³⁴ BBC Caversham Archives. 'Janet Wadsworth to Kenneth Adam, 4th August, 1960' in 'Commercial Television. Granada TV Network LTD. File 2. 1959- 1968'. T36/19/2.

³⁵ BBC Caversham Archives. 'Janet Wadsworth to Kenneth Adam, 4th August, 1960'.

letter, written just four years after the company began broadcasting, conveys its early efforts to create a comprehensive and thorough archive for the future.

Beyond the institutional archive

Research for this thesis has followed the lines of other media historians such as Jamie Medhurst who, for his study of the early history of the Welsh commercial television station Teledu Cymru, sought to collect his own textual material to counterbalance the paucity of archival material on the company.³⁶ Written and photographic records collected during my own research have complemented material identified from visits to the established archives mentioned earlier. These include a programme index for 1956–1972, which lists all programmes, staff and their roles at the company; unpublished photographic material relating to *World in Action*, shared after an interview with a former employee who worked on its first series; and two volumes of an unpublished oral history on the company written, in 1974, by the photographer, filmmaker, editor and former Granada employee, Noel Chanan.

Chanan's work has been of particular significance to this study, as it contains so much relevant information and detail on the early history of Granada that is otherwise inaccessible. Denis Forman, chair of Granada Television between 1974 and 1987, and

³⁶ Jamie Medhurst, 'Piecing Together "Mammon's Television"', pp. 127–147.

Deputy Chair of the Granada Group from 1984 to 1990, used some of Chanan's material in his own memoir, which he described as 'gold dust for any would-be historian of Granada'.³⁷ Chanan's original material has never been published.

Chanan's history

Noel Chanan was employed as a film editor at Granada between 1974 and 1981, having previously been at the BBC in Bristol and London, where he began his career as a trainee assistant film editor.³⁸ I contacted him early on in my research via a website relating to his research and his monograph on the Welsh photographer, John Dillwyn Llewelyn, to ask if he still had a copy of his work on Granada Television.

Chanan interviewed several key Granada personnel, including Sidney Bernstein and executives such as Denis Forman, former public relations manager, Jim Phoenix, as well as employees responsible for creating Granada's early current affairs and drama series. Chanan graciously agreed that I could retrieve and borrow both volumes of his oral history on condition that I did so in person, to ensure they were safely looked after and transported back to Manchester. This afforded me two visits to his home in Somerset to

³⁷ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 4.

³⁸ Noel Chanan, interviewed by Isabel Taube, Somerset, 30 September 2016.

collect and return each volume, where I interviewed him both times on the compiling of his history, and on his memories of working for the company.

Noel Chanan believed only two copies of his history were ever produced: one was in his possession and the other retained by Denis Forman. Nonetheless, in their work on *World in Action*, Peter Goddard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, refer to Chanan's history, particularly in relation to verbatim interviews made about the early political series including *Under Fire* (where politicians and figures of authority were questioned by a studio audience made up of 'ordinary people'), and for insights into the making of early *World in Action* programmes.³⁹

My interviews with Noel Chanan played an important part in developing my understanding of how Granada endeavoured to tell its history. He informed me that his was not the first to attempt to write a history of the company, mentioning two previous ones; the first of which was by a woman (whose name he was unfortunately unable to remember) and the other by Duncan Crow, a journalist and former Granada employee who published two books on *World in Action* in the early 1960s. Both of these histories

³⁹ Peter Goddard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, *Public Issue Television: World in Action 1963–1993* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 19.

were vetoed by Sidney Bernstein and Chanan's own work eventually suffered the same fate.

However, it is significant that Granada chose to commission a history based on oral sources, rather than employ an 'official historian' as the BBC had done with Asa Briggs. Chanan told me how his own history was inspired by Henry Mayhew's work *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1861, and described by Mayhew as 'a cyclopaedia' of London Street life. It was also influenced by filmmaker Midge Mackenzie, a good friend of Chanan's, who wrote a book to accompany a series she had directed on the suffragettes, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, for BBC Two, in 1975. Chanan recalled how the book had included 'bits of interview, radio reports [which] was visually interesting and lively', and as a tribute to the voices and people he interviewed, he had wanted to name his own history: 'Granada Television Pioneers Vox Pop'.

Chanan's work adopted something of a photo-montage approach, which incorporated written transcripts of his interviews placed next to newspaper articles and extracts from television histories charting key moments in the company's development. However, he suggested that his own history was eventually vetoed for 'aesthetic reasons' as well as for its content. He was told that when the book was sent to the designer, it did not 'fit' with how a history of Granada should 'look'.⁴⁰ His revelations have helped with my

⁴⁰ Noel Chanan, interviewed by Isabel Taube, 30 September 2016.

understanding of the company's preoccupations with cultivating a particular 'aesthetic' and image, while also, arguably, retaining a tight control over its official narrative.⁴¹

Many of Chanan's interviews, though not all, were with Bernstein and Forman, or with other senior personnel. As a result, his work is more a 'top-down' history of the company. Nevertheless, for future historians, especially those interested in the creation of Granada's early drama series, this is, as Forman commented, a vital document. There are interviews with influential figures such as Derek Granger, who would produce and create key programming for Granada. And one section includes an account by Pauline Shaw, one of the earliest women employed to work at the company on her experiences of listening to the singer Billie Holiday perform for Granada's light entertainment programme *Chelsea at Nine* (1957-1960) in 1959, and the singer's last appearance on television. However, some material from Chanan's history has been incorporated in Chapter 2, for the texture it conveys of Granada's emergence as a broadcaster, and how this was experienced by its earliest employees.

Visual material

In developing alternative ways of telling and examining Granada's history it was also necessary to consider the company's relationship to, and patronage of, the visual arts in

⁴¹ Noel Chanan, interviewed by Isabel Taube, 30 September 2016.

Britain from the 1950s to 1980s. In this, I drew upon exhibition catalogues relating to artworks displayed in Granada's offices, which is explored in depth in Chapter 2.

Information provided in the catalogues included the names, titles, illustrations and, in the case of a 1983 catalogue of Granada's artwork, some of the purchasing dates for over sixty artworks which were displayed around the company's building in Manchester. These catalogues trace how Granada's engagement with the visual arts developed from 1960, the date of the earliest purchase in the catalogue, to 1983, the date of the most recent one, and while they provide only a 'selection' of the artwork Granada purchased and displayed, they also provide information on how the artwork was were chosen and by whom at the company. The use of visual material continues in Chapter 4, where photographs provided by three women employees are deployed to explore the societal and corporate pressures which surrounded female appearance at the company. This chapter also considers the salience of photographs in historical research and their potential to evoke new subjects and themes when interviewing research participants.

Oral histories of Granada

As suggested, the relative lack of institutional source material on Granada means that original oral history testimony has played an instructive role in this research and made an essential contribution to overcoming institutional records that are 'absent', fragmentary, scattered or, at times, suppressed. Two former employees of the company, Stephen Kelly and Judith Jones, noted the timely contribution of oral history when they

founded the *Granadaland Oral History Project* in 2013, which was set up with the aim of interviewing a wide range of former Granada employees such as make-up artists, camera operators, secretaries and floor managers, as well as directors and producers. Kelly and Jones have pertinently focused on documenting the earlier years of Granada's history as a means of preserving memories that might otherwise have been lost. Their founding of the *Granadaland Oral History Project* was initiated ten years after the publication of *Granada: The First Generation* (2003), also on the early years of Granada's history. The *Granadaland Oral History Project* usefully departs from this collection in its more focused questioning of interviewees on topics that reflect less favourably on the corporation, such as its problematic coverage of the Toxteth/Liverpool 8 uprisings.⁴² It includes evidence about Granada's 'social conservatism', as noted by former employee Jon Savage.⁴³ Kristyn Gorton and Joanne Garde argue, however, that these projects should be approached with caution and observe that how 'past television is being

⁴² Granada failed to cover the events in time due to a union dispute and was broadly criticised in local and national press coverage. See David Highet, interviewed by Judith Jones, 10 March 2016, <http://www.granadaland.org/david-highet-on-how-granadas-coverage-of-the-toxteth-riots-was-never-screened/> [accessed 20 November 2017].

⁴³ Jon Savage, interviewed by Judith Jones, 1 October 2016, <http://www.granadaland.org/jon-savage-on-granada-politics-and-the-north-west/> [accessed 20 November 2017].

organised, managed, made accessible commercialised and governed by a wide range of stakeholders should be increasingly scrutinised by television scholars'.⁴⁴ For academics working on such material, they advise that priority should be given to 'the more critical questions of analysis of issues of memory (remembering and forgetting) reflecting upon and recollecting employment rights, gender, race, cultural taste, regionalism and commercial pressures'.⁴⁵

Stephen Kelly and Judith Jones do include some highly critical reflections in the memories they have recorded — and the project has provided a helpful initial point of access for this work — although Gorton and Garde are a reminder that limited reliance can be placed on these recollections for deeper understanding of Granada's history or complex response to societal and political change. This thesis has sought to ask its own more critical questions in relation to class, 'race' and gender in Chapters 4 and 5, with new oral history interviews that complicate Granada's historiography.

⁴⁴ Kristyn Gorton and Joanne Garde, *Remembering British Television: Audience, Archive, Industry* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp.172–173.

⁴⁵ Gorton and Garde, *Remembering British Television*, pp. 172–173.

Aims and contribution to knowledge

This thesis originally had three aims: the first was to investigate the origins of the Granada Television Company and to examine how and why it developed a reputation as the leading commercial television station of the day; the second was to scrutinise the company's reputation as a 'radical' broadcaster in connection to its factual programming output, the third was to produce a more complex understanding of the cultural influences on the company and, in turn, to examine how the company influenced movements in arts and culture between the 1950s and 1970s.

The fragmented nature of the archival material meant, however, that these intentions shifted slightly over time and led to a decision to focus on aspects of the company's history which had not previously been considered set within a broadly chronological framework. Exploring how and why Granada developed a reputation as the leading commercial television station of the day, I was initially drawn to a series of programmes that Granada produced on 'taboo' issues of the day between 1957 and 1959, including on euthanasia and homosexuality, since reviews of them appeared to differentiate Granada's programming from other broadcasters. However, what stood out when searching through online newspaper archives and reviews of Granada's output from this time were the excited responses that another early series called *Youth Is Asking* (1956–1959) elicited. Created soon after Granada began broadcasting in 1956, the series ran until 1959 and is the focus of Chapter 2. Janet Thumim writes that: 'there is a dearth of

writing on the history of ITV and its programmes compared to the BBC', and *Youth Is Asking* is an example of a programme that has so far received little attention.⁴⁶

Youth Is Asking involved young people asking questions of well-known politicians of the time. It was adapted from an American series, *Youth Wants to Know*, and raised the possibility of exploring early North American cross-currents and influences on Granada, especially in relation to how such an early regional initiative was shaped through what was originally a US programme.⁴⁷ The series is a salient example of the care which Granada took in its earliest broadcasting to present a serious approach to the problems of contemporary youth in the mid-1950s.

Chapter 3, on Granada's art collection, reflects the third aim, which was to explore the cultural aspirations that shaped Granada and to produce a more complex understanding

⁴⁶ Rob Turnock and Catherine Johnson, 'Histories' *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years*, edited by Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005). pp. 15-36, p. 15

⁴⁷ There were also similarities with the BBC's efforts to democratise the airwaves with youth voices in the 1930s and 1940s, see Melanie Tebbutt, 'Listening to Youth? BBC Youth Broadcasts during the 1930s and the Second World War', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 84 (2017), pp. 214–233.

of the wider influences that contributed to its identity. It explores how Granada's patronage of, and relationship with, the art world between the 1950s to 1990s was expressed through artwork, much of which was on the walls of Granada's headquarters in Deansgate, Manchester. This was a distinctive cultural statement that was often remarked on, and which made the building itself an exciting place in which to work. Chapter 3 argues that Granada's use of contemporary art played a deeply significant, but underexplored role, in how the company sought to distinguish its cultural, regional, and arguably its political identity from the BBC and fellow commercial broadcasters.

Chapter 3 also asks to what extent Granada's interest modern art signified its participation in wider contemporary discussions concerning arts and culture, and whether these interests were expressed in its programme output. This is explored in relation to the work of art critic John Berger, employed by Granada in the early 1960s, and who presented several notable art programmes for the company, although his time at the company has received minimal attention. The chapter moreover explores the tension between the art collection as a symbol of the company's ambitions to democratise art, and its role as a corporate asset and way to promote Granada's national commercial profile.

Chapter 4 turns to the experiences of women who worked in Granada. Oral histories of the company emphasise the unequal hierarchy in the way memory has been recorded; as the historian Janet Thumim has observed, of the eighty-nine contributions of memories to the book, *Granada: The First Twenty-five years* (2003), only eleven are from

women.⁴⁸ There have been attempts to redress this, notably via the *Granadaland Oral History Project*, which also includes interviews with former women employees covering a greater cross section of roles. Yet, of the seventy-five interviews and reminiscences with former employees currently on the site, only twenty-three are interviews with or written by former female employees.⁴⁹ There has also been very little academic work on the experiences of women at Granada and across ITV. In 2013, media historians Melanie Bell and Vicky Ball stated that research into the history of women at ITV, was ‘virtually uncharted territory’.⁵⁰ Their Arts and Humanities funded project, ‘Women’s Work in British Film and Television’ (2014-2017) sought to counteract this, with the project’s aim ‘to record, record and assess the economic and creative contribution women made to British film and television production between 1933 to 1989’.⁵¹ Their project includes

⁴⁸ Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture*, p. 117.

⁴⁹ For complete transcript list, see *Granadaland: An Oral History* website, <https://www.granadaland.org/transcripts/> [accessed 31 October 2023]. It should be added that this is an ongoing project.

⁵⁰ Vicky Ball and Melanie Bell, eds, *Working Women, Women’s Work: Production, History, Gender*, special issue, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10/3 (2013), p. 550.

⁵¹ Melanie Bell, ‘About the Women’s Work research project, Women’s Work in British Film and Television’, <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/womenswork/womens-work-research-project>.

interviews with former Granada employees, Adele Rose, Paula Milne and June Howson, who all worked at the company in the 1960s and 1970s. Rose and Milne were highly successful script writers who wrote for *Coronation Street*, while Howson directed and produced several successful series for Granada including *Coronation Street*, *A Family at War* (1970), and *Crown Court* (1972-2007). Their interviews, which primarily recall the undulations, achievements and contradictions of their creative lives, nevertheless serve to reinforce the absence of their voices in work on Granada's history; Rose, for instance, was the longest serving script writer on *Coronation Street* — she wrote for the series over a period which spanned 1961 to 1998 — yet her recollections do not appear in *Granada: The First Generation*.⁵²

Save from an invaluable work of Gillian Murray, who has explored the powerful visual presence of secretarial workers at the commercial company, Associated Television (ATV) in the 1960s (Murray, 2013), there has been minimal work ITV. The disparate experiences of female employees who worked as secretaries, production assistants, directors and producers at Granada is explored in Chapter 4 to redress this. Moreover, despite its avant-garde reputation, Granada's corporate culture and power structures reflected prevailing attitudes towards gender roles, and interrogating 'women's work'

⁵² Gillian Murray, 'Glamour and Aspiration: Women's Employment and the Establishment of Midlands ATV, 1956–1968', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10/3 (2013).

has provided the opportunity to scrutinise their reputation further in connection to gender and class.

Chapter 5 addresses a later period in the company's evolution from the 1970s to the 1990s, tracing the history of Granada Television in relation to issues of 'race', representation and recruitment. It focuses on the history of Granada's Positive Action Scheme set up by two former producers and directors of Caribbean heritage with the aim of ensuring that more young people from racially minoritised communities could be trained in media production. This chapter contextualises the political, cultural and personal influences that led to the establishment of these schemes, including Granada's response to the 1981 uprisings in Liverpool and Manchester. In 1990 Kobena Mercer called for more research into the history of Black British practitioners in British television, writing that this was: 'more complex and contradictory than our received knowledge would have it', observing too how 'research in this direction is just beginning'.⁵³ In the intervening years there have been a number of groundbreaking studies on the history of 'race' and the media including Beulah Ainley's work *Black Journalists, White Media* (1998), Sarita Malik's work, *Representing Black Britain* (2002), Darrell M. Newton's, *Paving the Empire Road, BBC Television and Black Britons* (2011) and Gavin Schaffer's

⁵³ Kobena Mercer, 'General Introduction', in *The Colour Black: Black Images in British Television*, ed. Therese Daniels and Jane Gerson (London: BFI publishing, 1989), p. 7.

The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television (2014). However, almost nothing has been written on the history of 'race' and recruitment at ITV, and Chapter 5 aims to address this absence on Granada. As with the Chapter 4, it explores the interior working environment at the company 'behind the camera' and investigates how both explicit and implicit racism impacted employees of Caribbean heritage at Granada. Given the absence of detailed underlying structural and statistical material in the company archives – or access to them – the chapter gives primacy to the disparate recollections of the former employees interviewed. This allows the exploration of a spectrum of responses to the social and cultural contexts of the period, providing a deeper, more contextualised understanding of the company's contested corporate identity in relation to 'race', which is not dealt with in histories of Granada.

Chapter 1: Class and region

Introduction

Granada Television was a flagship regional television network established during the first wave of commercial television. Its programming became celebrated internationally for inventiveness and innovation.¹ Granada, which broadcast to North West England and Yorkshire, played a pioneering role in the history of commercial television in Britain between the 1960s and 1990s, after which the Broadcasting Act of 1991 brought about significant changes in the landscape of British television. Granada's legacy as a 'powerful cultural institution' owed much to its celebration of distinctive regional voices and cultural identification with ideas of 'the North.'² This was signified by the location of its headquarters in the city of Manchester, whose tradition of political radicalism

¹ Julia Hallam, 'Introduction: The Development of Commercial TV in Britain', in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). pp. 1-24

² Ewa Mazierska, 'Introduction', ed., *Heading North: The North of England in Film and Television* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2007). p. 16

allied well with the new network's political and cultural intentions, and often uncompromising approach to programming.³

Of the fifteen regional television companies which came on air between 1955 and 1962, Granada was arguably the most regionally distinctive and sensitive to contemporary class and youth issues. Its first transmission, on the 3rd May 1956, was aired on the cusp of an efflorescence of youth cultural movements in Britain, but also an increased 'moral panic' about the influence of new music such as rock 'n' roll.⁴ Granada's early commitment to young people was embodied in programmes such as *Youth is Asking* (1956-1959), explored in Chapter 2, which featured young people from the North West asking questions of leading politicians and cultural figures. As a broadcaster, Granada set itself at the centre of cultural upheavals which were self-consciously anti-establishment and contested class assumptions and traditional social hierarchies. This was encapsulated in one of the company's current affairs series *Under Fire* (1956-1959), created to challenge the regional imbalances of England's southern based political and cultural class. It involved a studio audience, often based in Manchester,

³ Alan Kidd, *Manchester: Making the Modern City*, edited by Alan Kidd and Terry Wyke, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

⁴ Louise Jackson and Angela Bartie, *Policing Youth: Britain 1945-1970*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p.174

connected via live feed to a studio in London where a politician or panel of experts were then interrogated by the audience in Manchester. Alongside *Youth is Asking*, the series contributed to what Thumim has described as Granada's 'energetic' attitude to programme-making in the 1950s, and its fostering of forthright journalistic programmes.⁵

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Granada rode and was influenced by the 'wave' of northern writers who were putting northern England on the cultural map: Shelagh Delaney's 1958 play, *A Taste of Honey*, adapted into a film of the same name in 1961, was a key influence on the company's programme making. Delaney was a 19-year-old working-class woman whose work and writing emphasised a younger person's perspective. Her play, *A Taste of Honey*, which explored issues of illegitimacy, sexuality and 'race', stood out from the 'angry young men' and social realism movement which dominated British cinema at the time.⁶ Delaney's work would be influential on Granada's most successful series' *Coronation Street*. The young actor Tony Warren admitted he had seen the original production of *A Taste of Honey* at Stratford East in

⁵ Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 55.

⁶ Selina Todd, *Tastes of Honey: The Making of Shelagh Delaney and a Cultural Revolution*, (London: Vintage, 2021).

1958, two years before he wrote *Coronation Street*, later to become the company's flagship series.⁷ He had tried to persuade Delaney, then an acquaintance, to join Granada in 1960, and to write for *Coronation Street*, however, she had declined and dismissed what she saw as its clichéd portrayal of the North as 'caps and muffler'.⁸ Nevertheless, the series would revolutionise television with its regional accents and convincing portrayal of working-class women with most of the actors cast for the drama having been recruited via 'scouring the repertory [theatre] companies'.⁹

The series repudiated middle-class conventions around demure forms of femininity that had become influential after the Second World War and usurped traditional ideas of how female characters should behave, speak and dress 'on screen'.¹⁰ This was obvious in the first minutes of its earliest episode, broadcast in December 1960, where the voices and actions of two girls singing and dancing energetically to a local playground rhyme were followed by rapid discussions between Florrie Lindley, new owner of the local corner shop, and Elsie Lappin, its former proprietor, who, while

⁷ Selina Todd, *Tastes of Honey: The Making of Shelagh Delaney and a Cultural Revolution*,

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⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ann Suudi, 'Seeing Stars', *Granada: The First Generation*, pp. 261-263, p. 262.

¹⁰ Richard Dyer, *Coronation Street* (London: BFI publishing, 1981), pp. 4-5.

meting out advice to Lindley on how to run her establishment, vividly sketched the new community she had joined. From the outset, the series would give opportunities to new writers. Salford-born Adele Rose, who started out in the typing-pool at Granada, had never written a television play before she started on the series in 1961. She was encouraged to join the writing team by her good friend, Jack Rosenthal, then working as a writer for the series. Rose was commissioned to write an episode after she pointed out to Harry Kershaw, script-editor and producer on the series, that while *Coronation Street* was about mostly about women's lives in the North, it employed no women writers. Rose would go on to write 400 episodes of the series. She later recalled the audience she had in mind when writing for it were women from the North who were: 'feisty, not down-trodden "Moaning Minne" caricature[s]'.¹¹

Granada's ambitions to support younger writers and new writing was also embodied via one of their earliest experimental ventures *The Younger Generation*, established in 1961. This series was created to transmit eleven new plays on television written by young up-and-coming playwrights. It involved selecting a small 'repertory company' of actors to perform them: two actors involved in the project were the Manchester-born actor John

¹¹ Sue Bradley Interview with Adele Rose, 27 February 2015, *Women's Work in British Film and Television*, [https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/bectu/Oral Histories](https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/bectu/Oral%20Histories), [accessed 19th February 2024]

Thaw and Scottish director, Bill Douglas, who would go on to direct the landmark 1970s film trilogy: *My Childhood*. As Lez Cooke explicates, the series ‘signalled Granada’s ambition to nurture new playwrights’ and was also notable for creating work that was voiced through regional accents and dialects. Granada later went on to establish *The Stables Theatre* in 1968, an experimental theatre company. While the venture was short-lived due to funding constraints, and ended in 1971, it was also unprecedented, as John Wyver comments in his exploration of the theatre: ‘[o]n no other occasion in British television history has a broadcaster owned and operated a theatre company’.¹²

Both Bernard Sendell (1982; 1983) and Jeremy Potter (1989; 1990) have emphasised how different Granada was from the other commercial television companies established in the same period.¹³ Potter described Granada as not only ‘the most

¹² John Wyver, ‘*Sergeant Musgrave’s Dance* and the Politics of Possibility in Two Television Adaptations’, *Critical Studies in Television*, 9/3, 2014, p. 93. Wyver shared with me an early draft of his article on the Stables Theatre and these quotations are from that piece: John Wyver, “‘A bit of a plaything’: Granada’s experiment with the Stables Theatre Company, 1968–1971’, draft for *Screen Plays*, 13 April 2014, University of Westminster.

¹² Wyver, “‘A bit of a plaything’”, p. 1.

¹³ Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 1, *Origins and Foundation, 1946–62* (London: Macmillan, 1982); volume 2, *Expansion and Change 1958–68*; Jeremy

imaginative, innovative, individualistic' of the ITV companies, but also the most infuriating,' a telling phrase which captures something of the company's ability to upend the prevailing status quo.¹⁴ This reputation is hardly surprising, given the character and ambitions of the early company and the programming it created. David Plowright, who joined Granada as researcher in 1957, and later became managing director from 1981 to 1987, before becoming Chairman until 1992, conveyed the excitement of working in a new organisation which was popular, brash and eager to pit itself against prevailing orthodoxies: 'Granada television was the most precocious of the independent television companies formed in the 1950s [...] it was swashbuckling and successful and it was irresistible for the first generation of commercial television programme makers keen to challenge the monopoly of the BBC.'¹⁵ Plowright's use the word 'swashbuckling' conjures the piratical sense of adventure many employees experienced in setting up a new television company against the slower, bureaucratic traditions of the BBC. However, his memories also convey the nostalgic way Granada's

Potter, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 3, *Politics and Control* (London: Macmillan,1990); Volume 4, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980* (London: Macmillan,1990).

¹⁴ Potter, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p. 43.

¹⁵ David Plowright, 'Preface', in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

early history is portrayed: while the company would embody a more cavalier approach to broadcasting, Granada's working environment was often also experienced as contradictory by employees who were not in senior positions, which is explored in Chapter 2.

Sidney Bernstein: class, region and radicalism

For former employees one of the most distinctive aspects of working at Granada was the company's extensive art collection. This is examined in depth in Chapter 3, but it is worth emphasising for the way it shaped and influenced employees' memories of working at the company. The collection became integral to how the company was experienced as an enlivening place to work and owed much to the fundamental contribution that the company's founder, Sidney Bernstein, made to the creative environment of the company.

Asa Briggs regarded Bernstein as 'responsible more than anyone for giving Granada its highly distinctive identity'¹⁶ and others have declared how difficult it is 'to overstate the

¹⁶ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, volume 5, *Competition* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995), p. 185.

extent to which Granada was Bernstein's personal project'.¹⁷ Granada developed such a distinctive reputation that it is easy to forget the somewhat hesitant nature of the company's entry into the world of commercial television.

In 1951, when the Beveridge Committee met to discuss the proposal of a rival commercial channel to the BBC, Sidney Bernstein gave evidence in support of the BBC remaining a monopoly state broadcaster, offering a socialist view of the dangers of entrusting the immense power of television broadcasting to commercial business. His own commercial instincts prevailed, however, with the advent of the Conservative government in the same year which, despite some opposition from Conservative peers and lobbying by the BBC, decided to open up television to competitive tendering.¹⁸ In 1952, Lord Reith, the first Director General of the BBC, declared in the House of Lords that the advent of commercial television would be the death of civilised society.¹⁹ It was a

¹⁷ Mark Oliver Banks, 'Televising the Region: The Production and Consumption of Granadaland' (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 1999), p. 97.

¹⁸ H.H. Wilson, *Pressure Group: The Campaign for Commercial Television in England* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1961), p. 195, p. 220. In October 1953, the Conservative Party Conference passed a motion in favour of commercial television. See: Peter Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p. 231.

¹⁹ Lord Reith in the House of Lords, *Hansard*, vol. 176, col. 1297, 22 May 1952.

bleak view which perhaps encouraged the introduction of checks and balances when in 1954, the *Television Act* set up the Independent Television Authority (ITA) as a neutral overseer of any sort of political partisanship and to guard against programmes being politically biased. When commercial television networks were established in the following year, Sir Kenneth Clark was appointed Chair of the ITA, the body responsible for overseeing the regulation of commercial television, an appointment which caused some relief among those fearful of commercialisation, given his long-standing support for cultural heritage and the arts: Clark was chair from 1954-1957.

In 1954, when the ITA called for applications from television companies, expectations of who would apply were uncertain given the financial risk that was perceived to attach to commercial television. The ITA had anticipated – and encouraged – an application from the *Manchester Guardian*, which had expressed an interest in applying for a franchise but in the end was unable to do so because of financial constraints.²⁰ The decision of Sidney Bernstein's Granada group to tender for a contract was consequently welcome, given its established reputation in the entertainment world, where its cinemas were a byword for scale and grandiosity. The Bernstein brothers, Sidney and Cecil, were southern businessmen whose cinemas, based in London's suburbs, had been established by Bernstein's father, Alexander Bernstein, an émigré

²⁰'Newspaper Applicants Full Opportunity Offered', *The Times*, 24 November 1954, p. 6.

from Latvia, who had started a music hall business in the 1910s. Sidney and Cecil took over the family business in 1922 and transformed the theatres into ‘picture palaces’ under the rubric of Granada: a name based on the architectural splendours of a holiday in Spain, which was intended to evoke the glamour of these new cinemas.²¹ It was an inventive link to a particular place, created to appeal to audiences. It would subsequently be applied rather differently to the creation of Granada television’s strong identification with northern England.

The Bernsteins’ commercially successful cinema chain owed much to its extensiveness. They owned over fifty cinemas at the time of their application. These had the advantage of being independent and not in any form of partnership. According to Sendall, Granada’s desire to apply for a commercial television licence in 1954 was ‘wholly understandable’ because they were not ‘a merger’.²² Moreover, ‘their reputation in the cinema and theatrical world stood high’.²³ The company’s established entertainment background

²¹ This choice can be traced to the opening of a cinema in Dover in 1930, when the company changed its name from ‘The Bernstein Theatres’ to the ‘Granada Theatres’ in order to project a greater sense of ‘gaiety’. Sidney Bernstein quoted in Allen Eyles, *The Granada Theatres* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), p. 29.

²² Sendall, *Origins and Foundation, 1946–62*, p. 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

was an important part of Granada Television's foundation narrative. It helped the application stand out from other commercial companies from the outset, as did the franchise's name and associations with the southern Spanish city — a distinctive brand that contrasted with the abbreviated initials of the other four companies which also gained licenses in 1954 (Associated Rediffusion (A-R), ATV and ABC).

The Bernsteins' long career with a substantial and successful cinema chain made a decisive contribution to the outcome of Granada Television's bid, although it also encountered some difficulties due to Sidney Bernstein's political history as a well-known socialist. In 1925, at the age of twenty-six, Bernstein became one of the youngest Labour councillors in the country.²⁴ In the same year, he was also involved in setting up The Film Society in London with Ivor Montagu, a left-wing intellectual and member of the British Communist Party.²⁵ The Film Society was an influential alternative film 'club' that screened international films in London and brought Soviet political cinema to British film-makers and intellectuals.²⁶ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has

²⁴ Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein*, p. 85.

²⁵ See Russell Campbell, *Codename Intelligentsia: The Life and Times of The Honourable Ivor Montagu, Filmmaker, Communist, Spy* (The History Press, 2018).

²⁶ This included one of the earliest known screenings of *Battleship Potemkin* by the Russian Filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein. Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein*, p. 46.

described these film clubs as an early ‘alternative’ film culture in Britain, contrasting with popular ‘picture houses,’ such as Bernstein’s Granada chain, which ‘were a growing feature of the urban and suburban landscape’.²⁷ The Film Society was ‘decidedly minoritarian’, taking its cue from France and seeing, or imagining ‘the cinema – or “the film” – as art’.²⁸ Bernstein’s pre-war understanding of both art and artists’ films and the commercial cinema world would be important influences on Granada’s subsequent philosophy that the television company ‘should be a provider of culture, high, middle and low.’²⁹ Both traditions contributed to Granada’s subsequent evolution, in which contesting class assumptions in culture became an important mission for the company. Bernstein’s involvement in these ‘minoritarian’ and internationalist artistic spaces did, however, bring him into relationships with ‘alternative’ figures such as Montagu, which made him a figure of interest to the security services and ensured that he was closely watched by MI5. In 1932, he was

²⁷ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘Foundation and Early Years’, in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933–2000*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 14.

²⁸ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘Foundation and Early Years’, in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933–2000*, p. 14.

²⁹ Hennessy, *Having It So Good*, p. 538.

placed under surveillance by MI5, and he remained so until as late as 1944.³⁰ MI5 files, released by the National Archives in 2010, indicate the Security Services' belief that Bernstein was a key financier of the Communist Party, largely because his name was on a list of what were believed to be major donors possessed by Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain between 1929 to 1939 and from 1941 to 1956. (Pollitt also chaired of the Communist Party between 1956 and 1960). This 'proof' was insubstantial, and MI5 admitted that 'a considerable part of our information' was 'drawn from a single source. Not being verifiable, it can, of course, be said not to be "evidence"'.³¹ It was, however, believed to be credible since it came from 'an Englishmen of excellent education and standing'. This insinuated Bernstein's otherness in the eyes of the British establishment, as a second-generation emigrant and Jew who had never attended public school or Oxbridge, an outsider status which contributed to Granada Television's own somewhat iconoclastic reputation.³²

³⁰ The National Archives (TNA), KV2/3221.

³¹ The National Archives (TNA), KV2/3221.

³² The National Archives (TNA), KV2/3221

There is no evidence that Bernstein was ever a Communist, although he was a committed anti-fascist and supporter of the fight against anti-Semitism in the 1930s.³³ His strong socialist sympathies were not forgotten when his company applied for a commercial television franchise. Peter Black, describing the development of independent television, highlighted the strong opposition Granada's application received on political grounds, to the extent that Bernstein's former colleague and friend, Kenneth Clark, the first chair of the Independent Television Authority and 'well known BBC broadcaster' came to his defence.³⁴ As Black recounts:

The right-wing objected to the appointment the left-wing Sidney Bernstein's Granada group, so furiously that Clark received protests at Cabinet level. He pointed out that in a democracy a left-winger could not be downgraded as a citizen, and silence opposition by promising to accept their objections to Bernstein if it could be proved that he was an active, paid-up member of the communist party. Bernstein survived investigation (he and all the other

³³ See Jonathan Miles, *The Nine Lives of Otto Katz*, (London, Transworld Publishers: 2010) p. 297.

³⁴ Black was television critic of the *Daily Mail*, between 1952 and 1973. Peter Black: *The Mirror in The Corner: People's Television* (Hutchinson: London, 1972); Briggs, *Competition*, p. 3.

programme contractors were screened by MI5) but Clark was no longer received in some Tory circles. They rated him as a traitor to their hopes of commercial television as a counter to the Red blast from Lime Grove and Broadcasting House.³⁵

Bernstein's association with the left distinguished Granada's bid from the political background of other licence applicants in the mid-1950s. The first two commercial television contracts were awarded to companies associated with right-wing newspapers. Associated Rediffusion Ltd, a merger between Associated Newspapers and a radio company, received the first contract for commercial television, for the London Franchise, financed by Lord Rothermere, proprietor of *The Daily Mail* and chairman of Associated Newspapers, and the British financier, Harley Drayton.³⁶ The second contract also involved a merger between a newspaper a newspaper owner, the Kemsley-Winnick group, then owner of the *Daily Telegraph*, and Maurice Winnock, an impresario and entertainer, who were awarded weekend contracts for the Midlands and the North, which subsequently became ABC television. Granada was awarded the weekday franchise for the north of England. The final contracts were given to

³⁵ Black, *The Mirror in the Corner*, p. 84.

³⁶ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961–1995), IV (1979), p. 881.

Associated Broadcasting Development Group, a company founded by Norman Collins, formerly the head of the BBC, which later became Associated Television. There were concerns about possible financing by two further conservative newspapers, the *Daily Express* and the *News of the World*. In the end, Associated Television merged with Littler Group, an entertainment company whose managing directors Val Parnell, and later Lew Grade, were well known in the world of entertainment and ‘showbusiness’.³⁷

Efforts to ‘downgrade’ Bernstein and stifle Granada’s application reveal the extent to which sectors of the political establishment perceived the company as an outlier despite, as Sendall argues, there being broad support for it from the Independent Television Authority and an expectation that Granada would receive a licence. The importance of Bernstein’s involvement in socialist politics, and its role in the granting of Granada’s franchise, has often been repeated in histories and narratives of the company.³⁸ Jeremy Potter’s ‘official history’ of ITV (1990) described ‘Granada’s adoption of the role of crusader, its defiance of authority and its restless search for new

³⁷ Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 1, *Origins and Foundation*, 1946–62 (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 73–79.

³⁸ Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 4, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 42.

Peter Black: *The Mirror in The Corner: People’s Television* (Hutchinson: London, 1972).

ideas and opportunities' as patent 'reflections of the socialist ideals of its founding father, Sidney Bernstein'.³⁹ An ethos of challenging the class bias and the status quo underpinned Sidney Bernstein's ambition to develop a distinctive, new kind of broadcasting and informed the motivations of many left-wing writers and broadcasters who were subsequently drawn to the company such as Kurt 'Lew' Lewenhak, John Berger and Gus McDonald. Granada's television debut opened with an acknowledgement of the BBC, a gesture which reflected Bernstein's interest in quality programming. Although like other commercial television franchises, Granada separated itself from the middle-class attitudes of the BBC when it first emerged by not only representing working-class lives on screen but promoting the Americanised values of glamour and conspicuous consumption, which had been so influential in Sidney Bernstein's own career.⁴⁰

Distinct and overt political differences between Sidney Bernstein and the right-leaning sympathies of the other commercial licence applicants have led to a focus on his political beliefs, although Bernstein's dominance in the historiography of Granada also

³⁹ Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 4, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Keith Bartlett, 'British Television in the 1950s; ITV and the Cult of Personality', The International Television Studies Conference, London, 10–12 July, 1986.

owes a great deal to the character and energy with which he pursued his ambitions. In this regard his primacy in Granada's legacy may be likened to that of Lord Reith, the first Director General of the BBC and paternalistic 'father' of broadcasting, who shaped the cultural and social output of the BBC, as encapsulated in the corporation's founding mission statement. The film and television director Herbert Wise described his experiences of Granada in the late 1950s as being 'paternalism personified; personified in the figure of SLB [Sidney Lewis Bernstein]'.⁴¹ Others offered a more nuanced view from which may be inferred their own sense of contribution to the company. The Gay rights campaigner and writer, Peter Wildeblood, employed at Granada as a producer in the 1960s, observed while working at the company that: '[p]eople often seem to talk of Granada as if it were some kind of monolithic structure with Sidney Bernstein sitting on the top taking all the decisions. It absolutely isn't true'.⁴² Indeed, while Sidney Bernstein continued as an imposing figure in the company, Granada developed a strong in-house

⁴¹ Herbert Wise, in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 73–74; Purser, Philip, 'Herbert Wise', obituary, *Guardian*, 12 August 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/aug/12/herbert-wise> [accessed 5 June 2019].

⁴² Marjorie Bilbow, 'Not an art form – thank goodness: Peter Wildeblood Talks to Marjorie Bilbow', *The Stage and Television Today*, 5 November 1964, p. 12.

training programme who's flexible, ad-hoc and improvisational approach to programming contributed to a distinctive broadcasting identity based on experimentation.⁴³

Granada and the creation of a class-based regional identity

Despite Granada's subsequent reputation as the 'leading regional commercial television company,' its initial application to the ITA was for a London franchise. This has received little discussion or detailed exploration in academic work, although it casts light on the efforts the Granada subsequently put into creating its identification with the North as a significant selling-point to new audiences. Franchise agreements were granted in the expectation that companies would produce material which substantially reflected the culture of their region and once he had secured a contract for the North, Bernstein was quick to nail his colours to the mast.⁴⁴ Speaking to a *TV Mirror* journalist during the launch period of Granada in 1956 he observed 'I doubt that we'd have got London even if we'd wanted it, but I want to make it perfectly clear that

⁴³ Michael Apted, 'How Granada TV chairman Sir Denis Forman changed my life', 14 March, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/mar/04/michael-aped-granada-denis-forman>, [accessed 10 February 2024].

⁴⁴ Russell, *Looking North*, p. 189.

Lancashire and Yorkshire were our first choice'.⁴⁵ The region had been chosen because it comprised a 'closely knit indigenous, industrial society; a homogeneous cultural group [...] compare this with London and its suburbs: full of displaced persons'.⁴⁶

The comment suggests Bernstein's ignorance of the geographical and cultural diversity of northern England. The boundaries of the Granada franchise were actually decided by the areas that could receive the Granada signal, transmitted from Winter Hill and Emley Moor⁴⁷ and encompassed Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cumbria, parts of the Midlands and parts of north Wales.⁴⁸ As has been suggested, the subsequent formulation of a memorable and distinctive 'Granadaland' identity from these areas encapsulated the

⁴⁵ *TV Mirror*, week commencing 5 May 1956, reprinted by *This is Granada*, <https://granadatv.network/this-is-the-north-here-are-my-plans/>, [accessed February 2024]

⁴⁶ Caroline Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 216.

⁴⁷ Cooke, *A Sense of Place*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ John Finch (ed) in association with Michael Cox and Marjorie Giles, *Granada Television: The First Generation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2003), p. 20. In 1968, Granada was given the North West after the creation of a new Yorkshire region.

company's early ambition and commitment to redressing a cultural and political power imbalance. It was a case of inventing and innovating. There was a similarly serendipitous aspect to Granada's decision to base itself in Manchester. Leeds, Harrogate and Liverpool had been visited as potential sites for Granada Television headquarters, yet the decision to build in Manchester drew on the company's commercial familiarity with the city where, as in 1935, Granada had refurbished the old Hippodrome Theatre before selling it to the Gaumont Cinema Chain.⁴⁹

The Bernsteins were from southern England yet recognised the metaphorical significance of the North. On being granted a contract, Granada Television quickly implemented efforts to create a distinctive non-metropolitan cultural space. In this they were not alone. Dave Russell has observed nearly all the northern-based television companies, such as Granada and ABC were 'quick to realise the benefits of drawing on' the region's 'pre-existing stock of iconic cultural products and cultural icons' to identify themselves with their audiences, and to distinguish the innovative aspects of their programming and output.⁵⁰ Where Granada stood out were the lengths to which it went

⁴⁹ In Noel Chanan's history.

⁵⁰ Johnson and Turnock, *ITV Cultures*, p. 20; Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 189.

to bring its own identity into such close accord with that of the region in which it sought to establish itself.

Indeed, Northern England, which was identified with industry, working-class communities and a tradition of solid Labour Party support, chimed strongly with the class and socialist motivations of key players in Granada's in early history. Denis Forman, who was with Granada from the outset, had moved from the British Film Institute to become a 'driving force' in the company, was one of the 'rebels' responsible for shaping its early direction.⁵¹ A 'charismatic figure who rebelled openly against the prerogatives of the upper classes into which he was born', Forman believed in television as 'a kind of democratizing and equalizing force in society'.⁵² In his former

⁵¹ Philip Purser, 'Denis Forman Obituary', *Guardian*, 25 February 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/feb/25/denis-forman> [accessed 10 January 2024]

⁵² Paul Vitello, 'Denis Forman, British TV Innovator, is Dead at 95', *The New York Times*, 26 February 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/arts/television/denis-forman-british-tv-innovator-dies-at-95.html> [accessed 10 January 2024]. Forman was a Scot, born in 1917 in Dumfriesshire, where his father was a Presbyterian minister and 'country gentleman' living on his wife's country estate. It was a devout, narrow household much

role as head of the British Film Institute from 1948 and 1955, Forman had created the space and financial support for experimental filmmakers, including the innovative Italian filmmaker and writer, Lorenza Mazzetti, and those involved in the 'Free Cinema' Movement, spearheaded by director, Lindsay Anderson.⁵³

Forman's sympathies with the experimental, combined with a strong sense of moral purpose, was expressed in Granada's belief that television's social purpose was 'to maintain and transmit culture'.⁵⁴ It was Forman who was responsible for continuation of the series *Seven Up!*, a one-off programme made by *World in Action* in 1964 to explore how the British class system was experienced by fourteen children — ten boys and four girls — all aged seven. Later known as the *Up*-series, after it subsequently returned to follow the experiences of the same fourteen children, Michael Apted,

disliked by Forman, which was responsible for his lifelong atheism. Purser, 'Sir Denis Forman obituary', *Guardian*.

⁵³ Charles Drazin, 'The Origin, Practice and Meaning of the Free Cinema Manifesto', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Edinburgh University Press Volume 11, Issue 2–3 (2014), pp. 294–311, p. 303.

⁵⁴ Paul Vitello, 'Denis Forman, British TV Innovator, is Dead at 95', *The New York Times*, 26 February 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/arts/television/denis-forman-british-tv-innovator-dies-at-95.html> [accessed 10 January 2024]

director of the series, recalled how it was Forman who had sought him out in Granada's canteen to enquire whether he had thought of 'going back and seeing how the children were doing'.⁵⁵ Apted confessed that it had not. In 2024, the series was voted 'the programme that changed television most' by the Broadcasting Press Guild.⁵⁶

Forman's memoir, *Persona Granada*, describes how he and Bernstein set about distinguishing the new company by making it emblematic of an alternative, more energetic Britain, which would bring good quality, popular television to an audience of 'ordinary people':

Granada was going to be a northern company and it had to be proved that the North held all that was best in Britain, whether it be Yorkshire grit, the *Manchester Guardian*, Morecambe Bay shrimps, the Brontës or Blackburn Rovers, and conversely that London and the South-East were inhabited by a

⁵⁵ Michael Apted, 'How Granada TV chairman Sir Denis Forman changed my life', *Guardian*, 4 March, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/mar/04/michael-apted-granada-denis-forman> [accessed March 2024]

⁵⁶ Tara Conlan, 'Up documentary series voted most influential UK TV show of last 50 years', *Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2024/mar/12/up-documentary-series-voted-most-influential-uk-tv-show-of-last-50-years>, [accessed March 2024]

mass of displaced persons who had no regional identity and were rather weak in character, whose region was important only because it contained the monarchy and the seat of government [...] we started a campaign to move a significant member of the royal family to Harrogate and Sidney began to promote the idea of 'Granadaland'.⁵⁷

This re-telling of the deliberation with which Granada's initial public relations campaign was developed reveals both Bernstein's impresario's instinct to shape a regional identity out of which a distinctive new cultural experience might emerge, and Forman's belief in the 'high-minded' and popular.⁵⁸ Bernstein's long involvement in the entertainment business would have made him familiar with northern 'musical ambassadors' such as Gracie Fields, whose down-to-earth manner embodied a spirit of seemingly authentic northernness.⁵⁹

This was a version of The North which, as Dave Russell writes, was identified with 'certain key characteristics', 'notably stoicism, toughness, a rude vitality independence

⁵⁷ Dave Russell, *Looking North*, p. 189; Forman, *Persona Granada*, p.51.

⁵⁸ Philip Purser, 'Denis Forman Obituary', *Guardian*.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Hannah Andrews, "'No-nonsense-two-up-two-down-by-gum-you-daft-ha'poth-Northernness'": Jane Horrocks, Gracie Fields and performing generic Northernness', *Journal of Popular Television* 4.2 (2016), pp. 225-238.

and cheerfulness'.⁶⁰ Granada's vision of regional television implicitly drew on the everyday lives of working-class people in the North and on the region's popular associations with industrial culture and radical working-class politics. This representation was in some respects a cipher for the postwar world as a masculinist battle between the modern, muscular and gritty North and effete, suburban London and the South East. It was also based on a misguided view of the North as a more culturally homogeneous place than the South:

There are thirteen million people in our viewing area — as many as in the London area. There is more civic pride in the North than anywhere else in England. Dad will march his son round the town when he is just old enough to walk and show him the Town Hall and the football ground and the War Memorial. That won't happen in London.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Dave Russell, Chapter 2, 'Music and northern identity, 1890-c. 1965', in Neville Kirk (ed.), *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of 'The North' and Northernness*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 36.

⁶¹ 'Sidney Bernstein Talks to Geoffrey Kino, 5 May 1956, <https://transdiffusion.org/2022/02/21/this-is-the-north-here-are-my-plans/> [accessed February 2024].

The sheer longevity of attitudes defining the North as 'other' served to reinforce a traditional view of region that was in keeping with Bernstein's view of a cultural identity that was more coherent than that of the south.

There was, in the 1950s and 1960s, an emerging sense of the weakening of an older social order whose implications were both visual and aural. Expressions of class were not only audible but visible in the everyday life and culture of manual labour and in the formal dress expectations of the middle-class workplace. Despite England's strong regional divisions, notably between the north and south, the vocal tones of the north were rarely heard on the nation's national broadcaster, the BBC. Growing awareness of social inequalities were visible in attempts to improve educational opportunity in the 1944 Education Act, which raised the school leaving age to 15 and introduced a tripartite system of secondary education, with grammar schools, technical schools and secondary modern schools and admission decided by the 11-plus examination. The new system was intended to benefit the academically gifted across the classes in terms of entry to grammar school, yet it perpetuated class inequalities and division, with most children, overwhelmingly working class, attending secondary modern schools. Only a small minority of young people went on into higher education, leading to intellectual frustrations of the sort which informed the politics and social realist 'kitchen sink' dramas of the 1960s. At the time Granada became established, working-class life, especially in northern England, seemed to remain much as it had been before the Second World War, stereotyped and patronised in the national press, characterised

by ‘black puddings, mushy peas, flat caps and mufflers’.⁶² Nonetheless, many of those who did pass the 11+ entered an expanding education system in the 1960s which became fertile grounds for rebellious ideas, not only in universities and the new polytechnics but art colleges. The number of students in British higher education expanded from 122,000 to over 300,000 between 1955 and 1965, although young men dominated, with women comprising only 28 per cent of university students in 1970.⁶³ With most students living away from home, there was greater openness to new ideas, notably, political values which contested those of the older generation and dissatisfaction with traditional curricula. Gareth Stedman Jones summed up these frustrations in 1969, when he described how students were being ‘formally trained to develop a creative and critical intelligence’ to fit future occupations which would ‘demand specialised and skilled verbal or conceptual performances’, while universities and colleges imposed:

⁶² K. Wales, ‘North and South: An English linguistic divide?’, *English Today* 61:1 (2000), p. 5. For background on the North South divide see H.M. Jewell, *The North-South Divide: The Origins of Northern Consciousness in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994; Dave Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁶³ Melanie Tebbutt, *Making Youth*, p. 162.

deadeningly conformist syllabuses and systematically segregated departments of knowledge. These apprentice intellectual workers are thus riven by a constant contradiction: they must be alert and intelligent within their narrowly defined discipline and yet be numbed and inert outside it. They must not apply the intelligence they are being urged to develop, either to the institutions where they are studying or to the society which produces them.⁶⁴

Many students channelled their dissatisfaction into political activism and support for the new social movements which found expression on many student campuses.

Granada thrived on its reputation as a youthful, left-wing company that was especially responsive to contemporary cultural changes. It is easy to understand the excitement that working for such an innovative media company stimulated among politically aware graduates, who were studying in a time of significant cultural and social flux.

Working class communities in the North, closely associated with heavy manufacturing industry, were undermined in the 1960s by the decline of key sectors, including shipbuilding, steel production, heavy engineering, textile production and coal mining, which disproportionately affected industries based in northern England, Scotland and

⁶⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Meaning of the Student Revolt', in Alexander Cockburn; Robin Blackburn (eds.), *Student Power: Problems, Diagnosis, Action*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 32-33.

Wales. Aside from the impact on people in local communities, this decline encouraged the romanticisation of what seemed to be a disappearing working-class identity and drew intellectuals from working class backgrounds into social movements which were urging social change and greater equality. It was a time when some working-class youth could find themselves at an unexpected advantage. Gus McDonald a former shipyard fitter, who was taken on as researcher with Granada in 1967, in an interview with the *Illustrated London News* in 1970, credited his success in television to his past career: 'It was the biggest advantage I ever had. If you phoned people for a job and told them you'd been working as a shipyard fitter they'd see you immediately.'⁶⁵ Negotiating their class background was less easy for young women such as Jenny Barraclough, who joined Granada in the mid-1960s, the first in her family to attend university, who was candid about how her Oxbridge background and connections provided her with opportunities closed off to other women.⁶⁶ Her experiences of Granada are explored in Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ Christopher Farman, 'TV 70 World in Action', *Illustrated London News*, 31 January 1970, pp. 14–15.

⁶⁶ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose, 30 June 2015, British Entertainment History Project, <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/jenny-barraclough> [accessed 2 June 2022].

Manchester turned out to be an astute choice as Granada's headquarters. The city had been synonymous with the North in the popular imagination since its heyday as 'shock city' of the age in the nineteenth century, when it had acquired 'a centrality in the mental imagery of those outside the North'.⁶⁷ Granada's subsequent strengths in current affairs owed something to Manchester's reputation as the 'most important centre for the newspaper industry outside London' and home to the much-lauded *Manchester Guardian*.⁶⁸ Granada 'always regarded itself as a 'journalist's company' with a 'commitment to political programming' and locating its headquarters in the city perhaps indicated the journalistic aspirations the company was setting itself.⁶⁹ The newspaper had an international reputation, and its political reputation was riding high in the 1950s when, unlike most British newspapers which 'toed the patriotic line,' the *Manchester Guardian* famously opposed the Franco-British invasion of Egypt during the Suez crisis of 1956.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Russell, *Looking North*, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Notes (undated) on experiences of working at Granada by Stephen F. Kelly. Writer, broadcaster and formerly a journalist and television producer with Granada.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Alan Rusbridger, 'Courage under fire', *Guardian*, 10 July 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/jul/10/pressandpublishing.egypt> [accessed

Many northern journalists were attracted to working at the young television company because of its investigative journalism and political comment, which was often risk-taking in its coverage of controversial issues of the day.⁷¹ This formed a significant and highly acclaimed aspect of its early output and included *World in Action*, which began in 1963 and ‘contributed not only to the establishment of a radical reputation for Granada but to a liberalisation of public affairs coverage’.⁷² Granada also broadcast the first television coverage of a parliamentary by-election at Rochdale, in 1958, a groundbreaking transmission which paved the way for subsequent coverage of elections and included two programmes before polling on election issues with local ‘Vox pops’ and ‘a live broadcast’, the day before polling day.⁷³ Thumim noted how the

10 February 2024] In 1959, the *Manchester Guardian* changed its name to the *Guardian*. This thesis uses both names, depending on the relevant historical context.

⁷¹ David Plowright, who became a current affairs producer and later head of *World in Action*, had worked at the *Yorkshire Post* before joining Granada. *Searchlight* was produced by Tim Hewat, who went on to produce *World in Action*.

⁷² Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 11.

⁷³ Before transmission, the political correspondent of *The Times* questioned Granada’s impartiality, referring to Sidney Bernstein’s membership of the Labour Party and Granada’s left-wing leanings. See Pete Singleton, ‘Granada goes to Rochdale’, *This is*

event, '[i]nnovatory in its freshness of approach,' meant that not only ITV but the BBC 'profited from Granada's pioneering efforts'.⁷⁴

Critiques

Granada's identity became emphatically tied to place in ways which were becoming more challenging by the early 1990s, as broadcasters found themselves increasingly subordinated to the pressures and development of a more profit led culture of programme making. The decade led to new studies such as Mark Banks's examination of Granada to illustrate how commercial regional broadcasting created problematic understandings of the 'local' in the 1990s, locating the origins of these in the 1950s, when the company exploited paradigms of a North/South opposition for commercial reasons. Banks argued that Granada's 'production' of 'the North' was hegemonic and commercially orientated in utilising 'place imagery to secure arrangements of power

Granada, <https://granadatv.network/granada-goes-to-rochdale/> [accessed 10 May 2024]

⁷⁴ Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box*, pp. 46, 49, 69. The by-election was the first time a political debate in relation to a British election had been broadcast live. It instigated the televising of the general election by both the BBC and ITV in 1959, which continues to the present day.

and privilege'.⁷⁵ Drawing upon the theorists of place, Doreen Massey and David Harvey, Banks argued for a more diversified and democratic local media to counter entrepreneurial representations of region and 'the local': 'It is not enough [...] to merely acknowledge that "local" or "regional" television exists [...] It is necessary to uncover why and how discourses of space and place are actively used to reinforce patterns of social and spatial distinction in the local context'.⁷⁶ Uncovering how 'discourses of space' were constructed by the company's desire for a 'strong affiliate bond' between itself and its viewers, Banks wrote damningly of Granada's 'middle-class' managers:

Not only was Granada a company without Northern credentials, Northern experience or (initially) Northern executives, it was an institution wholly created by middle class entrepreneurs: a group that had always been profoundly implicated in the production and dissemination of exclusionary myths about the North.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Mark Oliver Banks, 'Televising the Region: The Production and Consumption of Granadaland' (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 1999), Abstract, np.

⁷⁶ Banks, 'Televising the Region', p. 7.

⁷⁷ Banks, 'Televising the Region', pp. 97–98.

While there is some truth to his argument, Banks's indictment of Granada's purportedly questionable commitments to the locality fails to acknowledge the company's sincere investment in the region, particularly in its earliest years when aspirations to create a distinct identity emerged from a complex background which found expression in programming and the patronage of visual arts in the region, which I explore in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, works like those of Banks and also Elinor Groom's study of Southern Television, which was founded in 1958, are important in highlighting different approaches to regionalism in commercial television.⁷⁸ Groom, for example, emphasised the benefits of seeking a more contextualised understanding of the way in which regionality permeated broadcasting values. Her research departs from the way regional identity is usually assessed, through programming, turning instead to examining how Southern Television's regional commitment was expressed in the company's 'day to day' workings and 'infrastructure'. It is an approach which has contributed to this thesis's understanding of how the region was played out in working relationships at Granada.

⁷⁸ Elinor Groom, 'The South, Southern and *Southerner*: Regional Identity and Locations in Southern Television's *Freewheelers*', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 34/3 (2014), p. 435

Both Banks and Groom are a reminder of how some aspects of Granada's legacy and output have been examined more than others. Lez Cooke's history of regional drama at Granada Television between 1956 and 1982 (2012), which explored the company's commitment to northern writing and drama as a focus of its licence application, was gently critical of the company's founder Sidney Bernstein, referring only to Bernstein's 'lack of awareness of the cultural differences within "Granadaland."' ⁷⁹ Cooke also reflected on the top-down culture of the company, although his chapter on *Coronation Street* highlighted how, with enough pressure from its employees, the company could begin to appreciate the value of its northern commitments. *Coronation Street*, first broadcast on the 9th December 1960, has been described as 'the crucial "northern" event which consolidated *Granada*'s position as the leading television exponent of the North at a time when TV was lagging behind the region's growing 'cultural profile' in northern-based fiction and film'. ⁸⁰ Initially, however, the company's programme committee was 'not very warm' to such 'popular programmes':

With the programme committee consisting of American and Canadian producers plus Granada executives in London and the South, rather than the

⁷⁹ Lez Cooke, *A Sense of Place: Regional British Television Drama 1956–82* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 49.

⁸⁰ Russell, *Looking North*, p. 190.

North of England, the support among ordinary Granada personnel for a programme created by a Mancunian, Tony Warren, who wanted to write about ‘something he knew’, suggests that Granada’s first successful, contemporary Northern drama was the result of pressure from ‘below’, rather than the result of policy determined from above, by Granada executives deciding ‘what went on air and what did not.’⁸¹

Herbert Wise, who began at Granada in 1956 as a trainee director, has described how the company was ‘more courageous on the factual front than the drama front’, an image of radicalism in factual programming that has been repeated in academic publications on the company’s legacy.⁸²

This thesis argues that a novel way to develop a broader and more complex understanding of the diverse cultural influences which inspired the company, especially in terms of the more subtle aspects of its relationship to regionality, is to examine Granada’s art collection, one of the first and most important corporate

⁸¹ Cooke, *A Sense of Place*, p. 66.

⁸² Lez Cooke, “‘We were the young lions in those days’: An Interview with Herbert Wise”, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 13/3 (2016), p. 492.

collections of contemporary art of the 1960s.⁸³ The Granada collection, which Sidney started in the late 1950s, was unique to the history of British television both for its scale and for how it encapsulated in many ways the youthful, modern and regional connections the company wished to project.⁸⁴ The art collection is an underestimated aspect of Granada's commitment to the region, which encompassed Bernstein's desire to democratise not only television but the art world and to make the arts accessible to his employees and the public. His views on the importance of the arts in everyday life converged with those of Jenny Lee, Britain's first Minister of the Arts in Harold Wilson's Labour government, which came to power in 1964. Lee's passion to make 'art for everyone' was expressed via promoting access to modern art to people from all backgrounds, especially the young. Bernstein's mission connected strongly with that of Lee. Moreover, both had been involved, in 1961, in supporting the playwright, Arnold Wesker's ambition to develop a 'Centre 42' (later the Roundhouse) in London 'as a

⁸³ Christopher Anthony Davies, 'John Hoyland: The Making and Sustaining of a Career, 1960-1982', PhD, University of Plymouth, 2015, p. 200. Collecting subsequently stopped for a while but recommenced in 1973 under Alex Bernstein, Sidney's nephew and Cecil's son, p. 2019.

⁸⁴ He also collected for his private collection, which was bequeathed to the Whitworth Art Gallery in 1993.

cultural centre for popularising the arts'.⁸⁵ Writing in *Tribune* in 1965, not long after Labour had come to power, Bernstein expressed his backing for Lee's pioneering White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts – The First Steps*:

With the publication of a policy for the arts Jennie Lee has brought a breath of fresh, but warm air into the whole question of the arts. What a pompous word 'arts' has become. I wish I could find a better one – one with less of the wrong associations. There is something about the word 'arts' that suggests it is divorced from the quick flow of everyday life. It carries with it, unfortunately, the idea of some exotic pool where the water slops to and fro without any effect whatsoever on the turbulent river beyond.⁸⁶

Bernstein's writing here expressed a common socialist proposition in the 1960s: that class barriers could be broken down to advance the belief that culture belongs to everyone. Taking the arts to the people was hardly a novel idea. It had found expression in the civic galleries of Victorian philanthropists and Bernstein was continuing a well-established tradition when he continued: 'If we want to attract those living outside of

⁸⁵ See Lawrence Black, 'Radical Chic?: Centre 42, the Roundhouse and How Culture Countered Wesker in the 1960s', in *Arnold Wesker: Fragments and Visions*, ed. Anne Etienne and Graham Saunders (Bristol: Intellect, 2021), pp. 20–38.

⁸⁶ Sidney Bernstein, 'Labour and the Arts', *Tribune*, 2 April 1965, p. 8.

London to the arts as a rewarding leisure it is essential that the galleries and museums in the rest of the country should have chance to exhibit the great works of art'. He emphasised Granada's contribution: '[i]n a small way we try to do something of this kind with two [Jacob] Epstein statues we bought. We tour them round the North'.⁸⁷ It was an indication of the importance Bernstein attached to the acquisition of the Jacob Epstein statues for Granada's collection, explored in Chapter 3, that Bernstein singled them out. It was also indicative of Granada's paternalistic approach and perhaps the tensions between his pedagogical view of art and his desire to democratise it. Sidney Bernstein was instrumental not only in bringing international art to Manchester but curating a collection that expressed the work of painters in the region. They also included abstract and social realist works by international artists such as Diego Rivera, Friso ten Holt, and Fernand Léger, and illustrated, if only incidentally, Granada's identity as a culturally grounded company committed to the arts, but with a wider, internationalist outlook.

Indeed, Granada's engagement with the public was not restricted to arts patronage. In 1959, the company set up a TV research unit at the University of Leeds. Its first researcher was the mass communication theorist Denis McQuail, who had moved from history to social sciences and, in his own words, 'had been influenced by the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams and by ideas emerging in the New Left

⁸⁷ Bernstein, 'Labour and the Arts', p. 8

movement'. In an interview, McQuail spoke of how the fellowship was set up 'partly for PR' but also because Sidney Bernstein, the owner of Granada, 'was a socialist with a mission to contribute to and improve society'.⁸⁸

Class, Gender, 'Race' and Region.

In many respects, Granada Television was a cultural project, as much as a broadcaster of programmes: innovative, experimental and risk-taking, it developed new ways of recognising the importance of class, politics and culture, establishing a creative environment for its employees which was stimulating and modern. However, the company asserted a strident northern identity that also papered over tensions about Manchester's economic dominance over Liverpool and gaps in Granada's modest attention to rural communities across the North West and north Wales. As Lez Cooke notes, it would take the company until 1980, when submitting its franchise application, to acknowledge that Merseyside had 'a history and character quite distinct from the rest of the region'.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Social Science Space, 'My Social Science Career: Interview with Denis McQuail', 23 February 2012, <https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2012/02/my-social-science-career-interview-with-denis-mcquail/> [accessed 29 November 2023].

⁸⁹ Cooke, *A Sense of Place*, p. 52.

Granada's efforts to reflect the experiences of racially minoritised communities in the North West were also contradictory. When Granada Television began in 1956, Sidney Bernstein stated he had chosen the region because it comprised a 'closely knit indigenous, industrial society; a homogeneous cultural group'.⁹⁰ This evocation of the North as comprising an 'indigenous society' was inaccurate. As Mervyn Busted has explored, the city was home to many diverse communities, including communities of South Asian, Caribbean and African heritage. Many of these communities had been encouraged to come to Manchester to take up roles in industry.⁹¹ Janet Reid's work on the employment of people of African and Caribbean heritage in Manchester in 1956 highlights the scale of their work in engineering roles in the city.⁹² Manchester had hosted the Pan-African Congress just over ten years previously in 1945 and was home, as Shirin Hirsch and Geoff Brown have explored, to a vibrant African and Caribbean radical activist

⁹⁰ Caroline Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 216.

⁹¹ Mervyn Busted, 'A Cosmopolitan City', in *Manchester: Making the Modern City*, ed. Alan Kidd and Terry Wyke (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 213–259.

⁹² Janet Reid, 'Employment of Negroes in Manchester', *Sociological Review*, new series, 4 (December 1956), pp. 199–211.

network, predominantly based on Oxford Road and in Moss Side.⁹³ Yet discrimination was imposed on communities of South Asian, Caribbean and African heritage in the North West via ‘colour bars’ in the 1950s. This policy went ‘largely unchallenged by the British government’ during the decade that Granada began to broadcast.⁹⁴ Despite resistance to ‘the colour bar’ in Manchester, including a notable campaign by the boxer Len Johnson in 1953, its effects would permeate into and beyond employment.⁹⁵

Historians Lisa Kerrigan and Eleni Liarou have argued that ITV took a pioneering approach in their representation of African and Caribbean communities in Britain particularly via their screening of single drama plays from the late 1950s to early 1960s.⁹⁶ This was a period which saw a concerted effort by the British government to limit immigration,

⁹³ Shirin Hirsch and Geoff Brown, ‘Breaking the “Colour Bar”: Len Johnson, Manchester and Anti-racism’, *Race & Class*, 64/3 (2023), pp. 36–58.

⁹⁴ Edward Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), p. 46.

⁹⁵ Hirsch and Brown, ‘Breaking the “Colour Bar”’.

⁹⁶ See: Eleni Liarou, ‘British Television's Lost “New Wave” Moment: ITV's Single Drama and Race’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 9/4 (2012), p. 616 and Lisa Kerrigan, ‘Thunder on Sycamore Street: The Rediscovered 1950s TV Play about Prejudice in Suburbia’, *BFI online*, 10 August 2020,

especially from the Caribbean, resulting in the 1962 Commonwealth Act.⁹⁷ In 1957, a BBC memorandum detailed how Granada was purported to be in a deal with an American Broadcaster to screen the play, 'Thunder on Sycamore Street', by the American Playwright Reginald Rose, a play 'on colour-relations' that was described as 'too controversial' for American audiences.⁹⁸ When the play was sold to several countries the curator Lisa Kerrigan writes that Granada was the 'only company' across Europe to cast the central character as a Jamaican, played by Earl Cameron. The decision to cast the central character as a Black Caribbean, was, she writes, 'a rarity on British television in

⁹⁷ Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain*, p. 423.

⁹⁸ The play *Thunder on Sycamore Street* by the Playwright Reginald Rose had originally been pitched to the American channel CBS. It centred on the story of a group of white residents in a suburban neighbourhood intimidating and terrorising the only 'black' family in the area. However, the story was considered too risky for American broadcasters, who were concerned about the challenges the play posed in attracting sponsorship, and of the reactions of audiences in the American South. In response, Rose reworked the play so that the family instead became a single character, a white ex-convict.

1957 in its confrontation of civil rights and racism head-on'.⁹⁹ The same year, Granada screened 'Home of the Brave', which focused on the experiences of an African American soldier in World War II and featured the Guyanese actor Cy Grant in the title role. Grant recalled that it was 'very powerful television and the write-ups were really good as well'.¹⁰⁰

Another notable output included Jamaican writer Barry Reckord's play, *You in Your Small Corner*, broadcast on Granada in 1962, which explored the complexities of class and 'race' as well as the scarring experiences of colonialism in a so-called 'post-imperial' world. Julia Hallam writes that the screening of such plays at Granada was due to the

⁹⁹ Lisa Kerrigan, 'Thunder on Sycamore Street: The Rediscovered 1950s TV Play about Prejudice in Suburbia', *BFI online*, 10 August 2020, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/features/thunder-sycamore-street-reginald-rose-earl-cameron> [accessed September 2021].

¹⁰⁰ Jim Pines, ed., *Black and White in Colour: Black People in British Television since 1936* (London: BFI, 1997), p. 45.

influence of Sidney Bernstein, who believed that Granada productions should have a 'staunch social message'.¹⁰¹

However, while these early plays arguably reflected ITV's desire to challenge the status quo, Stephen Bourne has observed how 'there were few openings for Black dramatists' in television at the time'.¹⁰² The actor and film director, Lloyd Reckord, played the lead character in *You in your Small Corner* written by his brother. Lloyd Reckord was a talented director of experimental films and would speak of his deep frustrations at not being able to find employment in Britain (especially at the BBC) to become a director. He would eventually leave the UK for Jamaica where he set up the National Theatre Trust in 1968.¹⁰³

In the 1960s, there are no records of people of African, Caribbean or Asian heritage involved in roles 'behind the screen' at Granada.¹⁰⁴ And the company's focus on the lives and experiences of racially minoritised communities in the region appears to have been

¹⁰¹ Julia Hallam, 'Introduction: The Development of Commercial TV in Britain', in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 17.

¹⁰² Stephen Bourne, *Black in the British Frame* (London: Continuum International, 2001), p. 68.

¹⁰³ Bourne, *Black in the British Frame*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁴ See Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation*, p. 120.

predominantly channelled through its drama programmes. In the same year as the Bristol Boycott in 1963 — a landmark event and collective success against the continuation of ‘colour bars’ in the Southwest led by Paul Stephenson — the Guyanese British actor Thomas Baptiste, one of the earliest Black characters on *Coronation Street*, began playing the role of the bus conductor, Johnny Alexander. Yet, the introduction of Baptiste was precipitated at Granada by concerns over ‘offending’ its audience.¹⁰⁵ Sarita Malik traces how Harry Kershaw, (a script writer on *Coronation Street* during the series’ formative years), was hesitant about introducing Black characters for fear of being ‘forced to put unhelpful comments into the mouths of fictional men and women who command a wide following’.¹⁰⁶ Malik has commented that such ‘fears’ were representative of a racism that hid itself behind ‘socially responsible morality rhetoric’.⁹

In 1969, the Jamaican cultural critic Stuart Hall began working at Granada, but his brief period presenting for *The Papers*, formerly *What the Papers Say* is non-existent in histories of the company, despite Hall’s influence and significance in postwar cultural

¹⁰⁵ Michael Coveney, ‘Thomas Baptiste’, obituary, *Guardian*, 12 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/dec/12/thomas-baptiste-obituary> [accessed 20 March 2021].

¹⁰⁶ Malik, *Representing Black Britain*, p. 141.

and academic life in Britain.¹⁰⁷ Hall was formerly involved in the New Left movement, as editor of the *New Left Review*. In 1968, he became acting director of the newly formed *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* at the University of Birmingham. A year later, in April, Hall began presenting *The Papers*, (after *What the Papers Say* briefly changed its name). However, there is nothing written about his time at Granada. The series, which had begun in 1956 and examined the UK press, was a stalwart of Granada and one of its most successful and longest running programmes. Traditionally when making the programme, as director Graeme McDonald recalled, ‘the script came up with the presenter on the morning of transmission so that there was a good deal of possibility for presenters to inflict their own ideas and opinions on the show’.¹⁰⁸ A description of a programme Hall presented for the series suggests that presenters were given scope to offer personal opinions: a review in the *Liverpool Echo*, reads: ‘Hall commentates freely on the free commentators of the British press’.¹⁰⁹ The international *Variety* magazine, in a brief account of the series, which was published before the series aired, suggested its new intention to be more far-reaching in its analysis of the media, observing that the

¹⁰⁷ Reporter, ‘Press Impact Assessed’, *The Times*, 20 September 1968, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Graeme McDonald, ‘The Light in Denis Forman’s Eyes’, in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 58.

¹⁰⁹ ‘TV and Radio Tonight’, *Liverpool Echo*, 10 April 1969, p. 2.

series would not only focus on ‘editorial content’ of newspapers but also ‘the owners, admen and so on’.¹¹⁰ In 1969, the series aired at 11:45pm and midnight on weekdays. Perhaps because of the lateness of the time it was broadcast, reviews of Hall’s time on *The Papers* are non-existent.

In the mid-1970s, Granada would commission Guyanese playwright Michael Abbensetts and Nigerian writer, Buchi Emecheta, to write several episodes for its long running series *Crown Court* (1972-2007).¹¹¹ However, there were no producers or directors of Caribbean heritage employed at Granada until Sue Woodford-Hollick: Woodford Hollick was one of the earliest women presenters at the company, having joined the company the same year as Stuart Hall, in 1969, before becoming a director on *World in Action* in the 1970s, where she made a several influential documentaries (which are explored in Chapter 4). In 1978, Woodford-Hollick gave a speech alongside journalist and academic, Margaret Walters, to industry professionals at the *Edinburgh Television Festival* on the lack of opportunities for Black and Asian people in television. The title of the speech, ‘In 1968 a Black family moved into No.8 Coronation Street, where are they today?’, reflected

¹¹⁰ ‘Radio-Television: TV-Radio Production Centres’. 1968. *Variety*, 252/7 (1968), p. 50.

¹¹¹ Lez Cooke, ‘Not Forgotten: Black TV Writers’, February 15, 2017, *Forgotten Television Drama*, <https://forgottentelevisiondrama.wordpress.com/2017/02/15/not-forgotten-black-tv-writers/>, [accessed May 19, 2024]

on how Granada had continually rejected the introduction of a permanent Black British family on the 'street'. Walter and Woodford-Hollick spoke of how 'truly whiter than white' soap operas, such as *Coronation Street*, were reticent about introducing characters from 'ethnic minority' backgrounds for fear of breaking the 'cosy sense of community' and homogeneity on which the series 'depends'.¹¹² Their critique made little impact on the series at the time. It was not until 1992 that Charles Lauder became the earliest Black British director of *Coronation Street* and not until 2019 — almost 60 years after the first episode of the series — that the first Black British family, The Bailey's, were introduced as regular characters on the soap. Looking back at his involvement in *Coronation Street* in the 1960s, the actor Thomas Baptiste would recall how his own pioneering contribution to the series went acknowledged by the company: 'I was the first Black actor to break into a major television series. So, naturally, I was a bit miffed when I wasn't invited to the thirtieth anniversary celebration, they had in 1990 for the long running soap. It was as though I didn't exist; and, for me, it was a corruption of history.'¹¹³ Baptiste's

¹¹² Margaret Walters and Sue Woodford, 'Race: Memo to Programme Controllers Subject: In 1968 a Black Family Moved into No.8 Coronation Street, Where Are They Today?', *Edinburgh International Festival Official Programme* (1978), p. 27, Black Cultural Archives.

¹¹³ Thomas Baptiste, 'Thomas Baptiste', in *Black and White in Colour: Black People in British Television since 1936*, ed. Jim Pines (London: BFI, 1997), p. 65.

recollection is a salient reminder of what Gorton and Garde warn of the 'issues of memory (remembering and forgetting)' in television history, and the patent importance of reflecting on how television's history is written and recalled.¹¹⁴

Recruitment and Region

Granada's recruitment processes have been described as significant due to the 'great attention' paid to recruitment and training schemes. As Potter noted: '[o]f its writers, directors and producers Granada demanded originality and a close acquaintance with the lifestyle and behaviour of their audiences, and it selected them with exceptional care'.¹¹⁵ The broadcaster Dorothy Byrne has described Granada as distinctive from broadcasting companies now, because it employed: 'lots of working-class people'.¹¹⁶ There were, however, also informal forms of recruitment that depended on personal contacts and networks which contributed to a less diverse workforce. Denis Forman, for example, remembered how 'our main source of production recruitment was through

¹¹⁴ Gorton and Garde, *Remembering British Television*, pp. 172–173.

¹¹⁵ Potter, *Companies and Programmes 1968–1980*, p. 43–44.

¹¹⁶ Dorothy Byrne, 'Dorothy Byrne | James McTaggart Lecture | Edinburgh TV Festival', posted 2 October 2021, by Edinburgh TV Festival, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH6J514H0B4> [accessed 13 December 2024].

the grapevine’, recalling how ‘I was totally unsupervised and had no guidelines’.¹¹⁷ This so-called ‘unofficial policy’ resulted in appointments which reflected the recruiter’s own background and sympathies, with a large number of new recruits drawn from Oxford and Cambridge. Forman later gave insight into his own class position in Granada and the tensions in Bernstein’s commercial motivations: he suggested that Bernstein’s placing of pictures of the circus promoters Barnum and Bailey in every Granada office was because ‘[h]e felt a lot of us were too posh. He came from a state school; I went to Oxford. He felt we should all remember we were in showbusiness. I think he wanted to remind us of the dangers of being too highbrow’.¹¹⁸

‘Like employing like’ reflected recruitment processes that were of their era and contributed to a ‘muscular’ television workforce characterised by little racial or gender diversity and lack of attention to the changes of gender and sexual politics of the late 1960s and 1970s. William James Atkinson has pointed to misleading assumptions that

¹¹⁷ Denis Forman, *Persona Granada: Some Memories of Sidney Bernstein and the Early Days of Independent Television* (London: André Deutsch, 1997), p. 45.

¹¹⁸ Jason Deans, ‘Good programmes Came First’, *The Guardian*, 13 October 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/oct/13/ITV.broadcasting#:~:text=%22Granada%20was%20not%20forced%20to,of%20a%20lot%20of%20profit.%22> [accessed 10 January 2024]

the creative and culture industries have been meritocratic: networking and ‘who you know’ have always been a very important part of recruitment, with white, male and middle-class applicants generally being at an advantage. Atkins observed how the ‘intersection between class and gender’ has been ‘sorely under-researched’ in the creative and cultural industries, with the ‘historical class composition of women in film and TV ... hardly ever mentioned in the academic literature’.¹¹⁹ Granada’s approach to representing working class women on screen, notably in *Coronation Street* in its earliest years, has been rightly lauded. Yet as this research suggest, working class women employees and employees of African and Caribbean heritage in the company experienced specific issues related to their heritage and class backgrounds, and in the case of some secretarial workers, also faced difficulties related to their dress and accents.

Conclusion

Granada Television emerged in an era when ideas of culture, class and region were being reshaped. There was an expectation that commercial television companies who received licenses had a responsibility to transmit programmes that not only entertained

¹¹⁹ William James Atkinson, ‘The Historical Association between Class Origins and Male Career Trajectories in UK Film Production’ (PhD diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2020), p. 109.

their audiences but educated them. Sidney Bernstein's experience in the entertainment world, combined with his commitment to quality television and a notion of public service, contributed to the production of quality programmes that were often award-winning.¹²⁰ Building the company's headquarters in a city still marked by bombsites and demolition, the first substantial construction in Post-war Manchester, was heralded as an example of Granada's belief in the future and its commitment to the city and the region. Not all Granada employees were happy to be located in what felt like the 'grim' north, but it was an important symbol of the company's ambitions. While its franchise agreement determined that it had to make a certain quota of regional programmes, strong identification with the region it broadcast to fitted the commercial reputation Granada aimed to develop; the company emerged from and developed in an era of class politics, which had shaped the socialist outlook of Bernstein. It was proudly and confidently 'from the North,' taunting metropolitan culture, the establishment and some of the more timid 'Tory' franchises which were established at the same time. This was also, of course, an imagined, constructed and often stereotyped class-based conception of region whose legacy has been powerful and nostalgic, memories made more powerful because of the deterioration which took place in commercial television after the 1990 Broadcasting Act, partly evinced in the title of former *World in Action*

¹²⁰ Julia Hallam, 'Introduction: The Development of Commercial TV in Britain' pp. 1-24.

editor and producer Ray Fitzwalter's personal account of the effect of the Act on Granada and ITV, which was titled: *The Dream that Died* (2008).¹²¹

It would be an injustice to the company's legacy not to appreciate that Granada's particular brand of programme-making had a meaningful, positive impact on former employees. Many of those I interviewed for this thesis recalled the company with affection, despite their frustrations with its periodic reticence and ambivalence in regard to meaningful change. There is room, however, for more nuance in the telling of Granada Television's history and its relationship to the region. This thesis develops such a telling in relation to the attempts made by Granada to showcase and respect the views of young people in early programming; in how its art collection refracted regionalism; and in aspects of 'race', representation and gender in the company's workforce which have been neglected. In highlighting the tensions and contradictions of Granada's public ethos and reputation, the intention is to complicate a well-established narrative in order to reveal the ambivalence and complexities which also informed it.

¹²¹ Ray Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died: The Rise and Fall of ITV* (Leicester: Matador, 2008).

Chapter 2: Granada Is Asking: Youth, Politics and Commercial Television in the 1950s

Introduction

This chapter interrogates the political, cultural and transatlantic influences on the making of one of Granada Television's earliest current affairs series, *Youth Is Asking*, first broadcast to Granada's regional 'Northern' network in 1956, and its subsequent incarnations, *Youth Wants to Know* (1957–1958) and *We Want an Answer* (1958–1959), both of which were transmitted nationally on ITV from 1957 to 1959. It examines the way in which Granada grew and developed its current affairs programmes and how the company addressed its mission to educate and entertain while maintaining its viability as a commercial broadcasting company and how Granada built its reputation for distinct programming through its development of the *Youth* series outlined above.

There has been minimal exploration or examination of the *Youth* series in histories of the company. Academic references have focused on Granada's contribution to youth programming rather than appreciating how the *Youth* series contributed more broadly to

its emerging identity as a confident commercial broadcaster.¹²² This is illustrated by the shift which took place in the series' titles themselves, from the reserved and politely interrogative *Youth Is Asking* to the more strident final title, *We Want an Answer*, a progression which maps the process whereby Granada sought to develop a more self-consciously assertive company identity as the series progressed.

John Mundy has described the first two series, *Youth Is Asking* and *Youth Wants to Know*, as representative of the independent broadcasting companies' 'earnest desire to understand the attitudes of young people', and indicative of a period when there 'was an intense interest by the British media in young people themselves'.¹²³ While Granada sought to combine current affairs and young people's opinions in the *Youth* series and endeavoured to capture several important developments in the growing cultural prominence and presence of youth culture, it also had wider ambitions for it. Both *Youth Is Asking* and *Youth Wants to Know* were important in capturing and promoting the emergence of political discussion on television. Set within the evolution of Granada's reputation as an 'anti-establishment' broadcaster, they also assisted in promoting Granada's national profile over and above its initial regional identity.

¹²² John Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen: From Hollywood Musical to Music Video* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 198.

¹²³ Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen*, p. 198.

‘Youth’ and the 1950s

This was a fluctuating and experimental era, not merely for a new commercial broadcaster such as Granada but for society generally, which presented challenges for television programme-makers in trying to work out their target audiences. Granada’s *Youth* series was formulated and produced in the same years that rock ‘n’ roll and popular music were making inroads into youth culture and when scrutiny of commercial television’s emerging political and cultural identity was particularly acute.

In the mid-1950s, Britain was still recovering from the effects of rationing and austerity while the latter half of the decade was characterised by strong resistance to British colonialism and international political destabilisation. For instance, in July General Nasser’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal exposed Britain’s weakness as a world power when it failed to gain American support in defending the Suez Basin.¹²⁴ In October, protests in Hungary draw attention to the oppression experienced by those living under Soviet rule.¹²⁵ Yet new commercial broadcasters including Granada were required by the ITA to create programming that was ‘predominantly British in “tone and style”’, with no

¹²⁴ Frank Heinlin, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation 1945–1963: Scrutinising the Official Mind* (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹²⁵ Alex Von Tunzelmann, *Blood and Sand: Suez, Hungary and the Crisis that Shook the World* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

political bias traceable in any programming. Each contractor was required to reflect a 'proper balance' in its scheduling.¹²⁶

The first series of *Youth Is Asking* (1956) was made under different constraints to the later ones. In 1956, television contractors had to adhere to a rule that prohibited them from discussing any current legislation in parliament 'for two weeks before [...] a parliamentary debate was due to take place'. Known as 'the fourteen day rule', this had come into being in 1944, via the BBC as way to avoid any 'pressure from ministers wishing to broadcast on matters of current legislation'.¹²⁷ However, it had become increasingly cumbersome to the corporation in the following decade and was suspended at the end of 1956 in part due to pressure from governmental failure around Suez and growing resistance from commercial broadcasters.¹²⁸ The 'fourteen day rule' reflected the patrician nature of the media environment that Granada entered.

Alongside this, the ITA, which regulated Granada, was required to ensure that all contractors reflected 'due impartiality [...] in the presentation of all news, and in

¹²⁶ Outlined in the Television Bill of 1954, see: Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain*, volume 1, *Origin and Foundation, 1946–62* (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), p. 33.

¹²⁷ Sendall, *Origin and Foundation*, p. 233.

¹²⁸ Sendall, *Origin and Foundation*, p. 233.

particular in any items dealing with matters of political or industrial controversy; and that no expression of their own opinion on such matters be allowed from any of their Members or officers, or of any director or officer of a programme contractor'.¹²⁹ This requirement had been written into the 1954 Television Act. Given this background, it is not surprising that decisions made over *who* should appear on the programme should have caused controversy.

Despite crises in international political events, domestically, this period was one of relative consensus between the two main parties. In an essay from 1960, historian E.P. Thompson reflected on the conservatism of the 1950s, remarking how it had been shaped by adherence to institutions in response to international upheavals so that 'Custom, Law, the Monarchy, the Church, the State, the Family – all came flooding back. All were indices of the supreme good – stability.'¹³⁰ Due to this political conformism, as Robert Hewison has noted, 'much of the desire for change manifested itself through culture rather than politics'.¹³¹ In the context of this complex unravelling of Britain's status as a 'world power', the media's ability to either absorb or to challenge tensions

¹²⁹ Sendall, *Origin and Foundation*, p. 33.

¹³⁰ E.P. Thompson, 'Outside the Whale', in *The Poverty of Theory* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), p. 233.

¹³¹ Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus* (London: Methuen, 1997), p. xvi.

was placed under scrutiny. Yet this also gave new commercial television companies like Granada opportunities to contest contemporary views through novel formats as in the case of the *Youth series*, with youth-led intellectual discussions and debates featuring well-known guests whose novelty played an important part in attracting reviewers' attention.

Youth was notable in that it involved young people discussing politics at a time when they were largely absent in broadcasting. Programmes for young people would come later, in 1957, with the introduction of the BBC's *Six-Five Special*. Before this they were the subject of sociological investigations, exemplified by the documentarian Dennis Mitchell's 1955 BBC 'Special Enquiry' into teenagers, the subtitle of which was: 'What are they? What do they want?'.¹³² In many ways, *Youth* was more akin to the BBC radio programmes of the 1930s and 1940s that featured 'polite' young people discussing contemporaneous political and social issues, and were driven by a desire to make broadcasting 'less elitist'.¹³³ Programmes such as *To Start You Talking* (which began in

¹³² BBC Archive, 'Special Enquiry: Teenagers Introduction', 1 November 1955, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/special-enquiry-teenagers-intro/z6r8gwx> [accessed 10th December 2023].

¹³³ Melanie Tebbutt, 'Listening to Youth? BBC Youth Broadcasts During the 1930s and the Second World War', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 84 (2017), p. 220.

1938) and *Under Twenty Club* (broadcast during the Second World War), like *Youth*, were chaired by a well-known broadcaster of the period and featured young people ‘from the regions’ who had been ‘selected’ by producers to appear on programmes, just as the young people for the Granada series would be.¹³⁴ However, Granada were keen to differentiate themselves from the BBC in the 1950s, and while *Youth* may have been reminiscent of BBC radio output of the previous decades, it was in fact US television of the time from which Granada had drawn inspiration.

Youth Is Asking – 1956: US origins and influences

The first of the *Youth* series, *Youth Is Asking*, involved young people, mostly from grammar schools (the choice of grammar school student for the programme is explored later), debating a topical issue with an invited guest, who was often from the world of politics, entertainment or journalism. Many of the issues and topics the series covered

¹³⁴ Tebbutt, ‘Listening to Youth?’, p. 226.

were wide ranging and included programmes on colonialism,¹³⁵ commercial television,¹³⁶ trade unionism¹³⁷, the relevance of Christianity¹³⁸ and the H-bomb.¹³⁹ Yet while the series was predominantly ‘British in tone and style’, its roots were transatlantic.

Youth Is Asking was adapted from an American format called *Youth Wants to Know* which was broadcast nationally in the United States between 1951 and 1958. Reflecting on the history of the original American television series gives useful insights into the scale and nature of Granada’s ambitions in this period through focusing on the invited guests, how it was discussed and its broader cultural and political influence.

Transatlantic influences

¹³⁵ Radio Critic, ‘A Case of Wasted Talent: ITV’s “The Heirloom”’, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 May 1956, p. 5.

¹³⁶ Television Critic, ‘Television Notes: Harvest Festival Programmes by B.B.C and I.T.A’, *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1956, p. 12.

¹³⁷ ‘Tele-Viewpoint’, *Lancashire Evening Post*, 25 July 1956, p. 5.

¹³⁸ Raymond Bowers, ‘The Relevance of Christianity’, *Daily Mirror*, 11 December 1957, p. 18.

¹³⁹ ‘Tele-crit’, *Liverpool Echo*, 11 April 1957, p. 12.

The American origins of and influences on *Youth Is Asking* reflected Granada's broader tendency in the 1950s to look to American programme-making for inspiration. This was part of a strong desire to distance its output from the identity the BBC in particular, but also from other commercial broadcasters. The media historian Michele Hilmes has argued for the importance of mapping the genealogies of British and American television and of documenting the keen awareness and engagement which took place between American and British broadcasters during the 1950s.¹⁴⁰ In 1955, for example, the *Manchester Guardian* noted how a Granada employee had been sent to the United States to look out for new directions in 'co-production' between American and British broadcasters.¹⁴¹ The section which follows explores some of the key tropes of the American series, *Youth Wants to Know*, especially in relation to the way young people were presented on the programme with the aim of contextualising and comparing it with Granada's own version.

Unlike the Granada series, the American *Youth Wants to Know*, aired between 1951 and 1959, kept to one name throughout its history.¹⁴² It was broadcast by America's National

¹⁴⁰ Michele Hilmes, *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 230.

¹⁴¹ 'Our London Correspondence', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 March 1955, p. 4.

¹⁴² Hilmes, *Network Nations*, p. 230.

Broadcasting Company (NBC), which had a ‘flourishing Public Affairs division’ in the 1950s.¹⁴³ Hilmes writes of how its wider current affairs output sought to ‘direct attention to important political, social and cultural issues and to fulfil public service obligations’.¹⁴⁴ These public service obligations and the success of the American *Youth Wants to Know* were recognised when in 1956, the year that Granada went on air, it won a prestigious Peabody Award, which had been set up in 1941 to recognise excellence in radio broadcasting and was intended to be equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize. The 1956 award praised *Youth Wants to Know* for ‘effectively’ combining ‘news, education and entertainment’ and observed that the ‘questions and questioners reveal an intelligence and development by today’s young people which are indeed heartening’.¹⁴⁵ Each programme gave ‘high school and college students the opportunity to ask questions of major figures in the world of politics, business, and international affairs’.¹⁴⁶ The series was broadcast live from Washington DC with ‘the entire operation [...] run like a press

¹⁴³ Hilmes, *Network Nations*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁴ Hilmes, *Network Nations*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Youth Wants to Know: NBC Television’ *Peabody Awards*, nd, <http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/youth-wants-to-know> [accessed 19 March 2019].

¹⁴⁶ Tim Brooks and Earle F. Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable Shows, 1946 to Present*, 9th ed. (New York, Ballantine Books, 2007), p. 1,567.

conference [...] the students presented their own question' to the invited guests.¹⁴⁷ The 'major figures' who appeared on the American version included politicians such as John Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Eleanor Roosevelt, Estes Kefauver and Senator Joseph McCarthy.¹⁴⁸ Influential international figures such as Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie and the Cuban leader Fidel Castro were also questioned as part of the series, reflecting its internationalist outlook.

The American series, like its British counterpart, was very much shaped by the politics of the people who made it. The *American Youth Wants to Know* was made during McCarthyism and the hounding of writers, directors and actors who were perceived as sympathetic to Communism.¹⁴⁹ 'Blacklisting' was something that 'marked the television industry during the 1950s'.¹⁵⁰ Opposition to McCarthyism was made explicit on the programme in 1955, when the president of NBC, Pat Weaver, reflecting on the tensions

¹⁴⁷ Brooks and Marsh, *The Complete Directory*.

¹⁴⁸ Matthew F. Delmont, *The Nicest Kids in Town: American Bandstand, Rock 'n' Roll, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in 1950s Philadelphia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁹ William Brody, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 100.

¹⁵⁰ Brody, *Fifties Television*, p. 100.

between 'the very conservative' management and programme-makers, criticised the management's dislike of anything 'controversial' in strongly anti-McCarthy language: 'Those of us who run communications know that America is based on the sanctity of dissent, that anything which pressures for uniformity or conformity is a block that is building a wall that ends our whole way of life'.¹⁵¹ Weaver's comments echo the Cold War anxieties of the period but also make explicit the structural and political tensions that marked programme making at this time.

One significant aspect of the American *Youth Wants to Know* was the presence of African American guests and panellists discussing issues of racial prejudice and segregation. The American series was aired to a national network during the era of Jim Crow segregation. In 1952 it created headlines after the African American baseball player, Jackie Robinson, invited as a guest onto the show, was asked whether he thought the Yankees were prejudiced against Black players and replied, 'Yes'.¹⁵² The historian J. Fred Macdonald refers to African American personalities as appearing frequently on US television between 1948 to 1957, yet an article from 1960 in the monthly African American-focused journal, *Ebony*, identified *Youth Wants to Know* as the only current affairs series on American television to feature African American commentators and

¹⁵¹ Brody, *Fifties Television*, pp. 100–101.

¹⁵² 'Robinson Charges Yankee Race Bias', *New York Times*, 1 December 1952, p. 31.

guests.¹⁵³ It noted how, since television's inception in the United States, only 'five [African Americans] have faced the nation, or met the white press or had an open hearing. Aside from *Youth Wants to Know*, an all-student question group, not one Negro has been a panellist on these opinion forming programmes.'¹⁵⁴

Granada's adoption of NBC's format reflected an ambition to present itself as a bold, commercial broadcaster on a par with its US counterparts and capable of providing a platform for robust, challenging and entertaining debate. Nevertheless, when it came to launching the programme Granada, unlike NBC, held back, from tackling issues of 'race' and segregation in its first programme, which resulted in the cancellation of its first booked guest, Trevor Huddleston, the famous anti-apartheid campaigner and priest. This was at the insistence of Sidney Bernstein himself, who vetoed Huddleston in favour of the Dean of Canterbury for reasons explored below. Bernstein's intervention led to the

¹⁵³ J. Fred Macdonald, *Blacks and White TV: Afro-Americans in Television since 1948*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1983), p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Ebony Photo Editorial, 'Black Wants', *Ebony*, May 1960, p. 22, available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=QoVz2rpp-skC&pg=PA122&dq=%22youth+wants+to+know%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjR9tCK5K_kAhWzoFwKHU6wC_YQ6AEIQzAF#v=onepage&q=%22youth%20wants%20to%20know%22&f=false [accessed 20 March 2019].

resignation of Therese Denny, a trusted producer and key member of Granada's first team, who had been responsible for booking Huddleston.

Therese Denny and *Youth Is Asking*

Therese Denny was an influential figure in the Granada organisation at this time, described by Denis Forman as one of Granada founder Sidney Bernstein's 'most trusted lieutenants'.¹⁵⁵ Originally from Adelaide, Australia, Denny had begun her career at Collins Publishers, as an assistant to the military historian, Chester Wilmot, before being recruited by the BBC and then Granada. At Granada, she was involved in finding guests for the first series of *Youth Is Asking*, although she resigned before the first programme was made, after falling out with Bernstein over her choice of Huddleston as its first guest.¹⁵⁶

By 1956, Trevor Huddleston was a well-known campaigner and writer who had published, to great acclaim, his book, *Naught for your Comfort*, which documented the discrimination faced by 'non-whites' in South Africa and chronicled Huddleston's own experiences of ministering in two 'Black' suburbs, Sophiatown and Orlando in

¹⁵⁵ Denis Forman, *Persona Granada: Some Memories of Sidney Bernstein and the Early Days of Independent Television* (London: André Deutsch, 1997), p. 84.

¹⁵⁶ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 84.

Johannesburg. Readers of the book, which was read widely by young people across Europe and in the United States in particular, were extremely responsive to Huddleston's arguments.¹⁵⁷ The *Manchester Guardian* described it as 'a noble book, a superb book, to be read by anyone who cares about race (or any human) relations. It vibrates with humanity'.¹⁵⁸ Huddleston's appearance in Manchester at the time of its publication attracted huge interest. On 1 May 1956, five days before Granada's first broadcast of *Youth Is Asking*, Huddleston spoke to a sold-out audience of 4,500 at the Free Trade Hall and to an 'overflow meeting' at the Albert Hall later that day, where he called for South Africa to be expelled from the Commonwealth.¹⁵⁹ He described his welcome in Manchester as being 'beyond anything I could possibly have dreamed of' but warned the

¹⁵⁷ Robin Denniston, 'Huddleston, (Ernest Urban) Trevor', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 29 May 2014, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-67142?rskey=crklvn&result=2> [accessed 19 February 2019].

¹⁵⁸ 'Sophiatown', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 March 1956, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Our Own Reporter, 'Father Huddleston Surprised by Welcome in Britain: Danger of Too Much Interest Too Soon', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 May 1956, p. 14.

audience that the ‘emotion’ surrounding his talks must not ‘die away as quickly as it had been aroused’.¹⁶⁰

Bernstein’s decision to cancel Huddleston’s appearance on *Youth Is Asking* and his conduct towards Denny features in a section of Denis Forman’s book, *Persona Granada*, which includes the correspondence leading up to Denny’s resignation. Forman’s writing is not focused on the significance of *Youth Is Asking*. Rather, the letters are used to demonstrate what he saw as the despotic and paternalistic control that Bernstein held over every section of programme-making when Granada first began, and how ‘once he [Bernstein] had taken a stand it was near impossible to persuade him to change his mind’.¹⁶¹ According to Forman, Bernstein felt he had not been consulted about the booking of Huddleston, whom he apparently did not like because he was ‘suspicious of people with a reputation for unblemished holiness’.¹⁶² In response, Denny resigned.

Therese Denny’s letters, reproduced by Forman in *Persona Granada*, describe how she consulted Bernstein about booking Huddleston and also referred to the guests – two former army generals – she had tried to get on the programme if he could not make it. She stipulated her preference for Huddleston as somebody of ‘far greater news value than

¹⁶⁰ Our Own Reporter, ‘Father Huddleston Surprised’, p. 14.

¹⁶¹ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 84.

¹⁶² Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 84.

either of the other two, a fact to which any of the daily papers of the last few weeks will bear witness'.¹⁶³ Denny described the difficulties she had experienced in her resignation letter and the effort she had expended in persuading Huddleston to appear on commercial television in the first place:

We managed to engage [Huddleston] after a considerable amount of trouble which included telephoning the head of his monastery for permission to appear on Commercial Television and cancelling a meeting at Father Huddleston's old school, to which he had previously committed himself [...] I was delighted that we had been able to achieve such a personality as our first guest [...] as I understand it, your argument is that he has appeared on BBC and independent TV news [...] Your other point was that he is a man who cannot be 'attacked'.¹⁶⁴

Denny's letter reveals the challenges faced by commercial programme makers to secure guests, especially from areas of the establishment such as the church that were, as she suggests, more sceptical of commercial television. Securing Huddleston appearance, 'after a considerable amount of trouble' and much effort to gain 'permission', was clearly a significant achievement.

¹⁶³ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 84.

¹⁶⁴ Letter of Therese Denny, featured in Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 84.

Both Forman and Denny attribute the cancellation to Sidney Bernstein's suspicion of someone who could not be attacked because he was somehow 'too good', notwithstanding Huddleston's significant reputation as a writer and political campaigner, as well as a 'personality' able to attract large crowds – making him almost the ideal guest to help launch *Youth Is Asking*. Bernstein's objection to Huddleston may be explained by his perception that this booking would not create sufficient 'entertainment' to attract viewers. Yet Forman's statement that Bernstein's suspicion 'of people with a reputation for unblemished holiness' (supported by the Therese Denny correspondence reproduced above), does not necessarily explain why he then chose another religious figure, Hewlett Johnson, 'Red' Dean of Canterbury, as the replacement guest of the programme.¹⁶⁵ Johnson, while controversial, was equally a man of 'unblemished holiness', known for his pro-communist writings and speeches and for being 'a catalyst for reactions to Communism both in Britain and America, where he commanded large audiences'.¹⁶⁶ Johnson had found fame with his book *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, published in 1939 by the left-wing publishing house, Victor Gollancz, and had been 'a unique figure' in the 1930s 'in terms of his extraordinary national and

¹⁶⁵ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 84.

¹⁶⁶ David Ayers, 'Hewlett Johnson: Britain's Red Dean and the Cold War', in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), p. 68.

international profile'.¹⁶⁷ However, his influence had peaked and waned by 1952.¹⁶⁸ He was eighty-one years of age when he appeared on *Youth Is Asking* and while his activities were reported in the press – as the Dean of Canterbury – his public profile was not on the same scale as that of Trevor Huddleston. Perhaps Bernstein saw his divisive views as a more potent incentive to lively debate given his 'pro-Soviet stance' had caused 'significant friction between himself and other clergy in the Church of England'.¹⁶⁹

It is difficult to explain the cancellation by any reservation on Sidney Bernstein's part to promote programmes questioning apartheid and racial prejudice, since he had already promoted one which included Trevor Huddleston himself. In 1955, for example, he had released through his Granada Theatres a film on apartheid in South Africa that featured Huddleston and which had been created by the anti-McCarthyist journalist Ed Murrow, a close friend of Bernstein's. A report in the *Observer* reviewed the film enthusiastically, noting how it had been produced by CBS and Ed Murrow and wondering why it had not

¹⁶⁷ Ayers, 'Hewlett Johnson', p. 73.

¹⁶⁸ Ayers, 'Hewlett Johnson', p. 79.

¹⁶⁹ Natalie K. Watson, 'Johnson, Hewlett', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34202> [accessed 20 December 2019].

been picked up the BBC, asking whether it was ‘too forthright for them?’¹⁷⁰ It noted how the South African film, originally made for American television and then released by Granada Theatres, had been very well received by the Press, and included ‘indelible impressions of street scenes, social conditions, and of some of the chief actors in the racial drama: Strijdom, Donges, Verwoerd, Dr. Xuma, Father Huddleston’.¹⁷¹ Following the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, Granada would broadcast a programme under its new *Searchlight* current affairs entitled ‘Crisis in South Africa’. This programme, directed by Tim Hewat, had ‘been instigated by Sidney Bernstein’ in response to ‘South Africa’s refusal to let the world’s press enter the country to investigate the massacre’.¹⁷² In response Bernstein assembled:

an unofficial commission of four British ‘observers’ including Labour and Conservative MPs and the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University. Unwilling to refuse entry to such an illustrious group, South Africa permitted the observers, accompanied by Tim Hewat and his crew, an interview with Prime Minister

¹⁷⁰ ‘Table Talk by Pendennis’, *Observer*, 15 May 1955, p. 11.

¹⁷¹ ‘Table Talk by Pendennis’, *Observer*, 15 May 1955, p. 11.

¹⁷² Peter Goddard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, *Public Issue Television: World in Action, 1963–98* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 14.

Verwoerd and a visit to Sharpeville. Despite run-ins with the secret police, Hewat also managed to obtain interviews with outlawed black leaders and riot victims.¹⁷³

In losing Denny as a producer, Bernstein clearly showed a disregard for her expertise, but also ran the risk of limiting Granada's radical and creative output by favouring his commercial instinct that Huddleston's 'unimpeachable' status would limit the programme's ability to attract viewers, notwithstanding any sympathy he may have had for the anti-apartheid cause. It is a measure of the importance he attached to *Youth Is Asking* that he made such an intervention.

Denny returned to the BBC and 'by the end of the 1950s was a successful producer for radio and television'.¹⁷⁴ In 1963 she moved to Australia and gained attention for her work by making a number of documentaries for ABC, at a time 'when women were rarely given the opportunity to produce or direct general content'.¹⁷⁵

The falling out with and loss of Denny over her choice of Huddleston provide insight into how Granada perceived *Youth Is Asking's* identity and purpose and also highlights how

¹⁷³ Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Jeannine Baker, 'Australian Women Working in British Broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s', *Feminist Media Histories*, 5/3 (2019), p. 159.

¹⁷⁵ Baker, 'Australian Women Working in British Broadcasting', p. 159.

the eminence of guests appeared to be far more important than what might interest young people themselves. While *Youth Is Asking* included younger people as guests, it seems that many of those who appeared in the later episodes were of Hewlett Johnson's generation, with strong connections to Manchester and the North. Johnson himself had formerly been the Dean of Manchester Cathedral and guests who appeared in subsequent episodes included the Durham-based trade unionist and politician, Samuel Watson, born in 1898; Mirabel Topham, owner of Aintree racecourse in Merseyside, born in 1891; and the actor Dame Sybil Thorndike, born in 1882, who had a long association with Manchester's Gaiety Theatre. This was perhaps a way to ensure coverage of regional and northern issues and demonstrate Granada's commitment to the North.

Choosing the young people

The episode in which the Dean of Canterbury appeared was presented by the journalist Neil Pearson, with sixth formers, from Liverpool, who were the first young people to appear on the programme. The *Manchester Guardian's* review thought that the young participants showed considerable promise in how they questioned Hewlett Johnson. They were also extremely polite, foreshadowing similar responses from critics of later series such as *We Want an Answer*. The review was a clear early endorsement of the programme and also delineated how Johnson was someone whom the newspaper enjoyed seeing 'attacked':

If the Liverpool sixth formers under Neil Pearson's able chairmanship did not fire their questions with the vigour of an adult 'press conference' they did put extremely good, clear intelligent points about Communism with a gravity and persistence which did them great credit. I thought they had the Dean on the spot more than once, although he extricated himself from impossible situations with some skill. There was complete disagreement and total politeness: the steady gaze of all those young viewers was a silent judgment that no viewer could ignore [...] it is certainly one of Granada's most promising features.¹⁷⁶

Youth Is Asking was reviewed consistently in regional and national papers during a period when television critics were keen to promote TV as a cultural medium and also extremely attentive to its successes and failures.¹⁷⁷ The choice of guests for each episode seems to have incremented Granada's status as a broadcaster, as exemplified in the *Manchester Guardian*, which commented on the programme's ability to draw in nationally recognisable figures: "Youth is Asking" is one of the few programmes in which

¹⁷⁶ Radio Critic, 'Varied Fare: Snooker and the Dean of Canterbury', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1956, p. 14.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Rixon, *TV Critics and Popular Culture: A History of British Television Criticism* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2011).

Granada at the same time gets away from the monotony of most independent television and puts up people and subjects of more than local interest'.¹⁷⁸

One of the early signals of the series' success was how frustrated critics were with its scheduling time. This was perceived as symptomatic of Granada's inexperience, although it also indicates how the series and Granada were being singled out for successful broadcasting early on. The *Manchester Guardian* wrote that: 'After two months of independent television in the North programme schedules [...] have a rigidity which might be more bearable if the programmes were not so poor. Of Granada's own efforts "Youth is Asking" is about the best [...] it seems a mistake to put this early evening as last night.'¹⁷⁹

Within the first few months of the first series being aired, the *Manchester Guardian* described it as one 'the best of Granada's own broadcasts'.¹⁸⁰ The original series of

¹⁷⁸ Radio Critic, 'Good Feature Put On Too Early: "Youth Is Asking"', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 July 1956, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Radio Critic, 'Good Feature Put On Too Early'.

¹⁸⁰ Radio Critic, 'Good Feature Put On Too Early'.

thirty-one episodes doubled to sixty-one in 1957, after the *Liverpool Echo* reported that 'so many people had asked Granada to bring it back'.¹⁸¹

Youth Is Asking was transmitted against a background of significant transformation in the way young people were catered to and presented on television. Between 1955 and 1959, young people become an identifiable social group, with television creators and producers actively, and keenly, seeking to 'attract' their attention with new forms of programming. For instance, during the time *Youth* was on air, there were several music programmes specifically aimed at young people. These included the BBC's *Six-Five Special*, broadcast live on Saturday between 6pm and 7pm in 1957 and featuring 'a tame mix of jazz and rock and roll with skiffle artists'.¹⁸² The first series had been 'cheap' to make and had been 'designed to run for only six weeks'.¹⁸³ However, the 'immediate response' and enthusiasm it produced was unexpected.¹⁸⁴ The following year, ABC launched *Oh Boy!*, a live music programmes geared towards young people that

¹⁸¹ Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen*, p. 198.

¹⁸² Melanie Tebbutt, *Making Youth: A History of Youth in Modern Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 153.

¹⁸³ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, volume 5, *Competition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 200.

¹⁸⁴ Asa Briggs, *Competition*, p. 200.

‘capitalised’ on the success of *Six-Five Special*. in 1959 the BBC introduced *Juke Box Jury*, with a formula that involved guest panellists reviewing the latest record releases. The programme ‘was based on an American idea and the BBC had to pay a copyright fee’.¹⁸⁵

While Granada chose to include young people on the programmes, their decision to include predominantly grammar school pupils as participants is suggestive of an attempt to introduce ‘serious’ youth voices into broadcasting at a time when they were predominantly framed through the prism of music and as ‘consumers’.

Grammar schools and the 1950s

The grammar school system, introduced by the Education Act of 1944, streamlined children into state or selective (grammar) schools via the 11 + exam so that, as Carolyn Steedman reflected in her memoir, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, childhood and education in the 1950s were ‘stretched out along a curve of achievement and only a few were allowed to travel through the narrow gate at the age of eleven, towards the golden city’.¹⁸⁶ However, grammar schools were also seen as one of the few avenues through

¹⁸⁵ Briggs, *Competition*, p. 206, fn 40.

¹⁸⁶ Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: Growing up in the Fifties* (London: Virago Press, 1985), p. 122.

which working-class children might ‘climb up’ the social ladder. Yet grammar schools’ focus on ‘talent’ reflected how the system, based on a selection, was one that was highly discriminative. Arguably, it also foreshadowed the mechanisms and ‘selection’ process of television production and programme-making itself, with pupils on the programme specially ‘selected’ by Granada to appear on the programme.

The BBC also looked for participants on their ‘youth’ programmes by visiting grammar schools. Steedman remembers that, while preparing to take her exams for grammar school, ‘there was a man from the BBC there that day who came into the eleven plus class and recorded voices, trying us out for a children’s programme’.¹⁸⁷ Grammar schools saw participation in the *Youth* programmes as a beneficial way to showcase their ‘talent’, and in Granada’s choice of students it seems that they were adhering to orthodoxies of the period.

When the journalist Ian G. Smith from the *Shipley Times* accompanied pupils who were appearing in an episode of *We Want an Answer* to the Granada studios in 1958, he wrote that, despite extremely short notice, schools were very eager to appear on the series. The Salts School, for example, was only contacted a few days before transmission. Nonetheless, ‘40 [schools] gratefully accepted despite the fact that they were right in the

¹⁸⁷ Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, p. 104.

middle of their examinations'.¹⁸⁸ Smith gives useful insight into how participants were selected, describing how 'on Thursday, producer of the show, Mr. Mike Wooller went to Salts and helped select the six members for the panel who would ask the questions of the guest celebrity'.¹⁸⁹ On the day of filming, he noted how, 'from what I could gather some person in authority had seen the boys and girls in the afternoon and had checked over the questions with them, so that they knew roughly the types that would be asked'.¹⁹⁰ His comments suggest the speed with which the series was made and how it was very much orchestrated and shaped by the selections made by Granada and teachers, who chose certain 'types'.

This is underlined in a memoir published by the distinguished mathematician Peter Hilton who, in 1957, was employed by Granada to instruct and prep the participants. Hilton, then in his mid-thirties, was a former code breaker who had worked alongside

¹⁸⁸ Ian G. Smith, 'Thrill for Forty Salt Grammar School Pupils: Adventure in Front of Television Cameras in Manchester', *Shipley Times and Express*, 9 July 1958, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Smith, 'Thrill for Forty Salt Grammar School Pupils', p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ Smith, 'Thrill for Forty Salt Grammar School Pupils', p. 3.

Alan Turing at Bletchley Park in the Second World War.¹⁹¹ Hilton instructed some of the programme's young participants on the questions they should ask invited guests (to whom, interestingly, he refers as 'celebrities'). Hilton was then employed as a senior lecturer at the University of Manchester and Granada's employment of such an individual suggests the company's own desire, perhaps, to affiliate itself with 'respectable' institutions to establish credibility early on. However, Hilton was also, according to his obituary, involved in amateur dramatics – and the thrill of being involved in television might have influenced his decision to take part in it. In his memoir, he recalls how:

the role of the programme was that the avid youth would be asking keen and interesting questions of some personality. Since the youth had no idea who the personality was or what sort of questions to ask, I would first of all meet the children chosen from the school or some youth group. I would meet them before the actual transmission of the program and explain to them who the celebrity was,

¹⁹¹ Ian Stewart, 'Peter Hilton', obituary, *Guardian*, 2 December 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/dec/02/peter-hilton-obituary> [accessed 3 July 2019].

what sort of questions to ask, and I would be ready myself with further questions in case the exchange between the youth and celebrity faltered.¹⁹²

Here, Hilton's revelation that Granada did not choose figures familiar to the young people suggests the programme's primary focus was on the 'celebrity' and less on the young people. His description of the 'children' from 'the school or 'some youth group' suggests that for him their background was unimportant. Moreover, his comments reveal how the 'interesting questions' asked were in no way instigated by the young people involved. Hilton did not take part in the programmes, yet his description of himself as being primed 'with further questions' in case the discussion 'faltered' also suggests that he may have participated and been involved in questioning. (However, I have found no evidence for this in reviews of the series.)

In choosing Peter Hilton to 'prep' the young participants, were Granada staff also expressing something of their political affiliations? During his time at university, Hilton was apparently 'strongly pro-Russian and joined a group of like-minded Queen's men whose social gatherings always ended with a rousing chorus of "The Red Flag" led

¹⁹² Lynn A. Steen and G.L. Alexanderson, 'Peter J. Hilton', in *Mathematical People: Profiles and Interviews*, ed. David J. Albers and Gerald L. Alexanderson (Florida: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), p. 142.

by Hilton'.¹⁹³ Once again, this nugget reveals the complexity of the 'Granada' ethos: both bound up in a 'radical' agenda but blind to some establishment elements such as a focus on grammar schools and a male-dominated ethos.

The sense of the young people as passive recipients or vessels for Granada's own or, in this case, others' political identity is reflected by Mike Scott, who was involved in directing many of the later episodes of *Youth Wants to Know* before taking over *We Want an Answer* and *Under Fire*, a studio-based current affairs programme initiated in 1956, which attracted attention for its antagonistic tone. Scott reflected on how *Youth Wants to Know*'s initially more tentative title and formulae were in part to do with the company's trepidation as a new broadcaster, but that this trepidation dissipated as Granada gained more experience. Over time, the company felt more confident to let audience members ask their own questions without, it appears, mitigation from figures such as Hilton. As he recalls here:

In the early editions of *Youth Wants to Know* the audience were there as wallpaper; the kids were not invited to participate. But once again, we gained confidence and became bored with the very set formula of six children-plus-

¹⁹³ I.M. James, 'Hilton, Peter John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 9 January 2014, <https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/102834> [accessed 20 May 2019].

celebrity, we said, let the audience do it. And *Youth Wants to Know* developed into something that was as freewheeling as *Under Fire* was. Children or Adults, the basic principle had to be that the audience felt it to be their show not ours, and then there would be no fear of a terrible silence.¹⁹⁴

Scott's disclosure of how the participants in *Under Fire* felt it had to be 'their show not ours' is in stark contrast to Hilton's description of *Youth Is Asking*.

Youth Wants to Know: 1957–1958

The launch of *Youth Wants to Know* on 20 February 1957 restored the name of the American series from which the format had first been taken.¹⁹⁵ The series was broadcast to the national network during a slot between 6pm and 7pm, formerly known as 'the toddler's truce' when programming had been prohibited because it was assumed that children were being put to bed.¹⁹⁶ The slot soon became 'a focal point of the ratings war, since it was thought to be vital to the success of programmes later in the evening that

¹⁹⁴ Noel Chanan's Oral History.

¹⁹⁵ Andrew Gray, 'TV Page Section', *The Stage*, 21 February 1957, p. 12.

¹⁹⁶ John Corner, 'Television and British Society in the 1950s', in *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*, ed. John Corner (London: British Film Institute, 1991), p. 7.

viewers were tuned in early on the ‘right’ channel’.¹⁹⁷ In moving to the national network, *Youth Wants to Know* was reviewed by national newspapers for the first time, a move that reflected how Granada was self-consciously trying to appeal to young people to a much greater extent than in the previous series.

This second series gained traction for both its wide appeal and the broad range of topics it discussed. This is reflected in a review in the *Liverpool Echo* in 1957, which described how ‘subjects have been as varied as the personalities questioned – they have included art, the H-bomb, “dating” and party government’.¹⁹⁸ The varied nature of these topics is indicative of how television programme-makers were trying to work out who *Youth* programming was actually *for* during this period. *Youth Wants to Know* was unlike the first and last of the *Youth* series in that it directly advertised itself as being ‘for teenagers’, which was indicative of the growing prominence of young people.

Elaine Grand

Youth Wants to Know, and later *We Want an Answer*, were both presented by Elaine Grand, a former fashion illustrator from Canada, who worked for both British and

¹⁹⁷ Corner, ‘Television and British Society’, p. 7.

¹⁹⁸ Norman Cooke, ‘Youth Wants to Know about Crime and Their Punishment’, *Liverpool Echo*, 20 June 1957, p. 8.

Canadian public television in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁹⁹ Before joining Granada, she had been ‘the most famous woman on television’ while working as a presenter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).²⁰⁰ In Canada, Grand ‘became the star interviewer on *Tabloid*, a news and talk programme that drew vast nationwide audiences.’²⁰¹ She was married to Rueben Ship, best known for his radio play *The Investigator*, which criticised McCarthy’s US House Committee on Un-American Activities, to which he himself had been called to give evidence, on suspicion of being a ‘communist’.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Grand presented programmes for ATV before working for Granada. She also worked for the Canadian programme *Close-up* at the same time as working for these organisations.

²⁰⁰ Peter Denton, ‘Élaine Grand’, obituary, *Guardian*, 17 May, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2001/may/17/broadcasting.guardianobituaries> [accessed 14 March 2019].

²⁰¹ Denton, ‘Élaine Grand’.

²⁰² Rueben Ship, *The Investigator* (1954), a radio play first broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on 30 May 1954. The play lampooned the US House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and McCarthy; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4sUImJC6iw> [accessed 20 March 2019].

Grandlater produced her own documentaries for ITV on various ‘taboo’ subjects and was, according to the television historian Patricia Holland, an ‘exception’ on British television in the late 1950s.²⁰³ Her presence on Granada’s first current affairs series – and British television more widely – has had almost no academic analysis or investigation.

While the role of chairperson seems to have rotated for the first series, the subsequent series were predominantly presented by Grand throughout. She fronted many of Granada’s major programmes as well as documentary specials on ‘taboo’ issues of the period such as mental illness and the contraceptive pill. Television critic Maurice Richardson praised her programme on the contraceptive pill for its ‘thoroughly sensible and informative’ tone, also commenting that, ‘Elaine Grand is the acknowledged queen of this kind of commentary’.²⁰⁴ Her presence and success on television were attributed to being an outsider and to being more relaxed and ‘natural’ on screen than her British counterparts. In an article reflecting on the BBC’s decision in 1961 to replace male comperes with female announcers (for the BBC women’s programming), Grand was

²⁰³ Holland writes of Grand’s exceptional status in her previous role presenting ‘This Week’ for the ITV channel ATV in 1956, where she worked before joining Granada the following year. Patricia Holland, *The Angry Buzz: This Week and Current Affairs Television* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 19.

²⁰⁴ Maurice Richardson, ‘The Canterbury Stakes’, *Observer*, 2 July 1961, p. 23.

mentioned by Doreen Stephens, head of women's programming at the BBC, as being 'the only successful' woman on television because 'she was brought up in Canada where they haven't got this artificial thing about women'.²⁰⁵ While these comments highlight the constructions for women at the time, the choice of someone with a 'relaxed style' reflects the non-BBC style, format and tone that Granada was attempting to create.

Topics discussed

Significantly, *Youth Wants to Know* received endorsement from the *Daily Mirror*, which platformed and prioritised the programme since it was extremely 'keen to see the nation modernise after austerity' and praised 'young people's willingness to throw off old cultural restraints as refreshing and surprising'.²⁰⁶ The first episodes were reviewed enthusiastically by the newspaper, which described *Youth Wants to Know* as 'a rattling good example of a show for teenagers on the serious but lively side', with the critic

²⁰⁵ Olga Franklin, 'What Has the BBC against Women', *Daily Mail*, 12 September 1961, p.

8.

²⁰⁶ Tebbutt, *Making Youth*, p. 146.

Raymond Bowers adding, 'I will bet that "Youth wants to know" as a series will catch droves of adults as well as teenagers.'"²⁰⁷

Granada's *Youth* discussion series was broadcast at the same time as the BBC developed its *Six-Five Special* rock and roll programme, another new youth genre in Britain, and this positive feedback from a popular national daily newspaper was something of a vindication of the increasing confidence of the series in combining entertaining youth programming with debates on contemporary topics. For instance, a review of *Youth Wants to Know* in April 1957 recorded a 'sombre' discussion of the H-bomb tests, with the writer commending how 'the programme was presented with discretion and earnestness in pattern with the solemnity of the theme'; 'timed later than 6pm so that it can reach the wider audience it deserves'.²⁰⁸ A month later, a light-hearted programme on 'should boys and girls have dates while at school' was the topic of another programme.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Raymond Bowers, 'Superman Take Over at Tea-Time', *Daily Mirror*, 23 February 1957, p. 16.

²⁰⁸ 'Telecrit', *The Liverpool Echo*, 11 April 1957, p. 12.

²⁰⁹ Clifford Davies, 'A Hundred Teenagers Ask About Love', *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1957, p. 16.

Unlike the previous series, guests who appeared on *Youth Wants to Know* were much younger, with far more women appearing than on *Youth is Asking*. Often a 'progressive' figure was pitted against a more conservative one. For instance, in May 1957, a programme featured the *Daily Mirror* journalist Marjorie Proops debating with Lady Molly, 'wife of former governor in Jamaica', on whether boys and girls should date while at school.²¹⁰ Proops, a socialist and social reformer campaigner, was a hugely successful agony aunt for the *Daily Mirror* from 1954 and, with Lady Molly, was one of several largely middle-class women who featured on the series. The debate was voted on by young people in the audience, with Proops, the more progressive of the two, 'winning'.²¹¹ Another programme explored the status of women in entertainment, where actor Margaret Rawlings debated with Gordon Sanderson, General Secretary of Equity, about Noel Coward's words 'Don't put your daughter on the stage'. Margaret Rawlings 'beat' Sanderson, arguing that 'if a young woman has a great passion for the stage, and if she has a genuine talent then nothing should stop her'.²¹²

The guests and programmes listed above illustrate how the *Youth* series was prepared to take on increasingly 'progressive' subjects, including gender inequalities, even if the

²¹⁰ Davies, 'A Hundred Teenagers', p. 16.

²¹¹ Davies, 'A Hundred Teenagers', p. 16.

²¹² 'Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage', *The Stage*, 30 May 1957, p. 6.

framing was distinctly middle class. Women's careers and lives were constricted more than those of men during this period, with the route for girls through grammar school being especially problematic.²¹³ As Helen McCarthy notes,

The 11 + examination [...] was weighted against girls [...] fewer grammar schools had places for girls than for boys and, as a result, girls in many areas had to gain a higher exam score than for boys to enter a grammar school. This inequality persisted, largely unnoticed, until comprehensive schools were introduced in the mid-1960s.²¹⁴

The inequalities inherent in the grammar school system were starting to receive attention from the mid-1950s and Granada's desire to engage with gender equalities is perhaps reflective of how these wider debates were transforming post-war landscapes.

The *Youth* series was also responsible for creating a space in which many influential directors and senior Granada management began their careers. The eminent director Herbert Wise was involved in *Youth Wants to Know*, as was the director Kurt 'Lew' Lewenhak, who worked for Granada and later Tyne Tees TV in the 1950s and 1960s,

²¹³ Helen McCarthy, 'Gender Equality', in *Unequal Britain: Equalities since 1945*, ed. Pat Thane (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 109.

²¹⁴ McCarthy, 'Gender Equality', p. 109.

where he made a number of social and political documentaries reflecting the nascent campaign for nuclear disarmament.²¹⁵ Both directors had been born in Austria in the 1920s and were Jewish refugees to England. Wise arrived in Britain on the Kindertransport from Vienna in 1939, at the age of fourteen.²¹⁶

We Want an Answer: 1958–1959

In April 1958, *Youth Wants to Know* was relaunched and renamed *We Want an Answer*. Interestingly the series sought university students to appear on the series, and Granada wrote to the William Mansfield Cooper, Vice Chancellor of the University of Manchester about their students' possible appearance on the programme. Researcher for the series, Patricia Owtram, specified the kind of young participants who were considered most appropriate: 'The young people we are looking for are those who are intelligent, think for themselves, and have a genuine interest in current affairs – as distinct from those who

²¹⁵ Brighton Screen Archives, 'Lewenhak Work Life Overview Scan'.

²¹⁶ Phillip Purser, 'Herbert Wise', obituary, *Guardian*, 12 August 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/aug/12/herbert-wise> [accessed 5 June 2019].

think they are born television personalities'; this comment suggests how the idea of television celebrity was beginning to become more influential.²¹⁷

We Want an Answer was directed by Mike Scott, who was subsequently associated with several other youth programmes. Scott joined Granada as a floor manager in 1956 and having been educated at a grammar school, shared the background of the young people who appeared on the series. He later became the organisation's programme controller from 1979 to 1989.

The new programmes were again transmitted to the national network, with the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* noting how 'the title [...] has been changed to one with a more demanding appeal'.²¹⁸ The format reverted to the same one as *Youth Is Asking* with six young people pitted against a celebrity guest.

This new series was made during a period of confidence for Granada. Following a successful transmission of the Rochdale by-election in February 1958 – the first time a regional political by-election had been transmitted on television – the company was

²¹⁷ 'Granada Television', University of Manchester, Vice-Chancellor's Archive, Correspondence from 1959 to 1962, University of Manchester Library, GB 133 VCA/7/183.

²¹⁸ 'Monitor', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 30 April 1958, p. 2.

praised for having enlivened election broadcasting. Historians have recognised this a key moment in the history of the organisation. Writing of Granada, Asa Briggs commented: 'More intrepid than other broadcasting organisations, Granada deliberately broke new ground, when after consulting its lawyers, it broadcast programmes while the campaign at Rochdale was in progress'.²¹⁹ This televising of a political discussion on commercial television was perceived as 'a first' for public life. Yet this was also a period where Granada was attracting criticism from the ITA and from the Conservative Party for its series, *Under Fire*. Launched in 1956 in the same period as *Youth Wants to Know*, *Under Fire* was, as has been suggested, deliberately antagonistic – often pitting audience members, normally in Manchester, against London based authority figure or politicians.

As Christopher Hill explains, the series, 'established very much an "us and them" dichotomy between experts and ordinary citizens'.²²⁰ Hill quotes the ITA Chairman Robert Fraser, who described the programme as giving 'the poor old underdog a chance to have his say'.²²¹ *The Times* described the series as one 'designed to put politicians in the dock to be rather crudely questioned, heckled and sometimes shouted down by the

²¹⁹ Briggs, *Competition*, p. 238.

²²⁰ Christopher R. Hill, *Peace and Power: Media, Movements and Democracy, c. 1945–68* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p. 45.

²²¹ Hill, *Peace and Power*, p. 45.

studio audience'.²²² The newspaper wrote of the Conservative Party's 'specific complaints' that Liberal and Labour MPs invited onto the programme were given more time to prepare than their Conservative counterparts. As such, Conservative MPs believed that 'Granada are not playing fair to defenders of the government or indeed defenders of the establishment generally'.²²³ *The Times* referenced a Conservative member of Parliament who described *Under Fire* as 'politics at the "rock 'n' roll" level'.²²⁴ Replying to these charges, Granada was quoted as stating: '*Under-Fire* is non-political. It is the complaints of ordinary people against those who are set in authority over them, regardless of party.'²²⁵

The progressive confidence of the company in its ability to produce and defend forthright programmes was reflected in the choice of a much more emphatic title for the final version of the Youth series, *We Want an Answer*. There also appears to have been a calculated choice to deploy the 'us and them' approach developed in *Under Fire*, a style that Granada seems to have pushed at and tested throughout the first few years the series was on air. Bernard Sendall, in *Independent Television in Britain*, describes the

²²² 'Conservatives Complain of Television Bias', *The Times*, 17 June 1958, p. 10.

²²³ 'Conservatives Complain of Television Bias'.

²²⁴ 'Conservatives Complain of Television Bias'.

²²⁵ 'Conservatives Complain of Television Bias'.

final iteration of *We Want an Answer* as ‘one of several discussion programmes, all with aggressive titles, with which Granada made a considerable reputation as a company with a hard abrasive edge’ in the 1950s.²²⁶

With the right format, intergenerational conflict could now be commercialised. For instance, a programme which featured the aristocratic writer Edith Sitwell elicited the question from a young person, ‘What do you think of rock ‘n’ roll?’.²²⁷ It was met with outrage by Sitwell, who replied, ‘I did not leave my work to come here to answer questions about rock ‘n’ roll’. Later, when questioned on the legacy of her work, Sitwell accused the questioner of ‘impertinence’. A reviewer from the left-leaning *Daily Herald*, writing under the headline, ‘You must apologise dame Edith’, sought to defend the young people, stating how ‘these were not teddy boys or Teddy girls [...] but highly intelligent and sensitive youngsters who had not the slightest thought of impertinence in their minds’.²²⁸

The increasing profile of this later series is reflected in reviews by the *Daily Mail* television critic, Peter Black. Black was an influential reviewer, so much so that on retiring from the

²²⁶ Bernard Sendall, *Origin and Foundation*, p. 333.

²²⁷ Phillip Phillips, ‘You Must Apologise Dame Edith’, *Daily Herald*, 26 June 1958 ‘Tele-parade’ Section, p. 2.

²²⁸ Phillips, ‘You Must Apologise Dame Edith’.

Daily Mail he was given a farewell party at the Ritz, not only by the BBC, but also by Sidney Bernstein and Denis Forman, which suggests the value they placed on his opinions. In a review dated October 1958, when the new series had been on air for several months, he wrote of being transfixed while watching an episode of *We Want an Answer* with an encounter between the Conservative Home Secretary, Rab Butler, and students from a group of Blackburn Schools.²²⁹

Granada's *We Want an Answer* pulled together another plum from the season's political conferences: Mr R.A. Butler, no less. He was questioned by six boys and girls from a couple of Blackburn schools [...] As a personality, however, he could hardly compare with the novelty value of the six. I have not watched every edition of the programme, and cannot tell whether the six were exceptional, or whether they are normal in these parts [...] Either way they were fascinating to watch [...] subjects covered included capital and corporal punishment, unemployment, education, and the Wolfenden report. The questioning was articulate, mostly tenacious, and preternaturally solemn. 'Sir, would you not agree that your meeting was a really rather a conference?' 'Sir, my father is a weaver and therefore I am personally concerned with unemployment.' It was plain that had

²²⁹ Black's review does not name the 'schools'; it was most likely one school. 'Peter Black's Teleview', *Daily Mail*, October 1958, p. 10.

the Home Secretary attempted a dodgy answer the team would have been down on him like a ton of bricks [...] their polite but firm hostility to Conservatism seemed part of them, like an accent [...] this was deeply interesting. I hope some Tory will be stung into asking Sidney Bernstein why no Conservative Child was included. It became evident that a general gloomy dismissing of modern youth as jailbait is misplaced. These boys and girls seemed to be a different species from the baffled, scowling, tongue-tied belligerents of the teenage cult. But they're not.²³⁰

This review is revealing in several ways. For Black, it was the incongruity of the young people's northern accents, together with their intelligence and 'polite but firm hostility' towards Butler, that made the encounter so compelling to watch and prompted him to reflect on whether the young people on television, were 'normal in these parts'. This was a patronising observation that expressed a sense of the 'otherness' of the North. Black's description of the young people's voices is even more poignant when set against memories of 'elocution lessons' experienced by a former grammar student, Michael Wild, at the same time as *We Want An Answer* was broadcast. Wild's school, Rothwell Grammar School, in West Yorkshire, appeared on the programme in 1958 and he recalls how 'the headmaster taught English to the first form and one of his pet themes was public

²³⁰ 'Peter Black's Teleview', *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1958, p. 10.

speaking and with it, elocution. This was at a time when the only socially acceptable accents were BBC English or Scots. Any other regional accent marked you as an oik from the provinces with limited intelligence.’²³¹

As ‘respectable’ Northerners but with regional accents, the students appear exalted in Black’s review, suggesting that the programme and, by extension, Granada, may have played a part in challenging hegemonies of dialect and region at the time (whilst at the same partaking in those hegemonies by choosing young people from schools where such lessons took place). Yet while Black clearly found delight in watching the encounter, he also attempted to neutralise and assign the students’ status to mere ‘novelty value’ while also emphasising the nascent development of youth in society, described as ‘the teenage cult’. His review moreover echoes suspicions made towards *Under Fire*, of a left-wing bias within Granada’s output. In a later review, from 1958, Black commented on how the earnest and polite younger participants were out of step with the forthright title of the new series. Their formality made him reflect on how:

we reach here the constant difficulties of child performers. They can never be flippant, either as interviewers or actors, and there is always something

²³¹ Michael Wild, ‘Life at Rothwell Grammar School in the 1950s’ (n.d.), <https://newwoodlesford.xyz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Life-at-RGS-in-the-1950s.pdf> [accessed 10 December 2023].

touchingly vulnerable about their earnestness. This is why the title of this otherwise excellent series is ill-chosen. It implies aggression, banging on tables [...] nothing could be further from the attitudes of these polite and accomplished striplings.²³²

Black's description of the young people as 'child performers' reflects a period in broadcasting when critics were becoming more attuned to television's desire to create 'entertainment'. It implies that Black was aware that there was an element of manipulation in how the 'accomplished' young people expressed their views, illustrated by the disjuncture between their politeness and the more aggressive connotations of the 'excellent' series' title.

Conclusion

There is no visual evidence from Granada's *Youth* series, except for one silent three-minute clip from a section of *We Want an Answer* on YouTube. The footage is of a grammar school and opens with the credits for the series, in which six pupils are framed by the camera around a desk with their name badges in front of them and the words 'WE WANT AN ANSWER' enlarged across the screen. Each of the pupils is captured close up, with the camera taking in their faces as they are introduced to viewers. They sit formally

²³² 'Peter Black's Teleview', *Daily Mail*, 7 November 1958, p. 12.

behind desks. The boys in suits and ties, the girls in high-collared dresses. Their fellow classmates sit behind them on wooden benches. At one point, a boy speaks, and the camera catches a girl laughing in the audience. In the centre, between the pupils and the two invited guests, sits Elaine Grand.²³³

The available footage of the programme attests to a certain formality. The young people are presented in a uniform manner even in the last iteration of the series, rather like the seating of *University Challenge*, which first aired in ITV in 1962 (see Figure 1). The format is far from ‘freewheeling’ to the modern television viewer, and the curation of the subject matter, the guests and the schoolchildren are still subject to careful ‘middle-class’ framing seemingly at odds with Granada’s ‘radical’ reputation.

²³³ The footage has been uploaded by a former grammar school student, Leslie Appleyard, who attended Rothwell Grammar School in the West Riding of Yorkshire, one of the schools which was selected to appear on the series in 1957 and 1958. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE6wS-MDiS8> [accessed 20 June 2019].



Figure 1. Screenshot of pupils from Rothwell Grammar School taking part in an episode of *We Want an Answer*. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE6wS-MDiS8> [accessed 20 June 2019].

While Granada was self-consciously seeking to brand itself as a ‘Northern’ company during this period, for some commentators it was also ignoring important local differences in reaching for national significance. In 1958, Ian G. Smith, a journalist from the *Shipley Times*, accompanied forty pupils selected from Salts Grammar school in West Yorkshire to the Granada studios on Quay Street, Manchester, to watch them appear in an episode of *We Want an Answer*. Smith was disappointed by Granada’s failure to acknowledge their home-town or school, writing how ‘there was no real mention of Salts school. Shipley was definitely not connected with the programme and

to anyone who was watching and did not know any of the pupils it might well have been just another show'.²³⁴

Nevertheless, the *Youth* series is now regarded as highly influential in the development of Granada's reputation. According to Peter Goddard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, both *We Want an Answer* and *Under Fire* were 'markedly more interrogative than their more discursive competitors'.²³⁵ The *Youth* series is now recognised as a precursor to *World in Action*, Granada's most well-known current affairs series – widely credited as incrementing and establishing its 'radical' and socially progressive image which produced investigative journalism focused on 'exposures' and known for its forthright style.²³⁶

It is perhaps a mark of the success of the *Youth* series that the 'discursive' and 'interrogatory' nature of the programme became too much for the Conservative Government at the time and was accused of breaching impartiality. While Granada

²³⁴ Smith, 'Thrill for Forty Salt Grammar School Pupils', *ShIPLEY Times and Express*, p. 3.

²³⁵ Peter Goddard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, 'The Formation of World in Action: A Case Study in the History of Current Affairs', *Journalism*, 2/1 (2001), pp. 73–90.

²³⁶ Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 10.

robustly defended the series, criticism nevertheless contributed to the cessation of *Under Fire* and to the final series of *Youth*.

The evolution of the *Youth* series in the 1950s exemplified Granada's desire to set the tone of the new broadcasting company by addressing the emergence of youth as an exciting new social category and challenging the derogatory way in which young people were often represented. The series' thoughtful tone encouraged viewers to take the young people's views seriously, with a focus on political discussion that contrasted with the music programmes becoming popular by the latter part of the decade. Drawing 'talent' from local grammar schools, *Youth* was in some respects showcasing the abilities of the region's 'future', albeit within carefully demarcated boundaries. This focus on youth loosened as the programmes adjusted to the changing cultural climate. Having been a training ground for Granada personnel through discussion of political issues, its legacies would be seen in future series. It reflected an experimental time in Granada's history, demonstrating how receptive reviewers were to Granada's efforts in shifting the way politics was discussed and presented on television.

Chapter 3: 'Pope', paintings and patronage: The meaning of Granada Television's modern art collection



Figure 2. Photograph of Patrick Heron's *Emerald in Dark Red with Violet and Blue* (1972), purchased by Granada in 1973, hanging in an office or meeting room. Date of photograph unknown. Courtesy of Stephen Kelly.

I loved the building because, as an artist, the walls were dripping with wonderful, up-to-the-minute art. It was always a joy to be wandering round the corridors. So, if you went in through the car park entrance, there were John Bratbys on the wall. In Committee

Room C – but I didn’t know this until later – was a Robyn Denny painting which I always admired.¹

Introduction

Granada Television collected over two hundred works of modern art between 1950s and the 1980s that were displayed in the company’s Manchester headquarters in Deansgate,

¹ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Steve Kelly, 10 August 2017, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <http://www.granadaland.org/thelma-mcgough> [accessed May 2020]. Born in 1941 in Liverpool, Thelma McGough attended Liverpool’s Junior Art School before attending the Liverpool College of Art in the 1950s. An influential figure in the city’s music and arts scene of the 1960s, she was married to the Liverpool beat poet Roger McGough. McGough would open a fashion boutique in Liverpool, *Moniker’s*, in the 1960s. She began a relationship with the Granada presenter Anthony Wilson in 1973, and in 1976 began working as a researcher for Granada Television. She left Granada to work at London Weekend Television (LWT) where she worked on the programmes *Surprise Surprise* and *Blind Date*. While at LWT, McGough won a Bafta for her work.

a modernist building designed by the architect Ralph Tubbs.² They included paintings by artists Prunella Clough, Howard Hodgkin, Patrick Heron, Francis Bacon and Frank Auerbach that are remembered for being highly visible — placed along corridors, in foyers and meeting rooms (see Figure 2).³ The art is recounted in oral history memories by employees as contributing to a distinctly ‘creative’ atmosphere at Granada and one that fostered a sense of it feeling ‘different’ to other companies. Jane Buchan worked as a production assistant at Granada from 1973 until 1978 and describes how the paintings were ‘all round the building’ and ‘felt like they were being shared with you’.⁴ Buchan remembers: ‘I’d never worked in a place like that and I found it really exciting’.⁵ Former *World in Action* director, Dorothy Byrne, who joined the company in 1982, leaving in 1994,

² Reginald Dodwell, Alex Bernstein and Robin Vousden, *The Granada Collection: Recent British Paintings and Drawings* (Manchester: Whitworth Gallery, 1983), p. 5.

³ Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*, p. 5.

⁴ Jane Buchan, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 21 January 2014, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/june-buchan-2/> [accessed May 2020].

⁵ Jane Buchan, interviewed by Stephen Kelly.

recalls the extent and scale of the collection: ‘even down in the corridors in the basement there were fantastic pictures’.⁶

While there have been references to the art as being symptomatic of Granada’s ‘difference’, most notably in Paul Morley’s recent biography of Tony Wilson, academic work on the collection is non-existent.⁷ Although publications have explored the relationship between media and architecture, the resonance and meaning of interiors has been overlooked.⁸ An exception is Dorothy Hobson’s history of Channel 4, where she writes of how ‘The whole location and décor of the new channel was part of the way that the channel was perceived by a number of critics and commentators’.⁹ Hobson writes that Channel 4 was keen to differentiate itself from other broadcasters, specifically through interiors and via seemingly minute details such as bathroom accessories: ‘the

⁶ Dorothy Byrne, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 20 September 2015, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <http://www.granadaland.org/dorothy-byrne-2/> [accessed May 2020].

⁷ Paul Morley, *Tony Wilson* (London: Faber, 2021), p. 86.

⁸ See James Benedict Brown, *Mediated Space: The Architecture of News, Advertising and Entertainment* (London: RIBA Publishing, 2018).

⁹ Dorothy Hobson, *Channel 4: The Early Years and the Jeremy Isaacs Legacy* (London: I.B. Tauris. & Co, 2008), p. 18.

taps in the toilets were of French design and had the designation of *Froid* and *Chaud* on them [...] Everything at the channel was new, designed and modern'.¹⁰ Likewise in its planning for the new buildings, Granada was also aware of the need to express its modernity through attention to interiors.

In this chapter, I examine the postwar architectural and interior design principles that provided the backdrop to the collection and shaped the acquisition of paintings in the early years of the company. The collection came to be viewed not merely as a fashionable adornment to complement the building and a vehicle to glamourise its brand but also reflected Granada's decision to engage with notions of the democratic purpose of the arts following the Second World War.

I trace the pedagogic principles that inspired the collection over nearly three decades, notably the contribution made by Sir Gerald Barry, the former Director of the 1951 Festival of Britain. Barry was a hugely influential figure in the Post-war period, advocating for new forms of displaying art and in particular, championing mural painting. He was employed by Granada as an educational advisor six years after his directorship of the Festival and is credited with formalising Granada's acquisition of paintings and playing a leading role in the early development of the company's identity as a new, and particular,

¹⁰ Hobson, *Channel 4*, p. 18.

kind of cultural champion.¹¹ Barry's involvement would mirror broader developments on the left at a time when traditional orthodoxies and demarcations of 'culture' were being disseminated and challenged in the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams.¹² Indeed, this chapter includes a detailed examination of the contribution of artist and writer John Berger, employed by the company between 1961 and 1963 at a formative period in the evolution of Granada's wider regional and national cultural engagement. Ideas of 'the everyday' and culture will moreover be explored through Jennie Lee, Labour's first Minister for Arts in 1964. Lee carried through Barry's belief in art being 'for all' while advocating the 'patronage' of the arts by commercial companies and was a friend of Sidney Bernstein.¹³ I argue that Granada deployed these principles to carve out its own unique identity in contrast with other broadcasters, including the BBC.

Kathy Arundale, who was employed as a secretary for thirty years at Granada, from 1957 to 1987, and who was responsible for looking after the collection, spoke of how the art

¹¹ For Barry's contribution to Granada, see John Willett, *Art in a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 99–100.

¹² Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Penguin Books; 1957; 1969); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, (London: Vintage Classics, 1958; 2017).

¹³ See Jennie Lee, 'Introduction', in *Patrons: Industry Supports the Arts*, ed. Alan Osborne (London: Connoisseur, 1966), p. 1.

collection ‘wouldn’t have happened anywhere else’.¹⁴ The scale of the modern art in Granada’s Deansgate offices was highly unusual and former employees experienced the presence of these pictures and sculptures almost daily in their working lives. Few studies have researched the impact of artwork on employees, in contrast to the larger number that have explored artworks, notably sculpture, in public spaces.¹⁵ Smiraglia, for example, has pointed out that most of the studies of art in workplace settings have taken place in hospital environments, with few paying attention to artworks in corporate settings.¹⁶ Her own study highlights the positive feelings artwork evoked among employees and the value they placed on its aesthetic contribution to their working

¹⁴ Kathy Arundale, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 3 February 2015: <http://www.granadaland.org/kathy-arundale-2/> [accessed May 2020].

¹⁵ See Robert Burstow, ‘Institutional Patronage of Central and Eastern European Émigré Sculptors in Britain, c. 1945–1965’, *The British Art Journal*, 19/3 (Winter 2018/2019), pp. 38–47; and Margaret Garlake, *New Art, New World: British Art in Post-War Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Christina Smiraglia, ‘Artworks at Work: The Impacts of Workplace Art’, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 26/5 (2014), p. 285. Betts offers a useful analysis of artwork in the boardroom in relation to its impact on power dynamics: Jan Betts, ‘Framing Power: The Case of the Boardroom’, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 9/2 (2006), pp. 157–167.

experiences.¹⁷ Here, I reflect on the more varied responses to the artwork by previous employees, not always positive and imbued with far more complexity, indicative of an ambivalence in how Granada was viewed as an employer.

Throughout the chapter I focus on a series of notable paintings representing different stages in the life of the collection, contextualising the circumstances in which they were purchased or acquired, and examine their resonance within the collection of paintings. I also reflect on their contribution to Granada's shifting corporate identity. This includes examining perhaps the most iconic picture in Granada's collection, Francis Bacon's *Study for a Pope*, acquired in 1964 and hung in the foyer of their Manchester Studios. I trace the complexities arising from Granada's commitment to progressive cultural engagement, in keeping with its founding principles, while developing an alignment with the corporate art market through the 1960s as it became more established and commercially confident. Granada's relationship to the London art market of the 1960s is mentioned briefly by Andrew Stephenson, who writes of how 'the city's commercial galleries [...] eagerly courted emerging British collectors, notably the owners of leading corporate buyers of contemporary art, including Granada television'.¹⁸

¹⁷ Smiraglia, 'Artworks at Work', p. 288.

¹⁸ Andrew Stephenson, 'Painting and Sculpture of a Decade, '54-'64 Revisited', *Art History*, 35/1-2 (April 2012), p. 435.

I also focus on how the collection was recontextualised between the early 1960s to the mid-1980s into an artifact commemorating and burnishing the company's commercial reputation and analyse how the collection exerted more subtle understandings of power and status within the company and how it denoted ideas of cultural capital at a specific moment.

Finally, I explore the function and significance of two public exhibitions held at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, the first in 1965 and the second nearly twenty years later in 1983, when the artwork was described as the 'Granada Collection'. Surveying and reflecting on the collection's history in 1983, Robin Vousdan, an assistant curator at the Whitworth Gallery, observed how Granada's collection reflected 'a partial picture of at least of some of the more significant developments in British art during the past three decades'.¹⁹ This chapter seeks to extend this claim, arguing that the art collection provides a unique picture of how Granada developed as a media company.

Defining the Granada Collection

*But now talking about it, I'm thinking all that artwork was everywhere.*²⁰

¹⁹ Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*, p. 5.

²⁰ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Isabel Taube, London, 25 September 2019.

The artwork displayed by Granada in its offices in Manchester and later Liverpool was extensive and seemingly ubiquitous. There is no comprehensive record of the collection, and I have relied largely on the catalogues prepared for two exhibitions held at the Whitworth gallery in 1965 and later in 1983, although these provide only a selection of the work which was owned by the company. Both exhibitions featured work that had been purchased for the Granada offices as well as work owned privately by the Bernstein family. For both exhibitions the art works were exhibited together – although differentiated clearly in the catalogues.

While I made several attempts to gain access to the Whitworth archives, there is no archivist at the gallery and (most likely because of this) many of my emails to the gallery went unanswered. These catalogues are limited but are important historical documents. As historian Ludmilla Jordanova has argued, exhibition catalogues can be fruitful for historical research since they are ‘full of openings [...] especially around processes of collecting, the taste associated with an institution and its leaders and the diverse manner in which works are acquired’.²¹ Jordanova writes that they can also be used ‘[to consider] influences on the company at different stages in its history’.²² From the 1965 catalogue,

²¹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 25.

²² Jordanova, *The Look of the Past*, p. 25.

however, there is some crucial information missing. As the curators explained: ‘for reasons of space it has not been possible to give fully detailed information under each catalogue entry, and we have therefore had to omit literary references, provenance and previous exhibitions’.²³ Nonetheless, these documents are still valuable historical artefacts pertaining to Granada’s visual history and identity. I have used the two catalogues to trace and consider Granada’s acquisitions of particular paintings, focusing on those which are closely associated with Granada itself, as opposed to those which are associated with Sidney Bernstein or his wider family.²⁴

Granada’s collection of artworks has long been attributed to Sidney Bernstein’s influence. He was an early collector of modern art in the 1930s. A 1936 article from *The Bystander* (a ‘high society’ magazine of the time) described how he had been the first person in the country to own paintings by the German painter Paul Klee and Mexican muralist Diego Rivera.²⁵ The article described his cinema business as ‘lowbrow’ while drawing attention to Bernstein’s ‘highbrow’ pursuits in art and politics, and his activities of ‘enthusiastically’ collecting the work of Picasso and Degas. It also mentioned that

²³ *Modern Pictures from the Bernstein and Granada Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Whitworth Art Gallery, 29 March–8 May 1965, Tate Archives, TGA 200817/2/67.

²⁴ *Modern Pictures from the Bernstein and Granada Collections*.

²⁵ ‘Sidney Bernstein, ‘High Low-brow’, *The Bystander*, 26 August 1936, p. 366.

Bernstein had a work by the artist Augustus John in his office. This way of differentiating ‘taste’ and highlighting the kinds of work that were in Bernstein’s ‘private’ office foreshadowed how Bernstein’s interest in art were attested to in Dennis Barker’s obituary of him written for the *Guardian* in 1993. Here, Barker remarked on Bernstein’s possession of an array of works by notable artists. He wrote of Bernstein:

He was an employer who filled the corridors, reception areas, and rooms of his offices with works of art for all to enjoy. He had bought paintings all his life and believed they should be seen. New employees to Granada might walk in their office and find along with a desk and a chair, a John Bratby here and a Patrick Heron there. If their wall was bare, they could make a phone call and ask if there was a painting going spare [...] his private collection, described by his biographer as ‘eclectic’ included Bonnard, Modigliani, Paul Klee, Barbara Hepworth, and a Breughel that once hung in his penthouse flat above the Granada studios ²⁶

The reference to a Breughel in the Granada penthouse may be apocryphal, but the passage indicates the degree to which Bernstein had become personally associated with Granada’s art collection as well as implying him as a paternalistic proprietor and benefactor, graciously lending his artwork to the business in an *ad hoc* way. But in this regard, he has been miscast. The prominence of the art in the building was the

²⁶ Dennis Barker, ‘Granada’s Hard Core’, *Guardian*, 6 February 1993, pg. 28.

contribution of several influences and involved decision making by several others associated with the company from its earliest days and acquired and displayed in a strategic manner.

Brave new world (by the River Irwell)

*It was quite an ugly architectural building from the outside.*²⁷

An understanding of those earliest influences emerges in Granada's choice of architect, Ralph Tubbs, for its new premises in Manchester. Granada was one of several television companies which bought or constructed new premises when commercial television began in the mid 1950s, but the company was distinctive in its ambition to design a post-industrial landmark for the city in which they would be based; Granada's building was the first commercial building constructed in postwar Manchester (Figure 3).

²⁷ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Steve Kelly.



Figure 3. Granada Television Building under construction (1960), Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives.

Ralph Tubbs, the modernist architect, had been heavily involved in planning for the Festival of Britain and had designed the ‘Dome of Discovery’ as its centrepiece.²⁸ This national exhibition, designed to celebrate Britain’s post-war achievements and hopes for the future, had been constructed on a sprawling site on the South Bank of the Thames. It

²⁸ Becky E. Conekin, *‘The Autobiography of a Nation’: The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 35.

aimed to showcase design appropriate for the re-building of post-war London and other cities, much of it futuristic and designed in the International Modernist style.²⁹ As Becky Conekin writes: 'there can be little doubt that the festival helped to shape popular definitions of good and modern design. The term "Festival style" came to be applied to buildings utilising concrete, aluminium and plate glass, as well as to household furnishings'.³⁰ Conekin quotes the design critic William Feaver, who described the seismic influence of the festival on future designers, architects and artists: 'The South Bank remained the popularly accepted idea of "modern" for a whole generation'.³¹ The Granada canteen would initially be given the name 'The Festival Café'.³²

²⁹ The History Press, 'The Festival of Britain 1951', 3 May 2017, <https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/the-festival-of-britain-1951/> [accessed March 2021].

³⁰ Conekin, 'The Autobiography of a Nation', p. 51.

³¹ William Feaver is former chief art critic of the *Observer*. Conekin, 'The Autobiography of a Nation', p. 51.

³² See image from Granadaland oral history website: <https://www.granadaland.org/interiors-of-granada-tv/> [accessed 10 December 2021].

In 1955, Bernstein stated that he envisioned a modern new building, open to the public: 'it will be part of the organisations' policy to attract the public to visit the centre'.³³ This was clear in the specifications that the *Manchester Guardian* reported on as having been submitted to Manchester City Council: 'the plan includes studios, reception rooms, offices, public rooms, restaurants, shops on the ground floor, and a garage'.³⁴ Granada saw its new headquarters as a commercial space but also one that was public-facing and fluid. This decision to 'attract' the public may have been informed by commercial television's obligation to fulfil a public remit in its broadcasting, although it has been suggested that, given the initial uncertainty about commercial television's success, if all else failed the building could be adapted for other purposes.

Bernstein's choice of architect was in keeping with other organisations based in the North West that looked to architects and designers now celebrated for their contribution to the Festival of Britain. This included Pilkington Glassworks Headquarters in St Helens, designed by architects Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, who had worked on architectural designs for the Festival's Riverside Restaurant (which included murals by Ben Nicholson). Pilkington's headquarters was constructed during a similar time frame to the

³³ 'Granada Studio in Manchester: Approved in Principle', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 April 1955, p. 5.

³⁴ 'Granada Studio in Manchester'.

Granada headquarters, between 1955 and 1965. Fry and Drew, with the support of their ‘enlightened patrons’, would also commission sixteen artists, many associated with the Festival of Britain, to design twenty-four specially commissioned artworks for the interior of the building.³⁵

Plans for the look and feel of the interior of the Granada offices appear to have also been influenced by the Festival of Britain and demonstrated a similar commitment to public art and sculpture at the centre of its headquarters (Figure 4). Indeed, the Festival of Britain had invited young artists to create new sculptures for the festival site. One artist chosen was the Manchester based American sculptor Mitzi Cunliffe, who lived in Didsbury (on the same street as Olive Dickson, Granada’s head of typing).³⁶ Cunliffe would be the subject of an hour-long Granada documentary in May 1956 (and would go on to create the British and Film Institute (BAFTA) mask).³⁷ Cunliffe’s sculpture *Root*

³⁵ Jessica Holland and Iain Jackson, “‘A Monument to Humanism’: Pilkington Brothers’ Headquarters (1955–1965) by Fry, Drew and Partners’, *Architectural History*, 56 (2013), pp. 343–386.

³⁶ Ann Sumner, ‘Mitzi Cunliffe, *An American in Manchester: The Artist Behind the Bafta Mask* (Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University, 2021). Detail about Olive Dickson told to me by Ann Sumner at the launch of this publication, 8 December 2021.

³⁷ Sumner, ‘Mitzi Cunliffe’, p. 42.

Bodied Forth was displayed at the Festival alongside sculptures commissioned by 'lesser known' artists for the festival of Britain including Geoffrey Clark, Anna Mahler and the Hungarian artist Peter Laszlo Peri.³⁸ However, the commissioning of these works gave rise to tensions around how sculpture should be displayed. These had been mainly between Sir Gerald Barry and the festival organisers and the Arts Council, which in the early phases of planning had sought to organise a separate 'Festival of the Arts'. Margaret Garlake outlines how both parties had 'radically opposed readings of The Festival. For Barry it was a popular celebration with an educational subtext [...] while the Arts Council took it as an opportunity to promote high art, its cultural exclusivity underlined by sculptures set prominently apart on raised plinths'.³⁹ While the Arts Council commissioned sculpture from more established artists for the festival, the Festival organisers (including Tubbs) spent approximately £10,000 on twenty sculptures and commissioned work from younger, less established artists in a style that was described as both 'progressive and traditionalist'.⁴⁰ Hugh Casson of the organising committee described how the aim for the festival was to show the meaningful symbiotic relationship that could occur between sculpture and building: one in which sculptures, as well as paintings, were not merely designated as ornamental or apart from building design but

³⁸ Sumner, 'Mitzi Cunliffe', p. 42.

³⁹ Garlake, *New Art New World*, p. 218.

⁴⁰ For Casson's opinions, see Conekin, 'The Autobiography of a Nation', p. 37.

functioned as a vital component of its purpose, cohesive with urban and thereby, daily life.⁴¹



Figure 4. Granada Television Building under construction (no date given), Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives

It was Hugh Casson's view, and not that of the Art Council, that was arguably more closely aligned with Granada in their purchase of art and in their decision to hire 'young artists' to create work for their foyer. A BBC memorandum in 1956 recorded of Granada

⁴¹ See Conekin, 'The Autobiography of a Nation', p. 37.

that ‘young schoolboys are to be invited to produce a piece of sculpture suitable for the foyer of the new television centre now being built in Quay Street, Manchester’.⁴² The *Yorkshire Observer* noted, however, that it was not young schoolboys but ‘present students at recognised Northern art schools’ who had been encouraged to submit a maquette for a design to be rendered ‘for any stone (including marble) clay, metal (or a combination of these)’.⁴³ The newspaper stated that ‘the subject will be optional’ but would have to bear in mind ‘the purpose of this building and the architectural setting in which it is to be displayed’.⁴⁴ The prize money for the competition was to be £50. The judges included Ralph Tubbs as well as S.D Cleveland, director of the Whitworth Gallery alongside Hugh Scrutton, Director of the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, whose appointment to the gallery in 1952 had, according to the art historian Gabriel N. Gee, ‘initiated a period of modernisation’ in the institution.⁴⁵

While there is no evidence that this sculpture was ever realised, and little has been written about the origins and history of the building, the involvement on the judging panel

⁴² ‘Commercial Television Information 1955–1960’. BBC Written Archives, T36/11/.

⁴³ ‘The Spotlight on the Featherstone’, *Yorkshire Observer*, 17 February 1956, p. 4.

⁴⁴ ‘The Spotlight on the Featherstone’.

⁴⁵ Gabriel N. Gee, ‘Painting within Itself: The John Moores Liverpool Exhibition’, *Journal of Contemporary Painting*, 4/2 (2018), p. 348.

of figures such as Tubbs emphasises the importance Granada placed on the design of its new interiors. Granada's decision to invite young artists can contrast with the BBC's approach to commission sculpture from more established artists in the earlier years of its history. While there has been very little written on Granada's art, a better-known history is the BBC's practice of commissioning artwork, predominantly sculptures, that sought to enhance its reputation and credence as a national broadcaster. What has been described as the BBC's 'small' art collection comprised work to commemorate key figures such as its first director general, John Reith, and 'major moments of creative programming'.⁴⁶ Much of it consisted of work commissioned in relation to the corporation's buildings, public statements and monuments in the public sphere intended to convey the BBC's authority and central place in the national psyche. In 1932, for example, for the exteriors and interior of its flagship headquarters, Broadcasting House, an art deco building in Portland Square, the BBC commissioned two works by sculptor Eric Gill.⁴⁷ These included the sculpture *Prospero and Ariel* over the front entrance and *The Sower*, placed in the foyer. *Prospero and Ariel* was illustrative of the BBC's wish to align itself with notions of a canonised collective culture while *The Sower*

⁴⁶ 'BBC Collections – Art', <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/collections/art> [accessed March 2021].

⁴⁷ 'BBC Collections – Art', <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/collections/art> [accessed March 2021].

was a more literal ‘metaphor for broadcasting’.⁴⁸ Street suggests that the ‘whole experience of entering the building was designed to create the sense of the almost religious nature of radio’.⁴⁹ This religious aspect was enhanced by a Latin inscription in the foyer dedicated to employees which described the building as ‘This temple of the Arts and Muses’ and which was also ‘dedicated to the first Governors’ of the corporation.⁵⁰

Granada from the outset attached an importance to establishing relationships with a younger generation, and the invitation to younger artists to present their designs for the Granada foyer owes something to the democratising and educational mission also associated with the Festival of Britain. However, there was also a different aesthetic value underlying these decisions that owed something to Sidney Bernstein’s other life as cinema proprietor. It reflected a different way of thinking about culture and art.

Lord Reith has been described as sharing with the Victorian middle classes a public distrust of ‘the frivolous and sensual’, and of viewing ‘culture as a form of self-

⁴⁸ Jennifer Dorn, ‘At Home with “Auntie Beeb”’: Broadcasting House and the BBC’, *British Heritage Travel*, 13 July 2016, <https://britishheritage.com/at-home-with-auntie-beeb> [accessed May 2020].

⁴⁹ Sean Street, *A Concise History of British Radio, 1922–2002* (Tiverton, Devon: Kelly Publications, 2002), p. 47.

⁵⁰ Dorn, ‘At Home with “Auntie Beeb”’.

improvement, a means of personal and social discipline'.⁵¹ And while Bernstein shared some of the paternalistic tendencies of the BBC's director general, he actively celebrated the sensual via his 'Granada' cinema chain. This was embodied in the interiors he created for the company's flagship cinema in Tooting, constructed at a similar time to the BBC's Broadcasting House, in 1931.⁵² Here, Bernstein employed the Russian designer Theodore Komisarjevsky to create an opulent, otherworldly interior, with design features that included marble floors and columns, a cyclorama, and a 150 ft-long corridor of mirrors, with each mirror situated 'under its own cusped arch'.⁵³ A childhood visitor to the cinema, the writer Angela Carter, held her breath walking along the corridor because 'anything might materialise in those velvet depths'.⁵⁴ The interiors

⁵¹ D.L. LeMahieu, 'John Reith 1889–1971 Entrepreneur of Collectivism', in *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain: Essays in Memory of John Clive*, ed. Peter Mandler and Susan Pederson (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 197.

⁵² The building is still the only Grade I listed cinema in London.

⁵³ Allen Eyles, *The Granada Theatres* (London, British Film Theatre, 2018), 44.

⁵⁴ The Granada Tooting was described by Carter as the building that was most influential to her creativity as a writer. See 'Manuscript notes about Tooting Granada cinema by Angela Carter', <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/manuscript-notes-about-tooting-granada-cinema-by-angela-carter> [accessed 20 May 2020].

were accompanied by flower displays from the celebrated florist Constance Spry.⁵⁵ The cinema design emphasises how sensuality, and an abundance of visual styles and references, were significant to Bernstein, and inevitably informed the range and extent of modern art and sculpture acquired by the company.

Scooters and clotheslines

Granada's desire to align itself with new youth movements and popular culture, and to reflect on its regional localities is arguably reflected in three paintings purchased following its emergence in the late 1950s as a 'distinctive' broadcaster. Two of these were large-scale paintings by the well-known artist of the time, John Bratby, and bought by Granada in 1959. Another was by the artist Alan Lowndes, entitled *Washing Day* (1958), bought for the company's collection sometime before 1965.

Known for his realist work, Bratby had represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1956, including with one work entitled *Still-Life with Chip Frier* (1954). Bratby had gained transatlantic fame after a character based on him was played by the actor Alec Guinness in a film *The Horse's Mouth*, an adaptation of the novel by Joyce Carey, which was

⁵⁵ Rosemary Hill, 'Constance Spry: At the Garden Museum', *London Review of Books*, 9 September 2021, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n17/rosemary-hill/at-the-garden-museum> [accessed September 2021].

released in the US to great acclaim in 1958.⁵⁶ Granada purchased *Three Lambrettas* (1958) and *Four Lambrettas and Three Portraits of Janet Churchman* (1958) a year later, in February 1959, in the same week as the film came out in Britain.⁵⁷ It was bought by Sidney Bernstein at an exhibition of Bratby's work at the London-based Beaux Arts Gallery.⁵⁸ The gallery was a patron of works by the all-male London based 'Kitchen Sink' art group, which had developed a reputation in the late 1950s for documenting domesticity in 'new ways'.

⁵⁶ The *New York Times* described the film as offering 'perhaps the most unusual and affecting study of a painter at work that we have ever had on screen'. See Bosley Crowther, 'Portrait of Art', *New York Times*, 16 November 1958, p. xi; the film was also deemed to be one of the 'five best foreign films of 1958' by the United States National Board of Review of Motion pictures; 'Two British Films in the List of World Prize Winners', *New York Times*, 23 December 1958, p. 5.

⁵⁷ The film came out the first week of February. See Alec Guinness, 'The Horse and I', *Observer*, 1 February 1959, p. 16.

⁵⁸ Robin Gibson, *John Bratby Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1991), p. 55. For a review of show at the Beaux Art Gallery, see Frederick Laws, 'The Aggressive Art of John Bratby: Out of the Kitchen and into the Sitting Room', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1959, p. 5.

The paintings were twelve-foot panoramic works. *Three Lambrettas* featured two blonde-haired women, both in matching skirts and white tops, their expressions harangued and depressed, leaning on two bright red scooters. In the foreground were numerous objects: worktables, pictures, shelves, a television set. Parts of the women's bodies were obscured by machinery and their despondent expressions contrasted with the chaos of the room and brightness of the scooters, to which their backs were turned. The sister piece, *Four Lambrettas*, was similar in theme and subject, with an added Lambretta and three women – wearing the same despondent expressions but with darker hair. The women portrayed in the paintings were reported to be Bratby's former students, but they bore a strong resemblance to Bratby's wife, the equally (if not more) gifted painter, Jean Cooke. Bratby's and Cooke's complex marriage is recounted in many memoirs and histories.⁵⁹ Bratby's behaviour towards Cooke could be disturbing and abusive. Bratby would 'would often freely paint over her canvases, sometimes slashing those he didn't

⁵⁹ See Charlotte Flint, 'Jean and John', 1945–1965, *New Art in Post War Britain*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Barbican, 2022), p. 116.

approve of'.⁶⁰ As a 'subject' for some of his work, Cooke often felt that he depicted her as deliberately miserable looking.⁶¹

Bratby's paintings are evocative of both the freedom and entrapment of the 1950s. Penny Tinkler has explored how scooters were advertised to the younger generation, particularly younger women, as they were seen to appeal 'directly to a perceived desire among young women for independence and autonomy'.⁶² In 1956, the twenty-one-year-old folk singer Peggy Seeger was appearing on weekly show with Ewan McColl and The Ramblers for Granada Television and recalled how afterwards, 'when the Granada contract was over, I bought a Lambretta scooter and took off for Scotland'.⁶³ The romantic image of Seeger heading north is redolent of how scooters were both evocative of the new café and 'mod' insignia of the time and a vivid symbol of freedom. Yet the

⁶⁰ Phillip Vann, 'Jean Cooke: Spirited Painter Who Emerged from Husband's Shadow', *Guardian*, 29 August 2008.

⁶¹ Robert Travers, 'Jean Cooke (1027–2008)', posted 14 April 2015, by Piano Nobile, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVQIFaPmO4I> [accessed 13 December 2024].

⁶² Penny Tinkler, 'Going Places or Out of Place? Representations of Mobile Young Girls and Young Women in Late 1950s and 1960s Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 32/2 (2021), p. 221.

⁶³ Peggy Seeger, *First Time Ever* (London: Faber, 2018), p.102.

period also saw a resurgence and consolidation of deeply gendered ideas around homemaking; the female students Bratby painted may have been expected to abandon their studies once they married. For artists such as Jean Cooke their early careers were shaped by expectations around remaining in the ‘feminine’ sphere of the home, although Cooke continued to paint (many of her works were of the couple’s wild, unkempt garden in Blackheath — a release from the domestic) and she was elected a member of the Royal Academy in 1972.

John Bratby’s two paintings were featured prominently in the Granada building. One of them was recalled by Michael Parkinson, who joined the company in 1963. He described one of the Lambretta paintings as being a ‘mural’ (an indication of its scale) and placed in the staff canteen.⁶⁴ In 1967, a photographer from the *Daily Mirror* came to take pictures of a rehearsal for *Coronation Street* and captured the corner of *Four Lambrettas*, with two of the scooters clearly in view.⁶⁵ This was at a time when the company might have been keen to promote the programme, as it was suffering a downturn in audience figures

⁶⁴ Michael Parkinson, ‘A Handful’, in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Michael Cox and Majorie Giles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 47.

⁶⁵ See: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/the-cast-of-coronation-street-on-set-general-scene-in-news-photo/888838996?adppopup=true>.

and plotlines were becoming increasingly lurid and attention grabbing (not unlike the Bratby picture itself).⁶⁶ Earlier, the art critic David Sylvester had famously coined the expression ‘kitchen sink’ in relation to Bratby’s art, and the invitation to the press to photograph rehearsals for the show, by now the epitome of ‘kitchen-sink drama’, could have been a deliberate commercial deployment of the work in order to sell the series.

However, while Bratby focused on interiors, perhaps the most effusively ‘Northern’ painting Granada owned was Stockport-born Alan Lowndes’s depiction of a Lancashire Street scene entitled *Washing Day* (1958). While there is no evidence for which year it was purchased by Granada, the painting was displayed in the 1965 exhibition of Granada’s artwork at the Whitworth, which suggests that it was both important to the company and could have been purchased sometime after it was completed. The work featured a factory chimney flue, terraced houses and a woman turned with her back towards the viewer, anonymised and dwarfed by the white sheet she was hanging out to dry. Lowndes’ skills as a painter were, according to his obituary, particularly recognised in the film, television and theatre worlds.⁶⁷ It was Lowndes’ piece, *Coronation Street*, that was reported to have influenced the naming of Granada’s own series exploring working-

⁶⁶ *Corriepedia*, https://coronationstreet.fandom.com/wiki/Coronation_Street_in_1967 [accessed 14 March 2021].

⁶⁷ ‘Mr Alan Lowndes: Painter of Northern Life’, *The Times*, 28 September 1978, p. 17.

class life, after its creator, Tony Warren, had viewed the picture in a local art gallery.⁶⁸ This purchase was more in keeping with the cultural influences of Hoggart and Williams, and their writings on modernity. John Berger was also reported to have predicted (early in the artists' career) 'that he [Lowndes] would become Britain's first professional working-class painter'.⁶⁹

John Berger and *Drawn from Life*

John Berger was already an influential artist, critic and writer when he joined Granada in 1961. During his two years working there, he presented two programmes, *Drawn from Life* (1961–1962) and *Tomorrow Couldn't Be Worse* (1963), both of which explored 'ordinary peoples' experiences of their past and artwork. In the case of *Drawn from Life*, Berger deployed paintings to access and speak about past experiences and memory.

Politically of the left, Berger had originally trained as an artist. One of his early paintings *Scaffolding – Festival of Britain* (1950) appeared to convey the vast skeleton of Tubb's Dome of Discovery being constructed on the muddy purlieu of the Thames; it captured the workers engaged in the physical labour of constructing the spectacle, not the spectacle itself. Berger would leave art and painting to become a writer and critic,

⁶⁸ 'Mr Alan Lowndes'.

⁶⁹ 'Mr Alan Lowndes'.

producing art criticism for the *New Statesman* and the *Manchester Guardian* in the 1950s where, as Lynda Nead comments, he was a 'tireless advocate of socially engaged realist art'.⁷⁰ From the beginning of his work as a critic: 'Berger made the ordinary political, the central component of a longer-term goal for art to communicate with people'.⁷¹

Berger's relationship to England was always complicated, akin in many ways to his complicated involvement with the New Left. When he joined Granada in 1961, he had recently left the country to live in Geneva with his wife, the influential writer and translator Anya Berger, who would have a significant impact on his thinking and output.⁷² The money from his freelance work at Granada enabled Berger to write and travel between Geneva and Manchester in the early 1960s. It was during this time that Berger published his novel *The Foot of Clive* (1962) and when his two children Katya and Jacob were born.

⁷⁰ Lynda Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke: Art and Culture in Post-War Britain* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2017), p. 272.

⁷¹ Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, p. 271.

⁷² Tom Overton, 'Life in the Margins: It's Time the Extraordinary Life of Anya Berger Was Acknowledged', *Frieze*, 17 February 2017, <https://www.frieze.com/article/life-margins> [accessed 10 May 2021].

Berger's visual and literary background connected with Granada's commitment to encouraging a more democratic approach to culture in the early 1960s. *Drawn from Life*, the series he made with the director Mike Wooller, was intended to connect paintings to ordinary people through storytelling. Berger was quoted in the *Liverpool Echo* as believing that the programme on art he presented, *Drawn from Life*, would make a significant impact. As he explained, it aimed to create:

a few holes in the great fortress of art snobbery. You know what it is like at most art exhibitions – each one becomes a kind of whispering gallery because everyone pretends that art is 'holier than thou' but it isn't and in 'Drawn From Life' we have begun to encourage people to talk out loud in the whispering galleries.⁷³

However, the idea for the series appears to have come from Denis Forman, who in a memorandum had advocated for the possibility for singular, personal objects, possibly something visual, to be a starting point for a television series which revolved around a person's life experiences. As he explained in a note:

The kind of programme I am suggesting cannot set out to prove anything or establish any pattern, because the person's experience must always be counted

⁷³ Bill Amos, 'Art with a Difference: Bill Amos's Saturday TV News', *Liverpool Echo and Evening Express*, 30 September 1961, p. 2.

as primary. The role he is being asked to play is the role he has played all his life. The proof is his. The visual references and the starting point (only bores can talk about themselves in the abstract) must also be individually chosen. One man may start with a reference to a short sequence from a ready-made film; another to a painting; another to his work; another to a game of football. The list is endless.⁷⁴

Forman's words here are significant in their focus on 'experience' and the primacy of individual experience as a central component for the programme. They echo the writing of cultural critic and writer Raymond Williams, who alongside Berger was involved in the New Left in Britain. In 'Culture is Ordinary', written in 1958, Williams wrote of how the 'nature of a culture' is 'always both traditional and creative' and was made up of 'the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings'.⁷⁵ Here, Denis Forman's description of the prospective participant ('the role he is being asked to play is the role he has played all his life') emphasises the centrality of individual experience and meaning for the programme. The historian Stuart Middleton has traced how experience

⁷⁴ Denis Forman, 'Ourselves and Half Men', 27 November 1961.

⁷⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Culture Is Ordinary', in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. Robin Gable (London: Verso, 1989), p. 4.

became ‘a fundamental category’ for the new left in the late 1950s and 1960s, particularly for Raymond Williams and the historian E.P. Thompson.⁷⁶

The resultant programme, *Drawn from Life*, was half an hour long and included two guests discussing their responses to three works of art. Guests included a miner’s wife, a salesman, a shorthand typist, a former RAF officer-turned-engineer, a ‘female nurse who had moved to Britain from Uganda’ and a ‘fifty-two year old male joiner from a Manchester Shipyard’.⁷⁷ From hearing their story, Berger selected one painting out of the three that he felt best responded to their experience. In the episode with the joiner, who recalled his experiences of growing up in a Manchester tenement house before the Second World War, Berger showed three paintings: ‘a Picasso child, a Kollwitz group of working women, a Breughel crowd’.⁷⁸ The programme was broadcast live, which as the historian Jonathan Conlin writes: ‘probably contributed to the guest’s nerves’. But as

⁷⁶ Stuart Middleton, ‘The Concept of Experience and the Making of the English Working Class 1924–1968’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 13/1 (2016), p. 180.

⁷⁷ Amos, ‘Art with a Difference’; guests also described in Jonathan Conlin, ‘Lost in Transmission? John Berger and the Origins of *Ways of Seeing*’, *History Workshop Journal*, 90 (1972), p. 158.

⁷⁸ Amos, ‘Art with a Difference’.

Conlin explains: 'Berger's focus on them as individuals was obvious [...] Berger never interrupted his guests, displaying a patience born of genuine curiosity about their lives'.⁷⁹

The programme's positive reception was reflected in the 'full-page' spreads it generated in the *Daily Worker*, while the *Daily Mail*'s television reviewer Peter Black felt the series was 'an exceptionally interesting attempt to use the quiz technique for better ends than it normally serves'.⁸⁰ Black remark on the programme's use 'of the quiz technique' seems incongruent when placed next to Forman's initial memorandum on the programme (which made no mention of adopting that formula for the programme), yet *Drawn from Life*'s intention was obvious to Black: 'Berger's case – that there is no barrier between painting and people – was amply illustrated'.⁸¹ The success with audiences was underscored by the strong defence it was given by readers of the *New Statesman* when it was criticised by the writer Doris Lessing for being too similar to a programme presented by the broadcaster Wilfrid Pickles, called *Have A Go*, which according to historian Jonathan Conlin was a 'massively-popular BBC radio show [...] [that] travelled the country inviting working class listeners to tell cheery life stories'.⁸² Berger's

⁷⁹ Conlin, 'Lost in Transmission?'.

⁸⁰ 'Peter Black's Televue', *Daily Mail*, 3 October 1961, p. 3.

⁸¹ 'Peter Black's Televue'.

⁸² Conlin, 'Lost in Transmission?', 158.

programmes did not operate in this cheery manner and were not designed to lift spirits. They were life stories based on people's individual insights.



Figure 5. John Berger holding a 'Granadafon', Herald Reporter, 'If I had a talking picture: TV has nothing on this art gallery', *Daily Herald*, 12 September 1961, cutting from Manchester City Gallery Archives.

During his time at Granada, Berger also contributed to supporting the deployment of an exhibition audio guide, devised by Granada for Manchester Art Gallery in 1961 (see Figure

5). These audio guides, first introduced in the US in 1958, were, at the time, a recent innovation in Britain. Granada's system – the 'Granadafon' – was, according to newspapers reports at the time, the earliest to be used in a gallery setting in Britain.⁸³ The guides featured scripts written by Manchester Art Gallery staff and were narrated by Granada personalities Bill Grundy and Brian Trueman, both of whom were known for fronting local programming in the region.

Such ventures reflected Granada's desire to be involved in forms of patronage that were perceived to be innovative and, following Berger's ideas about art, to puncture the intimidation of the 'whispering galleries'. But commercial motivations also underscored and influenced their decision to partake in such projects. The company was quoted as stating that it was prepared to equip other galleries with 'Granadafons', but not free of charge.⁸⁴

⁸³ 'Look and Listen', *The Studio*, January 1962, Manchester Art Gallery Archive; 'Listen and View', *Heywood Advertiser*, 22 September 1961, article cutting from Manchester Art Gallery Archives book.

⁸⁴ 'Listen and View'.

John Berger and the Granada collection

While he was employed at Granada, Berger wrote art criticism for the *Observer* newspaper and one wonders what he would have made of the Granada collection. Entering the building in 1961, he may have encountered Josef Herman's painting of *Two Miners Against a Tip* (1955) purchased by Granada sometime after it was painted.⁸⁵ It was a work resulting from Herman's life in the Welsh village of Ystradgynlais, where he spent eleven years fully immersed in the local mining community. (For the festival, Herman created a mural of crouching miners for the 'Mineral of the Islands' Pavilion.) In 1952, Berger had organised an exhibition entitled *Looking Forward* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, and for the cover of the exhibition's programme he had chosen an image of a miner by Herman.⁸⁶ Visiting the building would have provided the opportunity to look

⁸⁵ *Two Miners Against A Tip* had been exhibited at the Whitechapel gallery in 1956 before being bought by Granada; see *Josef Herman: Retrospective* (London: Camden Arts Centre, 1980), p. 11.

⁸⁶ The title was similar to that of a Communist Party of Great Britain policy document. The exhibition would also travel to Manchester in 1956, where it was exhibited in the first weeks and months of Granada's time on air. Martin Gayford, *Modernists and Mavericks: Bacon, Freud, Hockney and the London Painters* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2019), p. 150.

again at the work of the artist John Bratby. Berger had initially been a strong advocate of Bratby's work; however, his opinion of him had shifted as the artist became more successful. Writing in his collection of essays *Permanent Red*, published in 1960, Berger criticised the strongly commercialised aspects developing in Bratby's work, specifically the two Lambretta paintings purchased by Granada, observing how 'his girls are drawn like fashion plates and his scooters like advertisements in a trade paper'.⁸⁷

It is also interesting to speculate what Berger would have said to his employers about their purchase in 1962 of two notable sculptures by the artist Jacob Epstein entitled *Genesis* (1929–1931) and *Jacob and the Angel* (1940–1941) (Figure 6). Both sculptures had histories of being treated as grotesque curiosities rather than artworks by one of Britain's most important sculptors.⁸⁸ Stuart Tulloch writes of how responses to Epstein's work had fluctuated in the first half of the twentieth century, with his reputation severely damaged in 1908 in response to a series of nude sculptures the artist had created for the

⁸⁷ John Berger, *Permanent Red: Essays in Seeing* (London: The Shenvall Press, 1960), p. 82.

⁸⁸ Stuart Tulloch, 'Miracle or Monstrosity?: Story of an Artwork', *Tate Etc*, 22 (Summer 2011), <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-22-summer-2011/miracle-or-monstrosity> [accessed September 2021].

façade of the British Medical Association building on the Strand in London.⁸⁹ The reception of Epstein's work would consequently suffer. The painter Josef Herman later commented that it was the 'un-English' nature of Epstein's work and his closeness to a more European tradition that resulted in a 'collision of temperaments' in response to his sculptures.⁹⁰ The 'newsworthy' aspect of his work, rather than the artist's skills, dominated its reception.

However, Epstein's death in 1959 shifted the way his work was responded to and his 'entrance' back into the art establishment was aided in 1961 when significant number of his works were shown at the Tate Gallery in London. John Berger wrote a review of the retrospective for the *Observer* in September 1961 while he was working for Granada. In it he was scathing about Epstein and particularly these statues:

Epstein's works are scarcely ever consistent. The head of 'Genesis' is carved like a wooden mask whilst the buttocks are an academic imitation of flesh. The wings in 'Jacob and the Angel' are as heavy and formalised as headstones, yet the Angel's thumbnails are so literal that they could be manicured. The hands of 'Christ in Majesty' are almost like casts from life – you could read their palms – yet

⁸⁹ Tulloch, 'Miracle or Monstrosity?'.

⁹⁰ Josef Herman, *Related Twilights: Notes from an Artist's Diary* (London: Robson Books, 1975), p. 202.

the body is as rigid as metal casing. When the nervous system fails there is no coordination. When there is no consistency in a work of art the references to life become, in every meaning of the word, sensational [...] I believe that Epstein's inability to be consistent was due to his weakness of visual imagination.⁹¹

The passage encapsulates Berger's austere assessment of the statues bought by Granada, deriding their 'sensational' quality and 'weakness of visual imagination'. (In earlier decades, the sculptures had been exhibited in distinctly commercial venues including Blackpool promenade.)⁹² Tulloch, on the other hand, writes of how Granada's purchase of the sculpture *Jacob and the Angel* in 1962 came when the artist's work 'was finally being embraced for its pioneering modernity'.⁹³

⁹¹ John Berger, 'Epstein's Pyrrhic Victory Over the Philistines', *Observer*, 3 September 1961, p. 21.

⁹² Tulloch, 'Miracle or Monstrosity?'.

⁹³ Tulloch, 'Miracle or Monstrosity?'.



Figure 6. 2004.24/9 Photograph of Jacob Epstein's *Jacob and the Angel* (with *Genesis* in the background). Henry Moore Archive, Granada owned the sculpture from 1962 to 1996.

Granada's decision to purchase Epstein's sculpture reflects something of a developing reputation as patrons of contemporary art in the 1960s and the nascent development between commercial companies and artists in the North. Granada was not the only company in Manchester purchasing work by Epstein in the 1960s. Leonard Cohen, the owner of Henry's department store in Manchester, exhibited Jacob Epstein's sculpture

Adam in the basement of his store.⁹⁴ Cohen was treasurer of Wythenshawe Labour Party, President of Manchester Library and Philosophical Society and a writer of Fabian pamphlets. He believed in the democratic importance of art. According to historian Keith Warrander: ‘his aim in life was to bring art to the masses’.⁹⁵

While there is no sense of where works *Jacob and the Angel* and *Genesis* were placed in the Granada building (and Tulloch writes that the sculptures were ‘for many years loaned to Liverpool’s Anglican Cathedral’), the decision to purchase the sculptures also expresses a different idea of the purpose for the art displayed in the company’s offices, which had twin objectives: to promote its identity, as well as stimulate employees in their working environment. If that included the sensational, the provocative and the eye-catching perhaps, for Granada, so much the better. While purely speculative, one wonders if the Epstein sculptures may have elicited more personal responses and

⁹⁴ Marjorie Ainsworth, ‘Heady Days of Post-war Happenings: The Lit & Phil at 36 George Street’, *Manchester Lit & Phil*, 27 February 2023, <https://www.manlitphil.ac.uk/read-watch-listen/heady-days-of-post-war-happenings-the-lit-phil-at-36-george-street/> [accessed 13 December 2024].

⁹⁵ Cohen’s department store was taken over by British Home Stores in 1968. See Keith Warrander, *Manchester’s Lost District: Life before the Arndale* (Altrincham: Willow Publishing, 2019), p. 26.

memories for employees working in the building when first purchased, such as the writer John Finch who had been Epstein's 'live-in secretary' after the Second World War and began working for Granada from 1960, going on to write 140 episodes of *Coronation Street* over the following decade.⁹⁶ (Interestingly, Epstein's grandson, Roland Joffé, worked at Granada in the 1970s and also directed *Coronation Street*.⁹⁷)

Berger was let go abruptly in 1963 for reasons which were never made entirely clear to him.⁹⁸ However, a letter from Berger to the writer (and surrealist poet) Philip O'Connor provides a fascinating insight into his ambivalence about Granada as a company (it was kindly shared with me by Berger's biographer, Tom Overton). O'Connor was then looking for way to publish his writing and in August 1963 wrote to Berger for advice. The Granada group had recently purchased the publishing group, McGibbon & Kee, the first of three publishing companies it would buy in the 1960s and evidence of Sidney Bernstein's

⁹⁶ Anthony Hayward, 'John Finch', obituary, *Guardian*, 8 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/mar/08/john-finch-obituary> [accessed 23 November 2023].

⁹⁷ 'Joffé, Roland (1945–)', *Screenonline*, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/533554/index.html> [accessed 23 November 2023].

interest in developing the Granada name beyond television. In his reply, Berger also mentions the programmes he had recently made for Granada. These included *Tomorrow Couldn't Be Worse*, a series that involved interviewing a cross-section of people from working-class backgrounds about their memories of pre-1914 life in Britain:

Dear Philip O'Connor,

At last I'm out of that television asylum and can think a little again. (If you have a set and you want to see the programmes they go out at 10.30 on Mondays beginning on Aug 19th; the people themselves would interest you – I haven't done them justice, I fear.) [...] I'm not a left tycoon, and the only one I know is Sidney Bernstein. If you could see him, I think you'd have a chance. He's interested in publishing (he owns McGibbon and Kee), he's very intelligent and he is genuinely socialist. He runs Granada like the ancient Egyptian State but still. At the moment I'm so non grata that it would be a hindrance for you for me to mention you to him. But try to find somebody who knows him and go and talk to him – writing is probably useless.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ 'John Berger Letter to Phillip O' Connor', 17 August 1963 [Harry Ransom Center, Berger, John, 1926-. 14 ALS to O'Connor, Philip, 1958-1967. Box 8.5] 59 RdeM.

Berger's evocation of the 'television asylum', and his suggestion perhaps of the insular thinking of television programme makers, reveals his ambivalence towards Granada and also to Sidney Bernstein, in a way that encapsulates a central theme of this thesis: how Bernstein's strong political commitments sat alongside the top-down structure of Granada, despite its outwardly democratic self-presentation. Berger's description of himself as 'non grata', moreover, conveys the complexities of working for the company. In his memoir, Denis Forman identified the difference between 'persona non-Granada' and 'persona Granada': 'Sidney liked speed, vigour, humour and plain speaking in the people he worked with. He did not like pomposity or verbosity [...] above all he liked people who stood up to him [...] if you were evasive, apologetic or cowed your number was up'.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen in the previous chapter, for many talented directors such as Therese Denny and Herbert Wise, being a 'persona Granada' proved impossible.

Berger's own uncertainty about why he left Granada was still apparent many years later. Looking back on his time in Granada in an interview with Paul Delaney from 1977, this ambivalence was articulated further:

I had a contract with Granada television to spend [...] I forget now – was it 2 months or 3 months each year working for them. And they paid me enough to live

¹⁰⁰ Denis Forman, *Persona Granada: Some Memories of Sidney Bernstein and the Early Days of Independent Television* (London: André Deutsch), p. 87–88.

for the whole year, living fairly modestly. I think that lasted for 2 years, then I got thrown out [...] The only time in my life where I actually had an office, a secretary, extraordinary – and I wasn't really meant to do very much [...] Sidney Bernstein, who ran Granada television, he was a strange man, but really, I think I was a kind of court intellectual, that's not perhaps quite fair, because I had made some television programmes and they were quite good, and so [...] ¹⁰¹

The extract reflects Berger's unease about his status, and of Bernstein, and somehow suggests unfinished business. In describing himself as being like a 'court intellectual', before doubting if that was his role, he encapsulates perhaps a lack of agency and then doubts this. Indeed, the line 'I actually had an office, secretary – extraordinary' seems to suggest he may not have had much choice in the set-up, that these things 'bestowed' on him caused a sense of unease. While such facets of the role were perhaps taken for granted by people in a similar position, they were not by him. We will see in the following chapter how many women struggled to have creative roles at Granada and were hindered by the stratification and deeply gendered environment at the company. This environment made many women and men feel like outsiders. Berger would go on to make a landmark series with the BBC a decade later with *Ways of Seeing* (1972). His departure was Granada's loss.

¹⁰¹ John Berger, letter to Paul Delaney, 1977, personal archive of John Berger.

Study for a Pope

The following section explores the significance of the painting *Study for a Pope* (1955) by the Anglo-Irish artist, Francis Bacon, purchased by Granada in 1964.¹⁰² The importance of the painting to Granada was underlined by where it was displayed in the company's headquarters – in the foyer entrance (see Figure 7). It was one of fifty works completed by Bacon that had been inspired by an oil painting entitled *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1650), by the Spanish artist Velasquez.¹⁰³ Michael Peppiatt writes of how Bacon returned to the subject of *Innocent X* relentlessly 'as if there were still more paraphrases [of the image] to bring to the surface'.¹⁰⁴ Bacon remarked of his subject: 'It is true, of course, the Pope is unique. He's put in a unique position by being the Pope, and therefore, like in certain great tragedies, he's as though raised onto a dais on which the grandeur of his image can be displayed to the world'.¹⁰⁵ Entering the building in Manchester, one was greeted by just such a 'dais': a leaning pontiff, his right arm raised, encased in a cassock

¹⁰² Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*, p. 15.

¹⁰³ Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon in the 1950s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 28.

¹⁰⁴ Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon in the 1950s*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵ David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), p. 28.

and chalk-mark grille. Reviewing the first set of Bacon's 'Pope' paintings for the *News Statesman* in 1952, John Berger described experiencing an almost unwilling pull to the strangeness of the works: 'one watches them, hypnotised as an agnostic by some ectoplasmic manifestation at a seance'.¹⁰⁶ However, Berger was less convinced by Bacon's talent: 'I say that Bacon is a brilliant stage manager, rather than an original visual artist'.¹⁰⁷

Study for a Pope (1955) had been purchased by Granada in 1964, a year after Berger left the company, and two years after Francis Bacon had had a major exhibition of work in which the artist 'had ascended to the pinnacle of art world fame'.¹⁰⁸ The figure of the Pope was contorted and unnerving, the body twisted, squaring up to question the viewer. Michael Parkinson, who worked at the company from 1963 to 1966, and who built on his reputation as an interviewer remembered how 'When you walked through the door into Granada Television in Cross Street, Manchester you felt the place as special, certainly different from different media temples I had worked in. The main reception area was

¹⁰⁶ John Berger, 'Francis Bacon', *New Statesman*, 5 January 1952, 10–11; reprinted in Tom Overton, ed., *Portraits: John Berger on Artists* (London: Verso, 2017), p. 343.

¹⁰⁷ Berger, 'Francis Bacon'.

¹⁰⁸ Gayford, *Modernists and Mavericks*, p. 213.

dominated by a large compelling painting by Francis Bacon.¹⁰⁹ He also recalled the amount of artwork at the company in the mid 1960s: ‘what struck me most about working at Granada was that it was like working in an art gallery’.¹¹⁰ He would describe the Bacon painting as deeply affective; his memory conveys not only the importance of the work, staged dramatically to impress, but also how it signified a threshold between the outside world and inside world of the media. In his description of Granada as a ‘media temple’, the artwork validated the status of Granada as a powerful, but also forbidding and foreboding place in which to work.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Parkinson, *Parky* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008), p. 138.

¹¹⁰ Parkinson, ‘A Handful’, p. 47.



Figure 7. Francis Bacon's *Study for a Pope* in the Granada foyer (no date provided), courtesy of Stephen Kelly.

For many, the painting was the metaphorical centre of Granada. Phil Griffin, who joined the company in 1974 as a researcher, suggests how, for him, the company's reputation and painting coalesced: 'I had wanted to work at Granada for years and years, and largely because of the Francis Bacon [painting] in the reception which had taken my eye'.¹¹¹

Brian Park, who became a promotion scriptwriter with Granada, recalls how the painting

¹¹¹ Phil Griffin, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 8 September 2016, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/interviewees/phil-griffin/> [accessed 15 December 2023].

increased his own anxiety as he waited nervously to be interviewed for a job there in 1980: ‘If there was anything more discouraging than having to look at Francis Bacon’s “Screaming Pope” when you were about to do an interview in your ill-fitting suit, that you only wore for interviews and weddings and funerals, then I’d like to know’.¹¹² Brian Park’s mis-remembering of the title, calling the painting ‘Screaming Pope’, is suggestive of his nervous state of mind at the time, but underscores how the painting was part of people’s first impression of the building and, by extension, their new employer. For Dorothy Byrne, a former researcher, producer and later director for the current affairs series *World in Action*, who joined in 1982, the painting was a statement even more striking for its incongruity in where it was placed: ‘I just couldn’t believe it when I went in, and I went, “Oh, isn’t that Francis Bacon there?”’.¹¹³

¹¹² Brian Park, interviewed by Geoff Moore, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <http://www.granadaland.org/brian-park-describes-how-he-came-to-join-granada/> [accessed 12 December 2023].

¹¹³ Byrne was employed by the organisation from 1982 to 1994. Dorothy Byrne, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 20 September 2015, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/dorothy-byrne-2/> [accessed May 2020].

The placement of the Bacon in the foyer where it would be most viewed was intentionally meant to arrest and confer the company's status. The hubris of Francis Bacon's 'Pope' presented itself to employees as a stark reminder of the corporate power of Granada. In their work *Media Houses: Architecture, Media and the production of Centrality*, Steffan Ericson and Kristina Reigart, explore how "'myth" is given physical architectural form' via media corporations, and how specific media headquarters 'communicate demarcations of "inside" and "outside" the media" and between the "private" and the "public"'.¹¹⁴ Despite the prominence of the media in seeking to represent collective experiences, Ericson and Reigart write that most members of the public do not often see the inside of these buildings. The role of the foyer therefore operates as a very specific form of branding, created to cultivate a singular impression that as well as being impactful, can also denote obfuscation. In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu writes: 'A work of art has a meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded.'¹¹⁵ The Bacon was 'encoded' with forms of power, perhaps a message for those who 'understood' its status. In 1953, Pembroke College, Oxford purchased Francis Bacon's painting *Man in a Chair* (1952) from the Beaux Art

¹¹⁴ Steffan Ericson and Kristina Reigart, eds, *Media Houses: Architecture, Media and the Production of Centrality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Introduction', *Distinction*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 2.

Gallery. (*World in Action* directors, Michael Apted, John Birt and Jeremy Isaacs were all graduates of Oxbridge and employed at Granada in the 1960s.)

Whether by design or intent, Granada's purchase of the painting could also have been an ironic riposte to the BBC's own desire for grandeur and modernity via the centrepiece of its radio headquarters in Broadcasting House, completed in 1932. Inside Broadcasting House, overlooking the foyer, was a Latin inscription on a plinth dedicated to 'Almighty God by the first Governors in the year 1931, John Reith being Director-General'. This was intended as a moralising message to the occupants of the building, with the inscription urging that employees of the BBC should incline 'their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful and honest and of good report' and should 'tread the path of wisdom and uprightness'. The effect of the Latin script also deeply impressed those who visited the BBC's new headquarters. In 1932, the *Manchester Guardian* gave its first impressions on entering the building: 'The first things you see in the marble lined entrance hall of this up-to-date factory of sound production is unexpected. It is a Latin inscription recalling the pomp of Papal Rome'.¹¹⁶ The journalist's mention of 'Papal Rome' is in striking contrast with the altogether different version of Rome that greeted Granada employees via Francis Bacon's *Study*. The Latin inscription at the BBC, placed there in the 1930s, spoke to those

¹¹⁶ Our London Staff, 'Broadcasting House: Impressions at B.B.C New Headquarters, Latest in Studios', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 May 1932, p. 12.

with a specific and increasingly rarefied knowledge of that language, and represented a seemingly different approach to the uses of culture promoted by Granada, which the BBC might have regarded as too brash and commercial.

However, Granada maintained a high-minded approach to its public engagement in keeping with *Reithian* values, and both Granada and Sidney Bernstein continued to take their roles as patrons of the arts seriously, with a view to democratising their collection, despite this apparent divergence in the understanding of what constituted modernity. This was a reflection of a wider change in the nature of patronage in the 1960s, which became more significant in the Post-war period.

Popular patronage

Robert Burstow has described the ‘rapid expansion of public patronage of the arts’ that took place in postwar Britain, initiated by the Labour government under Clement Attlee.¹¹⁷ Art was to have a democratic purpose and government was urged to commission and purchase works by artists and sculptors for public sculpture in public spaces and buildings.¹¹⁸ This expansion, continued by successive Conservative and Labour governments ‘during two decades of social democratic consensus’, built on the

¹¹⁷ Burstow, ‘Institutional Patronage’, p. 39.

¹¹⁸ Burstow, ‘Institutional Patronage’, p. 39.

recommendations of the wartime report, published in 1946, which had stressed the importance of ‘official sponsorship of the arts’ given the decline of private patronage’.¹¹⁹ Pioneering projects such as Pictures for Schools, initiated by the artist and educationalist Nan Youngman in 1947 and in which education authorities in England purchased art work to be displayed in local schools, reflected this commitment. In postwar Britain, visual art was embedded in the daily life of young people and encouraged them to look at their environment anew.¹²⁰

It is in this context that the relationship between Bernstein and the Labour politician, Jennie Lee, should be considered. Lee was appointed by Harold Wilson in 1964 as the first Minister of the Arts. Garlake has noted how ‘Under the Wilson government of 1964 to 1970 the arts gained an unprecedented prominence’.¹²¹ When Wilson was elected, he and his wife Mary Wilson ‘displayed works by younger artists such as Robert Medley,

¹¹⁹ The Arts Enquiry, *The Visual Arts: A Report Sponsored by the Dartington Hall Trustees* (London: Political and Economic Planning, 1946).

¹²⁰ Natalie Bradbury, ‘Pictures for Schools: Visual Education in the Classroom and the Art Gallery’, *Paedagogica Historica*, 57/1–2 (2021), 126–144.

¹²¹ Margaret Garlake, ed., *Artists and Patrons in Post-war Britain* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2001), p. 6.

Keith Vaughan and Henry Inlander along the first-floor corridor' of Downing Street.¹²²

Wilson's interest in art and his appeal to metropolitan, younger voters was also, as John Seed explains, strategic: 'noting the relative numerical decline of its traditional constituency of manual workers in the North of England [Labour] began to target the groups that the New Left had found receptive – younger members of the professions'.¹²³

Wilson's attention to youth was also emphasised by Jennie Lee. In February 1965, Lee published a White Paper, 'A Policy for the Arts: First Steps', in which she identified the direction she wished to pursue.¹²⁴ This paper focused on her aims of revitalising Britain for a new generation and to make the arts more accessible:

A new social as well as artistic climate is essential [...] too many working people have been conditioned by their education and environment to consider the best in music, painting and sculpture outside their reach. A younger generation,

¹²² Julia Toffollo, 'Silent Witnesses: A Brief History of the Government Art Collection', in *Art, Power, Diplomacy, Government Art Collection: The Untold Story* (London: Scala Publishers, 2011), p. 64.

¹²³ John Seed, 'Hegemony Postponed: The Unravelling of the Culture of Consensus in Britain in the 1960s', in *Cultural Revolution: The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s?*, ed. B. J. Moore-Gilbert and John Seed (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 29.

¹²⁴ Cmnd. 2601 (1965), *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps*, London: HMSO.

however, more self-confident than their elders, and beginning to be given some feeling for drama, music and the visual arts in their school years, are more hopeful material. They will want gaiety and colour, informality and experimentation.¹²⁵

However, Lee's position was questioned in some quarters. When she was still barely into her role, the *Guardian* wrote somewhat dismissively of her: 'Miss Lee is no highbrow. She favours grassroots, do it yourself culture, including amateur activities and a good deal of what might easily be called "entertainment" rather than "culture"'.¹²⁶

Jennie Lee also spoke in positive terms of support for the arts from commercial companies. In her foreword to a book on *Patronage and the Arts*, she wrote how she hoped 'firms will come to regard giving assistance to the arts as a mark of good citizenship'.¹²⁷ She continued: 'The industrial patron has a role of great importance to play in modern society – he is the heir of the wealthy private individual who did much to

¹²⁵ Cmnd. 2601 (1965), *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps*, London: HMSO.

¹²⁶ John Ardagh, 'Jennie Lee Will Announce State Aid to Arts Centres', *Guardian and Observer*, 21 February 1965, p. 5.

¹²⁷ Lee, 'Introduction', p. 1.

raise the level of civilization in past ages and who has now virtually disappeared from the scene'.¹²⁸

This approach to patronage of the arts was not restricted to 'high-minded' broadcasters. One key patron of commercial art during this period was the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, founded 1963 and the owner of Rothman's cigarettes. The Foundation began sponsoring exhibitions by young artists from this date. In 1964, it sponsored the *New Generation* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, a prize for young British artists, and which Granada later sponsored from 1973. These exhibitions were 'an early product of corporate sponsorship' demonstrative of the burgeoning alignment between the contemporary art world and commercial companies.¹²⁹ As Simon Faulkner has explored, such exhibitions: 'stood as a site of mediation between two social spheres, conventionally understood to be antinomic, marking a point at which divisions between "commercial" and "non-commercial culture" were renegotiated'.¹³⁰ Funding such

¹²⁸ Lee, 'Introduction', p. 1.

¹²⁹ Margaret Garlake, 'Representing the Post-war World', in *Reconfiguring the 1950s*, ed. Sarah McDougall (London: Ben Uri Gallery, 2014), p. 13.

¹³⁰ Simon Faulkner, 'Art, Cigarettes and Visual Culture in the Sixties: The Peter Stuyvesant Foundation and the New Generation Exhibitions, 1964–66', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 1/1 (2000), p. 75.

exhibitions accrued significant ‘cultural capital’ for companies such as Peter Stuyvesant. Garlake has noted how, ‘during the 1960s when contemporary art became a marker of corporate status and prestige, industrial and commercial patronage briefly offered alternatives to the publicly funded model’.¹³¹ The relationship between ‘youth’ and contemporary art also held a strong appeal for commercial companies in Britain. As art historian Simon Faulkner states, ‘in the context of British culture in the sixties, the “young” and the “new” were often viewed as international while the ‘old’ was inward looking, “English” and of the “Establishment”’.¹³²

1965 Whitworth exhibition

Bernstein’s – and Granada’s – pride in their art collections was exemplified by an exhibition held at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester in 1965. This same year, Granada set up Northern Arts and Sciences Foundation, later the Granada Foundation with the aim of supporting theatre, writing and art.¹³³

¹³¹ Margaret Garlake, ‘Introduction’, in *Artists and Patrons in Post-war Britain*, ed. Margaret Garlake (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 8.

¹³² Faulkner, ‘Art, Cigarettes and Visual Culture’, p. 83.

¹³³ Social Science Space, ‘My Social Science Career’.

A few weeks before the exhibition took place, the company had announced that it was undergoing a 'de-Londonisation', with the majority of staff in London being transferred to the company's headquarters in Deansgate, Manchester.¹³⁴ The move was an indication of Granada's commitment to developing a distinctive image and of its desire to develop a reputation strongly identified with the North West.

Accessibility was again the guiding principle behind the Whitworth exhibition. John White, the Gallery's Director, wrote in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue that the paintings being shown had been 'bought [by Granada] to form a natural part of the environment of people working in a visual medium as the building on whose wall they hang'.¹³⁵ He continued that 'in a world increasingly inhabited by people who spend a great part of their working lives in offices, art can and should become a part of the working as well as leisure environment'.¹³⁶ White specifically praised the fact that 'these works are constantly on public view to those who walk the corridors or wait in foyers, climb the stairs or go into the company office'.¹³⁷ It was not so much the artwork per se but the fact

¹³⁴ 'Granada Leave London', *Guardian*, 14 March 1965, p. 1.

¹³⁵ John White, 'Introduction', in *Granada Collection 1965* (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester), p. 4.

¹³⁶ White, 'Introduction', p. 4.

¹³⁷ White, 'Introduction', p. 4.

that it was being accessed in people's everyday working lives that was so important to him.

Responses to Granada's exhibition at the Whitworth Gallery were mixed and communicate how the exhibition was seen through a corporate lens, with only one critic really responding positively to the spirit of the gallery director's comments. This was in *The Times*, in which the correspondent wrote that the exhibition represented Granada as an 'enlightened enterprise' and commented on how 'if the example of purchasing works to display in offices is followed only then can more and more people come into fruitful contact with first rate examples of modern art'.¹³⁸

A significant frustration for other reviewers of the 1965 exhibition was how to assess the collection of paintings owned and hung by Granada Television, given that so much of the work on display was not from Granada's headquarters but from its owners' private homes. Frustration at the distinction between Bernstein's private collection and the artwork displayed in the workplace was expressed by Paul Grinke of the *Financial Times*, who was clear about wanting to differentiate between the two collections, reminding his

¹³⁸ From a correspondent, 'Manchester See's Two Aspects of Modern Art', *The Times*, 5 April 1965; article from Manchester Art Gallery Archive.

readers that ‘different criteria are called for to consider collections which serve such different functions’.¹³⁹

This commentary raises a number of questions about how Granada curated its identity as a media company, with the reviewer questioning the extent to which the artwork displayed in the Granada building was intended to burnish the Bernstein family’s reputation and signify their own authority in the company. However, it is just as likely that the decision to include family art was in keeping with Bernstein’s desire to make art that he personally possessed available to the public.

Grinke favoured the family collection, mainly because it had a ‘diversity and a certain amount of panache which seems lacking in Granada’s own collection’. According to Grinke, the public collection at Granada was far more ‘utilitarian’. The choice of adjective is striking for how it seems to suggest that the art was too functional, too ‘everyday’, precisely hitting on how ‘the Granada collection’ was arguably intended to function.

Grinke expressed his admiration for particular works from the Granada collection, including ‘a rather cerebral Ben Nicholson’ and ‘a spirited [Marino] Marini’. His review also mentioned Sheila Fell, the works of Josef Herman and the painter Mark Gertler, each of whose works was described as being ‘too sombre’ and ‘not suited to the lively bustle

¹³⁹ Paul Grinke, ‘Contemporary Maecenas’, *Financial Times*, 15 April 1965, p. 28.

of a large corporation devoted to entertainment'. Mark Gertler's work 'Native Women Knitting' (date unknown) featured two women engaged in darning pieces of cloth. Gertler had been a good friend of Sidney Bernstein, and his paintings would often feature family and friends from the Jewish orthodox community of the East End, where Gertler was from and where Bernstein's maternal grandparents had first settled as tailors.¹⁴⁰ Gertler's work also shared an interest in localities and daily life that was seen in a painting owned by Granada by the artist, Sheila Fell, entitled *Wedding in Aspatia I* (1958). Fell had been born in Cumbria, the daughter of a seamstress and miner. The painting featured a bride and groom in front of a graveyard, their outlines and faces smudged and incoherent to the viewer. The work was a sombre mix of dark colours. Fell's biographer, Cate Haste, described its sister piece, also with the same name, as a 'fierce imaginative construct and a disturbing image of [a] wedding in a place of decay'.¹⁴¹ (This so-called place of decay was where Fell would be return to again and again, despite living most of her life in London.) These pictures, so evocative of local identity and place, did not resonate with the critic from the *Financial Times*, who regarded the choice as too dour.

¹⁴⁰ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 160.

¹⁴¹ Cate Haste, 'The Poetry of Place: Sheila Fell', in *Reconfiguring the 1950s*, ed. Sarah McDougall (London: Ben Uri Gallery, 2014), p. 84.

Grinke was interested in the impact of the work, whose overall effects were, he felt, too muted. He made reference to two abstract paintings by the artists Friso Tan Holt and Robert Medley. These were, he wrote, ‘too soft in tone to have the necessary impact to stand out in in large well-lit spaces’.¹⁴² He was of the opinion that the collection reflected ‘a hesitancy [...] as if they [Granada] had been advised to wait until the radio-active half-life of the avant-garde had been exhausted and only a faint ticking proved that the paintings still had life in them’. On the other hand, the Francis Bacon *Study for a Pope* was described as ‘magnificent, and an obvious Boardroom picture, but it may be discounted as a purely prestige picture acquired in the Rooms against fierce competition, and not a stroke of remarkable prescience’. In the light of Grinke’s comments, it is significant that Granada decided not to place the Bacon in their boardroom. Grinke concluded of Granada’s artwork that: ‘the general impression is [...] one of quiet, tactful, unassuming works which will cause no offence’. He was also dismissive of ‘Granada’s considerable contribution to the Mancunian Renaissance’ that does not seem to extend to the patronage of new Northern artists’. This sentiment was partly echoed by the *Guardian*, which conceded that the paintings from Granada’s offices appeared to have been ‘intellectually chosen for its purpose’.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Grinke, ‘Contemporary Maecenas’, p. 28.

¹⁴³ Grinke, ‘Contemporary Maecenas’, p. 28.

These diverging opinions of the reviewers, celebrating the panache of some paintings and criticising the 'sombre' and the 'utilitarian' works of others, reflect not merely the divergence in public opinion about modern art but also the changing nature of the Granada collection over the previous decade. These were opinions being expressed on a national scale and constituted an assessment of Granada as a cultural institution, not merely as a regional broadcaster. It arguably marks an important moment in the evolution of the company.

On a regional level there was a less complicated appreciation of the contribution being made by the company to the promotion of the arts. In November 1965, the *Manchester Evening News* journalist, Beryl Jones, wrote a lengthy article detailing how a new appreciation for art was being experienced in Manchester, particularly by the city's young. The article featured a quote from Francis Hawcroft, keeper of the Whitworth gallery collection, who commented on how young people 'like to see what is going on in the nineteen sixties, and they take modern art in their stride'. Across the city, Jones notes that 'Mancunians are rushing to see special exhibitions and even crowding lunchtime lectures on art'. Jones recorded the various ways in which this new 'culture rush', as she described it, was being experienced, both via the increased footfall of people visiting its cultural institutions but also in a renewed infrastructure developing out of private patronage and from the actions of city councillors, who were voting to finance and purchase modern work. (This contrasted with the council's previous actions, where Jones noted, 'just over a decade ago members rejected the chance to buy a Henry Moore

painting'.¹⁴⁴) Significantly, she praised Granada for playing its part in generating this new enthusiasm for the arts and wrote that, 'Among the few really great art patrons left in Britain are the Bernsteins'.¹⁴⁵

Meat Painting II

In the latter half of the 1960s, Granada's collection reflected an increased engagement with Pop Art and youth culture, demonstrated through their acquisition of the Liverpool-based beat poet Adrian Henri's work *Meat Painting II*, purchased by the company the same year it was completed, in 1967. According to Henri the meat of the work's title 'had been painted in the order in which it was supplied by the butcher'.¹⁴⁶ That year, Adrian Henri had contributed to an anthologised book of poetry called *The Liverpool Scene*, alongside poets Roger McGough and Brian Patten. The writer and cultural commentator George Melly wrote that their work represented 'a genuine pop culture in the real sense of that over-used and frequently misapplied word'.¹⁴⁷ Granada's purchase of this painting from somebody whose work reflected 'genuine pop culture' can be seen as

¹⁴⁴ Beryl Jones, 'A New Enthusiasm for the Arts', *Manchester Evening News*, 20 November, 1965; article from Manchester Gallery Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, 'A New Enthusiasm for the Arts'.

¹⁴⁶ Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ George Melly, 'Pop in the 'Pool', *The Observer*, 5 March 1967, p. 27.

constituting a tangible effort to reflect the cultural output and youth culture of Liverpool, a city Granada was often accused of neglecting. It was also demonstrative of a coalescing between the commercial and non-commercial worlds, and one that was advantageous to Granada in associating it with Pop Art. Granada would subsequently dramatise Henri's plays on television, suggesting a more substantial interest in his work and longevity to the company's interest and 'patronage' of Merseyside artists.

In 1967, a report called 'Art in the City' was published by the literary critic and Bertolt Brecht scholar, John Willett. It examined the infrastructure for supporting visual arts in Liverpool and Merseyside. In his work, Willet mentioned Granada as a key patron in the region. The report had been commissioned by Liverpool based Bluecoat Society of Arts and in his study Willett (a good friend of John Berger's) wrote of the benefits of embedding visual arts within the 'the daily affairs' of a company. Willet identified two such institutions, the Pilkington Brothers Glass Making Factory in St Helens and Granada Television Headquarters in Deansgate, Manchester, as representative of the 'beneficial relationship between commercial companies and the arts'. He wrote:

there are some who have made considerable efforts to improve the look of their offices and factories, while others have acquired pictures from varying merits for their decoration. Admittedly as yet only two of them can be seen as a major visual assets to the area, and neither is strictly on Merseyside: Pilkington Brother's new buildings at St Helen's have a big mural by Victor Pasmore at the refectory, while in Ralph Tubb's excellent Granada buildings over in Manchester – which are

perhaps mentionable in this report because Granada covers Liverpool from there – a good collection of paintings has been formed on the recommendation of Sir Gerald Barry and a panel of advisors. These are outstanding in that both represent the development of a bold visual arts policy within the daily affairs of a major organisation.¹⁴⁸

Willet's admiration of Granada's collection similarly echoes that of John White. However, Willet's role as independent of Granada makes his assessment all the more powerful.

Boardroom politics: *Berlin Wall* and *Bystander*

The late 1960s to early 1970s reflected a shift in buying at Granada and a change in managerial structures. In November 1968, Gerald Barry died. Five years later, in 1973, Alex Bernstein (nephew of Sidney) became managing director of Granada and in 1974 Denis Forman became company chairman. During this period that there was a renewed commitment to buying paintings. One person credited for purchasing works at this time was Gerry Hagan, who had first worked as the head of Granada's reference library, before working in the same role at the script department. Kathy Arundale remembered how Hagan 'had a brief to buy locally – smaller works, possibly – for Manchester, and used to

¹⁴⁸ Willett, *Art in a City*, pp. 99–100.

go to local galleries, local exhibitions and buy things he thought would be good'.¹⁴⁹ John Stretch joined Granada's reference library in 1968. Stretch recalls being 'full of the smug confidence of youth' when he arrived at the company; however, Hagan's voracious knowledge of the arts somewhat dampened his smugness: 'it was difficult to mention a writer, painter, musician [...] choreographer or film or theatre producer about whom he [Hagan] didn't know far more than I did'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Kathy Arundale, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 3 February 2015, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <http://www.granadaland.org/kathy-arundale-2/> [accessed May 2020].

¹⁵⁰ John Stretch, 'Gerry Hagan', in *Granada Television: The First Generation*, ed. John Finch, Marjorie Giles, and Michael Cox (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 162.



Figure 8. Photograph of Granada boardroom in Manchester. Most likely taken in the 1960s, although date unknown. Courtesy of Stephen Kelly.

Granada's paintings have been described as reflecting the shifts in British modern art, and in the 1970s this meant they also touched upon political currents of the era. One of the paintings Granada purchased in the early 1970s was *Berlin Wall with Grass and Skies*, by the artist Tom Phillips. The painting was clearly significant to Granada, as it was placed in their boardroom, on the sixth floor, in a room inhabited by the most 'senior' people at the company (see *Figure 8*). The painting featured quadrants of blue and green encasing

eight squares or depictions of the Berlin wall in varying shades of terracotta and black.¹⁵¹

They were surrounded by a border of bright multicoloured stripes.

Jan Betts has also explored how in companies, particularly in boardrooms, ‘changes of regime are represented by paintings too’.¹⁵² Betts has written of the symbolism of artwork in such spaces and how they ‘act in a very particular way [...] boardroom décor is not about the beautiful per se, but the appropriate’.¹⁵³ It is also about power: who makes the decisions. Betts has argued that aesthetic objects in the boardroom ‘work to create co-constructed places of power and oppression’ and Granada’s workplace art should also be seen in these terms.¹⁵⁴

However, perhaps the most striking work the company purchased in the 1970s was *Bystander* (1977) by the artist Rita Donagh, reflecting on the Troubles in Northern Ireland and purchased by Granada in 1980. Donagh had grown up in the Black Country to an Irish

¹⁵¹ The painting can be seen here:

<https://www.tomphillips.co.uk/works/paintings/item/5730-berlin-wall-with-german-grass-skies> [accessed 17th December 2023].

¹⁵² Jan Betts, ‘Framing Power: The Case of the Boardroom’, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 9/2 (2006), p. 163.

¹⁵³ Betts, ‘Framing Power’, p. 165.

¹⁵⁴ Betts, ‘Framing Power’, pp. 157–167.

mother and an Anglo-Irish father. Her early childhood experiences were shaped by memories of the local landscape, which she described as ‘a lot of neglected spaces, some burning underground and hazardous from old mines’.¹⁵⁵ She had enrolled as a fine arts student at Durham University in 1956, later working as a lecturer while developing her practice as an artist.¹⁵⁶ Her work focused on themes that were ‘attuned to ideas of marginalisation’.¹⁵⁷ From the early 1970s, she would explore the Troubles in Northern Ireland. *Bystander* featured two images: on the far left was a sepia image of children playing (from afar it looked like they were soldiers) playing in a hazardous and ‘neglected space’ and the foreground was shape of a body underneath a pile of black newspapers. The work had arisen from an article in the *Sunday Times* in 1974 reporting a car bombing in Dublin in which twenty-eight people had been killed. Alongside the article was a photograph of a body lying in the street, covered by newspaper sheets. While the victim was initially believed to be a male newspaper vendor, it later transpired that the person killed had been an eighteen-year-old woman.

¹⁵⁵ Jonathan Watkins, *Rita Dongah, Birmingham Ikon Gallery* (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2005), p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Watkins, *Rita Dongah*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Watkins, *Rita Donagh*, p. 13.

The art historian John A. Walker has commented how, in response to the heightened political tensions of the period, the 1970s saw more artists creating work that was concerned with ‘the importance of subject matter/content, social relevance and function’.¹⁵⁸ The same year *Bystander* was bought, Granada screened a programme focusing on the Troubles entitled *The H-block Fuse* (1980). It would influence an artwork by Donagh’s partner, the artist Richard Hamilton. Hamilton’s work *The Citizen* (1981–1983) had arisen from images on a Granada programme featuring interviews with IRA prisoners on hunger strike in the infamous H block of the Maze Prison outside Belfast. (Hamilton recalled being ‘struck by a scene in a TV documentary about republican prisoners’.¹⁵⁹) The programme was directed by Simon Berthon and filmed by cameraman George Jesse Tuner.

1983 exhibition

In 1983 Granada mounted a further exhibition of its work at the Whitworth gallery. The most marked difference between the 1965 exhibition and the 1983 exhibition was the

¹⁵⁸ John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.7.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Hamilton, ‘The Citizen, 1981–1983’, *TATE*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-the-citizen-t03980> [accessed 26 November 2023].

increased presence of abstract art in Granada's public collection. The cover of the 1983 catalogue featured a bold Howard Hodgkin painting, with round green ovals and heavy slabs of red and blue encased by indigo perimeter, the thickness of the brush work circumventing the perimeter of the painting. Alongside this abstract work shown as part of the exhibition was work by John Hoyland and by the painter Robyn Denny. The 'intellectual' Ben Nicholson was also displayed in exhibition as well as the Francis Bacon.

One of the benefits of the 1983 exhibition catalogue as a historical tool is that all of the thirty-eight paintings exhibited as part of the exhibition are featured in it. Yet these were only thirty-eight paintings in a total of 200 works owned by Granada. The exhibition included more overtly political works than in 1965, something emphasised in the catalogue essay and alluded to, albeit briefly, in reviews. These more political works included Rita Donagh's work *Bystander* and Tom Phillips' painting *Berlin Wall with German Grass and Skies* (1973).

Irene McManus of the *Guardian* wrote of the only 'dud' being a painting by the Liverpool beat poet, Adrian Henri.¹⁶⁰ For Jane Clifford, though, the focus was on the choice of Granada's owner: 'His tastes and preferences become evident in his exhibition in a way

¹⁶⁰ Irene McManus, 'Granada Collection', *Guardian*, 6 February 1983; cutting from Manchester Art Gallery Archives.

that was never possible when the pictures were dispersed throughout the Granada building'.¹⁶¹ Clifford's review reiterated that even after his departure, Bernstein was still dominant.

Art for all



Figure 9. Photograph of artist John Walker's painting *Ostraca V* (1977) in Granada's foyer in Manchester, purchased by the company in 1979. Date of photograph unknown. Courtesy of Stephen Kelly.

¹⁶¹ Jane Clifford, 'Edgar and Granada Paintings', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 February 1983; cutting from Manchester Art Gallery Archives.

An important reason for looking at Granada's art collection was the impact it had on former employees and how they have remembered the unique working environment. This was in contrast with the way 'outsiders', including reviewers of the exhibitions, experienced Granada's paintings at the time. One of the most significant differences in these responses is how newspaper critics of the Granada artwork collection viewed the paintings primarily through the prism of the Bernstein's' taste as patrons and collectors, while for many former employees these associations convey how they experienced the artwork as something specifically related to their experience of being in Granada's building.

Steve Kelly, co-founder of the *Granadaland Oral History Project*, remembers that there were paintings in both the Manchester and Liverpool Exchange Quay offices (opened in 1980).¹⁶² His own personal favourite was a painting based in the Liverpool offices: 'of Jack Johnson the Black American heavyweight boxer [...] It was in the basement production room. People did mention it because it was so striking and clearly had a back story to it – the life and times of a great Black boxer'.¹⁶³ I found no evidence of this painting, yet its tangible memory underscores the ephemeral nature of the collection.

¹⁶² Steve Kelly to Isabel Taube, email communication, 30 October 2019.

¹⁶³ Steve Kelly to Isabel Taube, email communication, 30 October 2019.

Kelly's memories reflect the way the artwork was placed in spaces where it was part of the everyday activity of employees. For some, the paintings' placements reflected the way the collection was not held in reverence by Granada, but rather displayed in a way that underplayed its significance. Esther Dean, who worked at Granada for twenty-two years from 1967 until 1989, remembers how:

There was one outside the wardrobe door, I can't remember who it was by, and it was in totally the wrong place because you needed to be a way away from it to look at it, it was a very expensive painting. It was so thick with paint. There was another one that I think was by Alan Jones. It used to be on the stairs going down. It had writing on it and I always used to read it as 'pus'. In fact, it wasn't 'pus', it was 'bus'. You could just see a bus coming through.¹⁶⁴

Dean's reference to the work 'thick with paint' could be a work by the painter Frank Auerbach, whose artwork *J.Y.M in the Studio II* (1963–1964) was bought by Granada in 1978. Alan Jones's work *2nd Bus*, 1962, was purchased in 1973.¹⁶⁵ Dean was also given

¹⁶⁴ Esther Dean, interviewed by Judith Jones, 4 November 2015, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/interviewees/esther-dean/> [accessed 15 December 2023].

¹⁶⁵ Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*, p. 28

costumes from the Ballets Russes, founded in Russia by Serge Diaghilev in 1909. She remembers how they ‘arrived and nobody knew what they were. They brought them down into wardrobe and they were hanging up and I said, “These are museum pieces, they shouldn’t be here! We can’t use them’.¹⁶⁶

Kathy Arundale remembers work by the celebrated abstract painters John Hoyland and Patrick Heron that were ‘hanging on a corridor which was just a way through to the back door’. She recalls that: ‘sometimes, as a result, they got a bit damaged, because people would be passing by with food and drink and so on, and they’d get bits of splashes’.¹⁶⁷

Chris Kerr joined Granada after he was head-hunted while managing the Bluecoat Arts centre in Liverpool in 1981. Kerr initially became the assistant manager of the new television studios in Merseyside and was responsible for putting together a collection of paintings for the Exchange Flags site there. His memories reflect how Granada were keen to create a collection that reflected painters from the region: ‘it was a privilege to be able to put together a collection of work by Liverpool artists such as Adrian Henri, Maurice Cockrill, Clement MacAleer, Stephen Farthing and others for the Exchange Flags

¹⁶⁶ Esther Dean, interviewed by Judith Jones.

¹⁶⁷ Kathy Arundale, interviewed by Stephen Kelly.

studio'.¹⁶⁸ When the company moved to new premise in Albert Dock in 1986, the relaxed nature of Granada's relationship to the artwork meant that many of went missing, as Kerr recalls: 'Quite a lot of these "disappeared" in the move to Albert Dock which I guess means that other people liked them too'. He recalls: 'Given the great value of the collection I was always impressed by how laid-back Alex [Bernstein] was about the pictures. He felt it was important that they should be on general view and if, as they did, they got damaged, well we just had them repaired.'¹⁶⁹

As Thelma McGough remembered: 'there were paintings everywhere. And now – talking to you – they would be such a security risk when I think about it. But they were always there. If you went in the car park entrance. Anyone could walk off with those paintings if they had a mind to it. That did not occur to me at the time.'¹⁷⁰

Granada's desire to foster a sense of art as something to be shared is commented on by Kathy Arundale, whose later responsibilities included maintaining the upkeep of the artworks. She recalls how 'People did used to say "Oh, I like that. I wish I had it in my

¹⁶⁸ Chris Kerr, 'Granadaland Notes', <http://www.granadaland.org/chris-kerr-2/> [accessed March 2022].

¹⁶⁹ Kerr, 'Granadaland Notes'.

¹⁷⁰ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Isabel Taube, London, 25 September 2019.

office” and, if it was feasible, we’d move them about’.¹⁷¹ This is echoed by Steve Kelly, who remembers how the artworks also acted as a ‘reward’ system in Granada. In an email replying to a question about the meaning of the art collection, he responded: ‘If you rose to exec. producer level and were given your own office you could go and choose a painting or two for your office’. They functioned as a form of status in the organisation. The paintings were also deployed to impress and as a form of ‘branding’ for the company:

Also worth saying, that when Granada had a major public event, such as when they televised coverage of TUC, Labour, Conservative conferences in Blackpool they would put paintings on the walls of our production office in the Tower building. It was just to make the place look good when MPs dropped in for interviews or whatever. They weren’t expensive paintings but were by local artists and usually staff could buy them afterwards. I tried to buy one once, but someone beat me to it. There were also paintings in the Stables (the bar) and again these were by local artists, not expensive and could also be bought.¹⁷²

Not everyone found the paintings appealing, as Alex Bernstein conceded in his ‘Foreward’ to the 1983 exhibition catalogue for the second show of Granada’s artwork at the Whitworth that year, in which he observed that: ‘I have to admit that many in Granada

¹⁷¹ Kathy Arundale, interviewed by Stephen Kelly.

¹⁷² Steve Kelly to Isabel Taube, email communication, 30 October 2019.

exhibit some indifference to the paintings, nevertheless there are many more who have grown to like them and even take pride in them'.¹⁷³

Organisational histories: Bacon as biography

The importance of Granada's art collection – specifically the Francis Bacon painting – is also recorded in recollections of life at Granada. In many accounts it is used to propagate Granada's mythology and reputation for 'difference'. For the 1983 exhibition catalogue, Alex Bernstein wrote 'there have been paintings hanging on the walls of Granada for many years. They were chosen by a variety of people, but the policy of buying paintings was started by Sidney Bernstein [Granada's founder], who himself bought the Francis Bacon in this exhibition in 1964 before the artist was so universally accepted'.¹⁷⁴ While there is no information as to who bought the Bacon, the artist was extremely famous in 1964, having been the subject of two retrospectives in New York and London two years earlier, which elevated him to one of the most famous British artists of the period. However, Bernstein's comments underline how the Bacon was used to project an image of Granada that aligned it with ideas of exceptionalism and originality.

¹⁷³ Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Dodwell, Bernstein and Vousden, *The Granada Collection*.

It is significant, then, that in memoirs by former employees, the art collection, and specifically the Francis Bacon, is deployed as a metaphor for their sense of Granada's own demise as an organisation. Ray Fitzwalter joined the company as a director for *World in Action* in 1970 working there until the mid-1990s. In his memoir, he connects the artwork and Bacon's 'Pope' not only to Granada's rise but also to its decline, linking this to the wider trajectory of ITV, with the sale of the painting being symbolic of the ways in which profit was placed over programme quality when Granada was taken over by new management in the early 1990s.¹⁷⁵ He describes how the 'remarkable Francis Bacon that was hung in the front hall [...] was sold for millions at the peak of the market to the benefit of the balance sheet' and observes how for many employees, 'the disposal of the art collection was a watershed, a symbol of the end'.¹⁷⁶ The Bacon, too, represented the end of the Bernstein era. In their book *The Myths We Live By*, Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson have written of how 'any autobiographical narrative doubles as a morality: and this can be discerned not only in its shaping, but in the mythical elements which may be juxtaposed with unique personal memory'.¹⁷⁷ The way the Bacon painting performs

¹⁷⁵ Ray Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died: The Rise and Fall of ITV* (Leicester: Matador, 2008), p. 176.

¹⁷⁶ Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died*, p. 176.

¹⁷⁷ Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, 'Introduction', in *The Myths We Live By* (Routledge: London, 1990), p. 11.

such doubling and mis-remembering is redolent in Fitzwalter's memoir, in which the art collection, and the Francis Bacon painting particularly, becomes a paradigm of Granada's own failed morality as an organisation. Fitzwalter includes an anecdote in his book about the return of a former employer, Andy Harries who had worked in entertainment:

He was given an office and there, stuffed behind a filing cabinet, found two Patrick Heron lithographs, both damaged. 'I took them to be repaired and they were sent to Manchester and hung in the boardroom', he said. 'I recently visited, and they had gone. Only the hooks were left. I was told that all the valuable paintings had been sold, and the remnants were to be auctioned at LWT. There is no interest in nurturing only in money.'¹⁷⁸

Harries' words as related here are suggestive of how the artwork was clearly equated with the nurturing of a specific kind of sensibility connected to morality – and how the loss of that morality was manifested through the sale of the pictures.

Frank Whiteford reviewed an exhibition in 1992 for the *Sunday Times* entitled 'The New Patrons', in which many of Bernstein's pictures were exhibited and which emphasised Bernstein's role in the choice of art for Granada's collection:

¹⁷⁸ Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died*, p. 176.

As Lord Bernstein remarks in the catalogue, his colleagues may not ever spend much, but least they never sought to influence his choice. The result is one of the best private collections of contemporary British art in the country. It includes many things of museum quality, among them splendid paintings by Patrick Caulfield, John Walker and Stephen Buckley, none of which cost a great deal of money and all of which are on show here. Although they were not bought as investments, they now represent a sizable portion of the company equity – as Granada discovered when it decided to sell the Francis Bacon which used to hang in its Manchester studios, bewildering jobbing actors and visitors to the set of *Coronation Street* alike.¹⁷⁹

The review belittles the experience of those who worked alongside these paintings and in some instances the powerful inspiration they provided. The director Colin Stone, who worked as a researcher and director at Granada and ITV in the early 1990s, had grown up in the adjacent district of Hulme and gives a strong sense of what the artwork meant to him:

¹⁷⁹ Frank Whitford, 'Poor Corporate Image, Frank Whitford on the Case of Too Much Selection by Committee at the New Patrons Exhibition', *Sunday Times*, 5 January 1992, p. 15.

The one thing I would say about the art was that everyone appreciated it [...] it fed into the culture of the company and people who worked for it because basically what it was saying, not subliminally, but not overtly, was that art – and by extension this job that you do – is for everybody. Basically, having a piece of fabulous art in front of you, there's no reason that you're from Hulme and from a working-class background that you should not have an environment enriched by amazing art so here it is. I might own it. Because they could have easily put that on someone's shelf...make it earn loads of money but instead they put it in a workspace so workers can enjoy it. But it says something to us about Bernstein, his philosophy, even though I didn't read this, it just seemed to be a very articulate way of him expressing himself to us and speaking to us as workers. And saying to us 'this is my piece of art, but this is your piece of art as well'. And that's what I felt about it.¹⁸⁰

Even if by the 1990s the wider commercial art market, reflected to some extent in the *Sunday Times* review, did not appreciate the democratising project undertaken by Granada in accordance with the highest principles, the memories recounted in this section provide a testament to an earlier, more earnest ambition.

¹⁸⁰ Colin Stone, interviewed by Isabel Taube, November 2020.

Legacy ledger: The end of Granada's reputation

In 2010, the *Manchester Evening News* wrote about a painting that was to be sold at auction by the Granada Television Company.¹⁸¹ The painting, *Three Lambrettas*, was described as 'bizarre' and 'massive' by the newspaper. Janice Troupe, a Granada spokesperson, stated that it was being sold because it 'was no longer in keeping with our plans for the site'. These plans included the sale of the Granada site and the relocation of the company to Media City in Salford.

The comments came in the same year that a programme, *The Road to Coronation Street*, was aired on the BBC Four.¹⁸² Directed by a former employee, Charles Sturridge, the programme portrayed the early years of Granada and the early development of *Coronation Street*. Filmed in the studios in Quay Street, in almost every scene a modern painting formed part of the backdrop for the programme.

The presence of the art collection in the programme attests to the importance and significance of the artworks in the memories of former employees. However, it is the

¹⁸¹ 'Granada to Sell Oil Painting', *Manchester Evening News*, 17 April 2010, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/granada-to-sell-oil-painting-984496> [accessed 20 January 2020].

¹⁸² *The Road to Coronation Street*, BBC Four, 16 September 2010.

Bernstein family collection that endured. A few years after his death, Sidney Bernstein's family bequeathed pieces of his private art collection to Manchester City Art Gallery. When I visited the Manchester Gallery City archives in November 2019 to explore if they might also hold anything in relation to Granada's collection, Kate Jesson, Curator of Contemporary Art, expressed delight that I was researching the history of Granada's collection and Bernstein in particular. She made the point that Sidney Bernstein had been instrumental in bringing international art to Manchester. Jesson had formerly worked as curator at Castlefield Gallery in Manchester and told me that twenty years previously she had visited the Granada offices, where she had been shown paintings by an employee of Granada that were stacked up in a corridor in the building. She was astonished at the scale and quality of them. When new developers moved onto the site after Granada had left, she had sought to save the Granada sign above the building as she saw it as a key piece of 'public art', an iconic statement known throughout the city. She failed, however, partly because it had moved into private hands (although three of the sign's letters are currently held in the archives of Manchester's Science and Industry Museum). It was a telling example of how a key artefact connected to such an important cultural organisation in the city been commodified rather than preserved as part of Manchester's cultural heritage. Jesson's enthusiasm reflected poignantly the loss of the Granada art collection.

Jesson's account encapsulates the role of private commercial patronage. The art, and all it represents in terms of the companies' cultural manifesto, had become finally only

an entry in the company's accounts, since commercial or private patronage was never able to become 'policy' in the same way. A former employee, Phil Griffin, has spoken of how the history of Granada's art collection can be told through its 'accrual and dispersal'. What was once an integral part of Granada's legacy had now become only a ledger entry.

Conclusion

However, traces of the collection exist. The photograph in Figure 10 of Epstein's *Jacob with the Angel* was taken by me before the national lockdown in February 2020 at Tate Britain, and the second photo (Figure 11) of one of the Ballets Russes' costumes, previously given to Esther Dean, was taken on maternity leave with my daughter when we visited the Whitworth Gallery in 2023. It suggests that Granada placed an importance in the collection being donated and seen in public art galleries and institutions.

Granada's art collection is even more poignant in the context of what the site has become. In August 2015 it was announced that Manchester City Council was searching for an architect to design a new proposed £110m 'flexible art space' within the city to be built on the site of the former Granada studios.¹⁸³ The 'art space' was originally to be

¹⁸³ Tom Anstey, 'Former Granada Studios to become £110 Million Manchester City Art Space', 3 August 2015,

called the Factory, after the music label co-founded by Granada presenter, Tony Wilson. A considerable portion of the new funding was to come from the government and said to be ‘part of a wider initiative in the north of England to restore the “cultural and economic counterbalance” to London in the south’, which the article stated had been described as

<https://www.attractionsmanagement.com/index.cfm?subID=0&pagetype=news&codeID=317215&dom=n&email=web&pub=AMe&date=> [accessed 17th December 2023].



*Figure 10. Jacob Epstein’s *Jacob and the Angel* at Tate Britain (February 2020), author’s own photo.*

¹⁸⁴ Tom Anstey, ‘Former Granada Studios to become £110 Million Manchester City Art Space’.

In July 2018, a further announcement was made by the developers Allied London, which co-owned the site with Manchester City Council, announcing that the ‘legendary studios’ would resurface as a new studio space that year to include a 200-bedroom hotel run by Soho House hotel. There was a further refinement of the project with the announcement that Soho House’s plans for Granada’s Manchester studios included a rooftop pool and ‘wellness centre’ as well a gallery featuring the work of artists from ‘in and around’ Manchester.

In 2023, the Factory was renamed Aviva Studios after the insurance company purchased the naming rights to the arts venue for £35 million.¹⁸⁵ The venue’s cost, originally estimated at around £111.6 million, had more than doubled and the City Council was looking for a way to recuperate some of its investment. This renaming and opening of a Soho House in the city is in keeping with a new trend in which the city’s cultural landscape and heritage is viewed as a corporate branding opportunity for businesses and, in the case of Soho House, one associated with privilege and exclusivity. This commercial appropriation of Granada’s reputation for an exclusive hotel and a member’s club art gallery amounts to a form of cultural partitioning that arguably does

¹⁸⁵ Fran Williams, ‘OMA’s delayed and overbudget Manchester Factory officially opens’, 19 October 2023, <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/omas-delayed-and-overbudget-manchester-factory-officially-opens> [accessed 17 December 2023].

little to rebalance cultural inequalities. It seems a far cry from Granada's early progressive plans to democratise culture as evidenced by making their art collection available to the public and by creating a unique space for its workforce. For the most part, Granada's art collection was not viewed as an exclusive luxury commodity but as a vehicle for public cultural engagement and reflected its wider ambition for progressive, democratic broadcasting.



Figure 11. Ballets Russes outfit on display at Whitworth art gallery (July 2023), author's own photo.

Yet, as I have demonstrated in this chapter, while the art collection was regarded as a significant vehicle for wider public cultural engagement, over time Granada also

appreciated the value of deploying its artwork to embellish its corporate commercial brand. A deeper understanding therefore of Granada's transformation from a regional broadcaster to a national cultural institution relies on an appreciation of the contested nature of its legacy as an 'enlightened' broadcaster, complicated even further by the marked inequality in the representation of paintings or sculptures by women. The personal, structural and societal reasons for that absence are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: ‘Girls’, ‘Glamour’ and Granada

Introduction

This chapter explores the working lives of women employed by Granada Television in the 1960s and 1970s and traces how they negotiated the gendered structural inequalities of the period. It also focuses on how female employees navigated both explicit and unspoken pressures placed on them, including challenges related to their class backgrounds, and experienced shifting ideas of femininity at a time when the company’s most well-known drama series, *Coronation Street* (1960–), was gaining traction for its convincing portrayal of working-class female characters. There has been minimal work on the lives of women who worked ‘behind the scenes’ at Granada.¹ There has also been scant attention to how, as revealed in two staff lists from 1966 and 1972, most women at Granada were employed as secretaries, and in cleaning and catering roles.²

¹ Richard Dyer, *Coronation Street*, pp. 4–5; Sue Vice, *Jack Rosenthal* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 14–32.

² Granada Personnel List 1966; Granada publishing, 1972.

This chapter aims to redress the minimal focus on women's histories at the company by drawing upon a range of material to explore how Granada was experienced as a rewarding but also contradictory environment. In the first section, I draw upon a memoir by Valerie Byron, named as a secretary on a 1966 personnel list, who, in her memoir, *No Ordinary Woman*, recounted her experiences of working first as a typist, then as a secretary, before being promoted to production assistant for Granada's experimental theatre company, the Stables Theatre in 1968, a role she coveted.³ Byron's book is significant in the historiography of ITV since it offers a counterpoint to the masculinist way in which its history has been told so far and provides a rare account of Granada as told from the experiences of a working-class women employed during its 'heyday'.⁴

Byron's work, however, is carefully crafted to present a particular personal history. The historian Penny Summerfield has explored how memoirs are often inflected with 'cultural tropes in which recollection is invested'.⁵ In her autobiography, Byron unquestionably seeks to glamorise her life, with the blurb reading 'Valerie Byron's back

³ Valerie Byron, *No Ordinary Woman* (London: Austin & McCauley, 2012), 178.

⁴ See Fitzwalter, *The Dream that Died*; Forman, *Persona Granada*.

⁵ Penny Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), p. 88.

story reads like a script pitched at the tv and movies stars'.⁶ But while her recollections are invested in the descriptive 'tropes' of secretarial work, they give a fascinating, textured insight into its culture, where a secretary could delight in working for a 'glamorous' company, but find her everyday office environment dominated by regulations around her appearance and for speaking out of line.

I compare Byron's experiences with those of Thelma McGough, who worked for the company at a later stage, in the mid-1970s, to examine whether the changing social and political climate during that period altered the nature and extent of the restrictions, how they were negotiated, and whether women were afforded greater mobility and opportunities to move to roles and work they desired. McGough joined Granada following a career in fashion and would eventually produce and direct programmes at the same time as her former boyfriend, Tony Wilson, fronted the company's programmes, including the influential music series, *So It Goes* (1976-1977).

I also examine the experiences of two 'women directors', Jenny Barraclough and Linda McDougall, who worked on Granada's current affairs series, *World in Action*, in the 1960s and 1970s to contrast their memories of Granada with those of Byron and McGough, and to consider if their more senior roles enabled increased remuneration and opportunities for creativity. A 1966 list of Granada personnel revealed that 'women's work' was

⁶ Valerie Byron, *No Ordinary Woman* (London: Austin & McCauley, 2012).

consolidated in the secretarial department with no ‘women directors’ working for the company that year. By 1972, however, a Granada personnel list included the names of three ‘women directors/producers’. Yet across ITV, many women faced difficulties in being made directors or producers. A report published in 1975, *Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industry*, which explored discrimination within ITV by the television union, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), noted that of the 217 directors across the different ITV companies, only eighteen were women.⁷ The report also stated how within ITV: ‘work on high-budget and/or “important” films and programmes is an almost exclusively male preserve’.⁸ Despite Granada having a reputation for employing more ‘women directors’ for its current affairs programme, *World in Action*, only one programme directed by a female director, Linda McDougall, features on a 2009 box set of the series’ ‘most significant’ programmes.⁹ This is the 1975 film, ‘The Making of Margaret Thatcher’, and in my final section I draw upon my interviews with McDougall to explore her experiences of making the programme.

⁷ *Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industries* (ACTT, 1975), p. 29.

⁸ *Patterns of Discrimination Against Women*, p. 29.

⁹ *World in Action: Volume 2*, Network, 5 October 2009. DVD.

In focusing on accounts from both former secretaries and former ‘women directors’ (a term that I have placed in quotation marks throughout this chapter to respect the fact that both Barraclough and McDougall did not use this description to describe themselves to me), I aim to redress the imbalance of how memory of Granada, and thereby its history, has been recorded in relation to gender. Enfolded into this absence are histories of ‘race’ at Granada. Sue Woodford-Hollick was one of the first people of Caribbean heritage to work at the company and one of the earliest female presenters at Granada when she began presenting a weekly evening regional news programme in 1969. She would later be appointed editor and director on *World in Action* in the 1970s, before leaving the company for Channel 4 in 1981 to become its first commissioning editor for multi-cultural programmes. I approached Woodford-Hollick to interview her about her memories of Granada, and although responsive to the themes I intended to explore, in the end she decided not to be interviewed. Writing in Margaret Busby’s *New Daughters of Africa Anthology*, Woodford-Hollick reflected on how, due to being ‘hidden’ as a child and made to feel ashamed of her heritage, she still found it: ‘so hard talk about my past’. She recounted her experiences of growing up in ‘White, genteel South London’, where her Irish Catholic grandmother, who she describes as somebody ‘desperate for middle class respectability’, often told her to hide from view when they had visitors or when they

were travelling together.¹⁰ Woodford-Hollick did not find out until adulthood, when she began working for Granada, that the woman she took to be her older sister was in fact her mother, and that her father was Ulric Cross, the Trinidadian Judge and Diplomat, one of the most decorated Caribbean soldiers of the Second World War.

This reluctance to talk about her past may in some part explain how, despite Woodford-Hollick's influential position at Granada and her historic appointment at Chanel 4, she does not feature in any of the published source material on the company. Woodford-Hollick's seminal role in advocating and calling for greater participation of practitioners from African, Caribbean and South Asian heritages in acting, producing and directing was instrumental in changing the television landscape of the 1970s, and it is explored in the following chapter.

Revelations of sexual assault by female employees at Granada, and the *#MeToo* movement, have also highlighted the need for further research into the histories of women at ITV. The *#MeToo* movement came to prominence in the Anglo-American world following reports in 2017 from several women that they had been sexually assaulted by the Hollywood producer, Harvey Weinstein. Almost a month after these disclosures, the award winning director, actor and writer, Kay Mellor, who began her career at Granada

¹⁰ Sue Woodford-Hollick, 'Who I Was Then, and Who I Am Now.', *New Daughters of Africa*, ed. Margaret Busby (London: Penguin, 2022) p. 111.

on *Coronation Street*, revealed her experiences of sexual assault at the company in the 1980s by a former executive, now deceased, whom she described as being perceived as ‘a real pillar of the community type’.¹¹ Mellor had been under the impression that she was meeting the executive to discuss the possible development and commissioning of a script for a ‘comedy drama’ entitled ‘Annie’s Back’ about a ‘mother who moves in with her two adult daughters’. However, during the meeting, Mellor was assaulted by the executive. Mellor then described returning to her office ‘feeling stunned’, and in an interview with the *Observer*, she spoke of how following the incident: ‘I never mentioned it to another living soul, not even my husband Anthony’. She recalled how she felt ‘soiled by the experience as though I was a failure for having even gone up there thinking that it was about getting a commission’. Mellor left the company two and half weeks later and ‘shredded the script for “Annie’s Back”. It felt like a link and I never wanted it to get made’.¹²

¹¹ ‘Screenwriter Kay Mellor Reveals She Was Sexually Assaulted in TV Executives Office’, *Observer*, 5 November 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/nov/05/kay-mellor-sexual-assault-tv-executive> [accessed 13 November, 2017].

¹² ‘Screenwriter Kay Mellor’.

Mellor's testimony underscores the urgent need for further research into the histories of women who worked at ITV and the impact that experiences of sexual assault had on their careers. In 2019, Dorothy Byrne, who also worked at Granada in the 1980s, spoke in the annual Television McTaggart Lecture of how she was sexually assaulted on her first day of working at Granada by a director at the company. She recalls how a 'female boss' had informed her that this would happen and that 'I wasn't to take it personally because he sexually assaulted all women he worked with'.¹³ Mellor and Byrne's testimonies suggest that there may have been a culture of silence and complicity around experiences of sexual assault. In the case of Byrne, they also point to the need for more academic research into the history of gender relations at the company.

William James Atkinson has stated that class is a 'sorely under-researched issue' in film and television, and that the 'the historical class composition of women in film and television is hardly ever mentioned in the academic literature'.¹⁴ Recent work has

¹³ Dorothy Byrne, 'Dorothy Byrne | James McTaggart Lecture | Edinburgh TV Festival', posted 2 October 2021, by Edinburgh TV Festival, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH6J514H0B4> [accessed 13 December 2024].

¹⁴ William James Atkinson, 'The Historical Association between Class Origins and Male Career Trajectories in UK Film Production' (PhD diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2020), p. 109.

conveyed how the class backgrounds of female employees at the BBC could be more debilitating for them to ‘progress’ than their gender. Indeed, in Joy Leman’s interview with story editor and writer Elaine Morgan and producer Irene Shubik, who worked at the BBC in the 1950s and 1960s, both confirm that their class was far more influential to the trajectories of their careers than their gender.¹⁵

In an interview given after her disclosure of assault at the company, in 2021, Kay Mellor spoke of coming from a working class background in Leeds and commented on the narrow range of career opportunities open to young women of her generation; she described how she had gone to secretarial college on leaving school, ‘back then in the day, you could either be a secretary, a nurse or a teacher if you were a woman. Those were three things that were open to you’.¹⁶ In an interview with the *Guardian*, from 2021, she recalled the atmosphere in the *Coronation Street* script-writing rooms, where she worked in the 1980s: ‘It was a very male-dominated environment, powerful, wealthy

¹⁵ Joy Leman, ‘BBC Drama and the Politics of Production 1955–66’, *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, 26/1 (2021), available at: <https://0-journals-openedition-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/rfcb/7642> [accessed 30 August 2024].

¹⁶ Jane Graham, ‘Kay Mellor: Getting Pregnant at 16 Gives You the Life Experience to Be a Writer’, *Big Issue*, 6 March 2021, <https://www.bigissue.com/culture/tv/kay-mellor-letter-to-my-younger-self/> [accessed 13 December 2024].

men. The only other woman in the room would be a secretary.’¹⁷ Her memories complicate the received idea of a democratic corporate culture as portrayed in some memoirs by former male employees and highlight the need to draw from qualitative sources such as oral history testimonies and personal writings to consider Granada’s history.

While this chapter draws upon such oral histories, it also deploys the personnel lists to explore the structural ‘make-up’ of Granada in the 1960s and 1970s, something historians of ‘women’s work’ in the media have advocated to counter ‘meritocratic explanations of women’s success’ and to provide a ‘building block’ for ‘reassessment’.¹⁸ Although these lists arguably provide only a partial, and indexical sense of the company’s

¹⁷ Zoe Williams, ‘Mutts and Millions: How Kay Mellor’s Dog Made Her Rethink The Syndicate’, *Guardian*, 30 March 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/mar/30/kay-mellor-the-syndicate-mutts-millions-shih-tzu-kennel> [accessed 13 December 2024].

¹⁸ Vicky Ball and Melanie Bell, eds, *Working Women, Women’s Work: Production, History, Gender*, special issue, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10/3 (2013), p. 556. See also: Natalie Wreyford and Shelley Cobb, ‘Data and Responsibility: Towards a Feminist Methodology for Producing Historical Data on Women in Contemporary UK Film Industry’, *Feminist Media Histories*, 3/3 (2017), pp. 107–132; and

structure, in utilising these kinds of corporate records I follow the work of Janet Thumim, who examined staff lists at the company from the late 1950s and early 1960s and deployed them to scrutinise how job roles were demarcated at Granada. She traced how they detailed the fact that female employees at the company were ‘given the titles Mrs or Miss with their surnames, whereas the executives are recorded by surname only, thereby only in a gender-blind form’.¹⁹ Thumim argued that the lack of an appellation for male employees, in comparison to female ones, was an indication that many women had more lowly jobs at Granada, and her findings correspond with the 1966 and 1972 lists I analysed, which emphasised the consolidation of women in typing, clerical, cleaning and hospitality roles.

Yet while qualitative data is helpful in building a broader picture of the company’s structural make-up, it does not reveal the granular accounts of women’s everyday working lives. In the following sections I consider, through personal testimony, memoir and photographs from the personal collections of former female employees, women’s experiences of Granada, tracing their trajectories and experiences of class, femininity and sexuality, during a period when the company emerged as a new cultural powerhouse in Britain.

¹⁹ Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture*, p. 177.

Glamour, class and Granada

Keith Bartlett has claimed that commercial television deliberately separated itself from the middle-class attitudes of the BBC when it first emerged by promoting Americanised values of glamour and conspicuous consumption.²⁰ However, during its early years, these 'values' were frowned upon if too obviously displayed. In Denis Forman's memoir of Sidney Bernstein, he writes of how the Granada founder disapproved of women appearing to dress 'glamorously' in the office:

He [Bernstein] was always aware of the way women dressed. He strongly disapproved of anything like glamour in the office, where all women, no matter how pretty, had to dress quietly, with no short skirts, and no too prominent bosoms and certainly no trousers. Indeed, the Bernstein prudishness sometimes spread to screen, and Sidney would sometimes pull me aside and suggest that a low neckline should be raised or, when he thought he could detect the outline of a nipple, that I should tell wardrobe to see that a slip was interposed.²¹

²⁰ Keith Bartlett, 'British Television in the 1950s; ITV and the Cult of Personality', The International Television Studies Conference, London, 10–12 July 1986.

²¹ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 87.

Forman's recollections here underline the extent to which women's dress and bodies were conduits for the company's corporate image in the earlier years of Granada, echoing the expectations of how women were expected to dress at the BBC in the 1930s and 1940s, a company that, as explored in Chapter 1, Granada were keen to both emulate and distance themselves from. Kate Murphy has described the earlier regulatory environment of the BBC where typists, secretaries and clerks, experienced 'petty rules and requirements' about their appearance, which, she states, were directed particularly to women who worked as secretaries.²² Indeed, the American singer Elizabeth Welch, recalling her time at the corporation in the 1930s, recounted how 'the BBC was called "Auntie" because it had a reputation for being prim and prissy. The ladies, for example, never had plunges in their dresses – the BBC were very strict about that.'²³

Katie Milestone and Joan Ormrod have commented on how expectations around female appearance and behaviour in the first half of the 1960s were 'strongly melded' to the expectations of the previous decade, and Granada's stringent requirements on how

²² Kate Murphey, *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 34.

²³ Murphey, *Behind the Wireless*, p. 34; 'Elisabeth Welch', in *Black and White in Colour: Black People in British Television since 1936*, ed. Jim Pines (London: British Film Institute, 1992), p. 24.

women should appear and dress in the 1960s are reflected in Valerie Byron's memoir.²⁴ Byron, who joined Granada's typing pool in 1963, recalled how 'no trousers were allowed at work, as we had to be dressed in a lady-like fashion'.²⁵ This included wearing 'stockings with garter belts, panty girdles [...] high-heeled shoes and always skirts or dresses'. As a result, she recalls, 'my underclothing was always uncomfortable, and I was constantly tugging at myself in a most unbecoming manner'.²⁶ The person responsible for overseeing the typing pool was called Olive Dickson. Byron describes reluctantly taking a job in the Colour Television Research Department to get away from Dickson's 'eagle eye' when it came to dress, 'as head of the pool she was always telling me to pull at my girdle and to act like a lady. Fat chance!'²⁷ Byron's memories are reminiscent of the historian, Annette Kuhns's vivid recollections of wearing a uniform at her grammar school in the 1950s. Khun recalled how the school endorsed 'a specific model of femininity' where 'you were supposed always to comport yourself with ladylike

²⁴ Katie Milestone and Joan Omrod, 'Editorial', *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, 7/2 (2018), p. 1.

²⁵ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 159.

²⁶ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 159.

²⁷ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 159.

decorum'.²⁸ These rules, she remembers, had 'everything to do with presuppositions about the proper conduct in public of young women of a certain class'.²⁹ Byron, who was born in Sale, in Cheshire, passed the 11+ and first attended Altrincham Grammar School for Girls in the early 1950s before moving to the United States aged twelve, for several years. Her memories of Granada's strict regulations echo Kuhn's own account of her constricting grammar school uniform, vested in prescribing a middle-class 'respectability' through clothing.

Granada's expectations of how women in the typing pool should dress reflected the broader expectations on working-class women in the late 1950s and early 1960s and can be contrasted with its innovative role in challenging representations of femininity during the same period. Elsie Tanner of *Coronation Street*, played by Pat Phoenix, was employed at a department store called *Miami Modes* when the soap began, (with the shop's Americanised name encapsulating the importance of transatlantic chic, and of Hollywood constructions of glamour at the time). The character of Elsie Tanner, and Pat Phoenix herself, would become influential figures in popular culture, in part because, as Adele Patrick comments, her character frequently appeared in costume jewellery and

²⁸ Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets, Act of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 110.

²⁹ Kuhn, *Family Secrets*, p. 110.

glamorous outfits which ‘confounded rather than confirmed notions of British femininity’ in the early 1960s.³⁰

Carol Dyhouse’s work on glamour and class in postwar Britain has highlighted the continual contradictions relayed to working class women around femininity in the 1950s and 1960s. Dyhouse reflects on the impact of Dior’s ‘New Look’ collection (presented by the French fashion house in 1948) and its significant impact on the style and permutations of Western women’s fashion into the following decades. With its cinched waists, full skirts and sharply tailored jackets, the collection communicated what Dyhouse describes as a ‘well-bred, lady-like containment’.³¹ The ‘look’, she continues, emanated ‘not so much a new version of glamour, but more a nostalgic statement about a world in which gender identities and the hierarchies of class and race were part of a common understanding’.³² This ‘common understanding’ would coincide with the increased availability of cosmetics, costume jewellery and once luxurious items such as fur. Yet for women who embraced new forms of adornment and dress, there could be accusations of vulgarity. This was particularly true of working-class celebrities portrayed

³⁰ Adele Patrick, ‘Queening It: Women's Taste for Jewellery Excesses in Post-war Britain’, *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 15/2 (2005), p. 137.

³¹ Carol Dyhouse, *Glamour* (London: Zed Books, 2021), p. 90.

³² Dyhouse, *Glamour*, p. 83.

in the press at the time such as Diana Dors and Stockport-born Norma Sykes, otherwise known as Sabrina, who played the ‘ditzzy’ blonde in the 1950s television series, *Before Your Very Eyes* and who, as Dyhouse states, often faced ‘accusations of vulgarity’ in relation to their glamorous personas and appearances.³³

Despite their pioneering approach to representing Northern women on screen, women employees at Granada experienced issues related not only to their dress, but also to their accents and class backgrounds. For instance, Jacqueline Turner, who started out as a typist and then became a secretary at the company in the mid-1960s, aspired to become a production assistant (PA), a coveted job for typists and secretaries since it was seen to eventually promise a permanent, more ‘secure’ role.³⁴

The person responsible for hiring and promoting staff at Granada, including production assistants, was Joyce Wooller, an influential figure at Granada. She is described as ‘formidable’ in many oral history accounts and was the first woman to be elected to Granada’s board in 1981. In his memoir, Forman wrote of Wooller that, ‘without her

³³ Dyhouse, *Glamour*, p. 99.

³⁴ Jacki Turner, ‘Jacqueline Marjorie Stott/Harding/Turner – Granada Memories’, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, 6 February 2017, <https://www.granadaland.org/jacki-turners-granada-memories> [accessed 30 October 2021].

instinctive ability to judge character and talent Granada would never have succeeded in training and developing people who were to be the foundation of our success in the 60s and 70s'.³⁵ Forman recalls why she was so influential in relation to 'women's work' at Granada: 'Joyce Wooller who was in charge of PA's (amongst other much more important jobs) certainly had the power of yes or no as to whom she took on for training'.³⁶ Turner remembered how 'Joyce had an amazingly posh accent and had attended Roedean Public School so I was very aware of my Lancashire accent which I had been trying to soften ever since starting work with Granada'.³⁷ Wooller's presence as a formidable figure has been referenced and dramatised in fictional television programmes, although her class background has not been explored, nor has the way this potentially shaped who was employed by Granada.³⁸ In 'softening' her accent, it seems possible that Turner was acclimatising herself to a culture that was more top-down, and more class-based, than has previously been explored.

³⁵ Forman, *Persona Granada*, p. 185.

³⁶ Turner, 'Granada Memories'.

³⁷ Turner, 'Granada Memories'.

³⁸ Wooller was played by the actor Jane Horrocks in *The Road to Coronation Street*, directed by Charles Sturridge, BBC Four, 16 September 2010.

The effects of class on the career prospects of women employees would be detailed in the ACTT's *Patterns of Discrimination* report in 1975. This analysed the significant barriers for women's opportunities to progress from typist to production assistant and stated how at ITV 'management always chose "nice young county ladies" for PAs, their social class and appearance being more important than their technical skills'.³⁹ As the following section argues, Granada's presentation of egalitarianism and charismatic commercial confidence was arguably undermined, early on, by its traditional focus on female appearance and expectations around women's roles, yet while these emphases were not exceptional for the period, they do contrast with the innovative visual identities and distinctive environment that were central to Granada's appeal, and how it could be experienced as a vibrant and exciting place to work.

Visual identities

The following sections draw upon memoirs by former employees to explore questions of visibility, glamour and femininity in connection with the experiences of secretaries at Granada and ITV in the 1950s and 1960s. Rosemary Pringle has explored how secretarial workers 'were a focal point in new discourses around "sexuality" in connection to identity, adventure, recreation and commodity' in the 1950s, and Gillian Murray has described the strong visual presence of secretarial workers at ATV in the mid-1960s,

³⁹ *Patterns of Discrimination Against Women* (ACTT, 1975), p. 10.

tracing how they were encouraged to exude ‘telly bird’ personas by entering a ‘Miss ATV’ staff beauty competition, but then faced difficulties in ‘progressing’ as ideas of glamour became increasingly associated with frivolity in the 1960s.⁴⁰ However, Murray also writes that while such competitions may have seemed ‘anachronistic’ to the emerging ‘women’s movement’ of the late 1960s, the adoption of new ideas of ‘glamour’ for such competitions also played a crucial role in encouraging more women to apply for roles at ATV, and thus contributed to the greater presence of women in the burgeoning production spaces of ITV.

While there is no evidence of a ‘Miss Granada’ taking place, secretaries had a strong visual presence at the company, despite being largely absent from histories of ITV. Gillian Murray contends that the reason histories of clerical workers remain ‘overlooked’ is because their work was located ‘off-screen in offices removed from the television floor’.⁴¹ This is echoed by Heather Sutherland, who in her study of women producers working at the BBC explains their absence in her own work: ‘while it would be interesting, illustrative and desirable to converse with “the typists”, the fact is that locating them in the present day is near impossible’.⁴² The following section draws upon two memoirs to

⁴⁰ Murray, ‘Glamour and Aspiration,’ p. 642.

⁴¹ Murray, ‘Glamour and Aspiration,’ p. 639.

⁴² Sutherland, “‘Trousered” and “Sexless” at the BBC’, p. 657.

underscore the visual and symbolic importance of the secretarial worker at ITV; the first is from Lew Lewenhak, a former director of news and current affairs at Granada the 1950s, and the second draws from Byron's memoir.

Lew Lewenhak had initially begun his career as a sub-editor on the European News desk at the BBC's Bush House before working as Films Officer for various British industries, including the Steel and Coal industries.⁴³ He joined Granada when it began in 1956, directing programmes such as *Youth Wants to Know* and *Under Fire* for the company in 1957 and 1958. Lewenhak subsequently left Granada to work at Tyne Tees Television.

In 1962, he wrote a detailed account of his impressions of commercial television entitled *TV People*. He explained that he wanted 'to try and build up some sort of composite picture of the people in British television and the way they think work and live'.⁴⁴ In reflecting something of the 'composites' he also sought to ruminate on the disparity between the BBC and ITV, which he evoked in his memoir through his recollections of entering the BBC premises at Bush House and the lobby of an ITV company, and of the differences between the two organisations as defined through class, sexuality and femininity:

⁴³ Brighton Screen Archives, 'Lewenhak Work Life Overview Scan'.

⁴⁴ Lew Lewenhak, 'TV People: A Working Title' (1962), Brighton Screen Archives.

In the BBC the way will be barred by a commissionaire with waxed moustaches and military bearing, ingratiating to his superiors, adamant and brusque to the lowly, the non-authorised, and those, such as you and me, without an appointment. By his side sits the alumna of a girl's public school, chilling, virginal, and untouchable, guardian of the internal telephone. The atmosphere in the foyer of the commercial stations, on the other hand, is a cross between the lobby of an advertising agency and a theatre stage door. Long stemmed flowers in a classic white vase flank a pretty girl receptionist who gives you the bright 'Can I help you routine?', and an avuncular commissionaire is ready to hand you the key to your dressing room or keep an eye on your shopping basket.⁴⁵

Here, Lewenhak distinguishes between two approaches in broadcasting at the time. The first is staid, formal, hierarchical and class-ridden, run with military precision. The other is freer and friendlier, in which 'you' are greeted with ease and efficiency. His recollections portray how female sexuality became progressively associated with ideas of societal transformation and shifting class identities in the postwar period, with the BBC embodied via a publicly educated 'virginal' ice queen, while the ease and seemingly classless commercial television is embodied via the description of the 'pretty girl', a

⁴⁵ Lewenhak, 'TV People'.

bright accessory to the ‘long stemmed flowers’ whose description comes first.⁴⁶ In drawing these distinctions, it is notable that Lewenhak seeks to identify the character of the different corporations by reference to the visual presentation of female secretarial and administrative staff, who far from being peripheral have, for him, an essential visual presence within the corporate identity.

Grammar school to Granada ‘girl’

The following section turns to explore the experiences of Valerie Byron, who worked at the company throughout the 1960s. Byron was one of fifty secretaries named on Granada’s 1966 personnel list which featured, in alphabetical order, the names of each of its 848 members of staff. Out of this number, 285 employees had female names, most of whom were concentrated in secretarial and cleaning work; for instance, alongside the fifty women described as secretaries, there were twenty-two women listed as clerks and thirty described as typists. There were fifty female names adjacent to the role of cleaner and twenty-one female names listed next to the name of café assistant. In comparison, male names were nearly all adjacent to roles that were manual, managerial or creative.

⁴⁶ See Stephen Brooke, ‘Bodies, Sexuality and the “Modernization” of the British Working Classes, 1920s to 1960s’, *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 69/1 (2006), p. 104.

For Valerie Byron, who began work there in 1963, three years before this list was published, becoming a secretary had not been her first option as a career. However, she would eventually land what she described as a much coveted job as a production assistant for Granada's experimental theatre company, the Stables, which was established in 1968. Her recollections of the period provide a vital resource for understanding the company's appeal for young women. She evokes its corporate culture which, although not exceptional in regard to gender job segregation, and in keeping with the male dominated world of commercial television during this period, was nevertheless experienced as cosmopolitan and varied.

The work of typist and secretary was physically demanding. Kathy Arudnale, who joined Granada in 1957 and became personal secretary to Denis Forman just over ten years later, in 1968, remembers the expectations of her role included being available to do almost '[e]verything'. This included: 'Tea-making, coffee-making, meeting-fixing. Typing endlessly [...] It was all really hard work', although she, along with many of the other interviewees of the *Granadaland Oral History Project*, described her working life at Granada as rich and fulfilling. Anne McGarry, who attended grammar school and worked at Granada from 1959 to 1966 before leaving to study for a degree, remembered how the working environment was: 'friendly and comradely. There was of course, a certain

hierarchy, but it seemed to me that this was flattened out a bit, a feeling that we were all in it together, something that's often lacking in other places.'⁴⁷

Byron, who was a colleague of both Arundale and McGarry, also recalls possibilities for self-expression and opportunities for promotion to work which she enjoyed and that interested her. Byron had initially wanted to become a psychiatrist but she was encouraged to train as a secretary by her mother who told her: 'you can never go wrong with a background in shorthand and typing'.⁴⁸ Byron recalls how she 'was horrified at the prospect', but 'I soon realised I had very few options', given financial limitations and also because she had not completed her secondary school education while living in the US.⁴⁹ Byron attended a secretarial course at Greenwoods College in Manchester in 1959 for nine months, where she recounts: 'I was to learn the basics of becoming an executive secretary'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ann McGarry, interviewed by Judith Jones, 9 July 2020, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/anne-mcgarry/> [accessed 30 October 2021].

⁴⁸ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*.

⁵⁰ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*.

Secretarial work was the avenue through which many young women, particularly women from working-class backgrounds, were encouraged to ‘progress’ before they ‘settled down’ and got married. Ann McGarry commented on how societal expectations: ‘Things were very different then, not many girls went to university, especially if you’re working class’. For Byron, commercial television offered something ‘different’ to the drudgery of most ‘day-to-day’ secretarial work that was available.⁵¹ Indeed, in recalling how she first came to work for the company, Byron described being attracted to the Granada site itself, particularly the way the building ‘looked’. She writes of how she first glimpsed it while employed as a secretary at an architect’s firm across the road where ‘the work was not inspiring, and the young men I worked with pleasant enough, but what caught my eye was the building across the street – Granada Television. The place was magical and as soon as I saw it, I was determined to get a job there.’⁵² Byron was not alone in being drawn to the Granada building on first impression. Jacqueline Turner, who joined the company two years after Byron, recalls how, ‘I took a shopping trip to Manchester and happened to pass the Granada Television Studios on Quay Street. I thought to myself that it would be a very interesting place to work.’⁵³

⁵¹ Ann McGarry, interviewed by Judith Jones.

⁵² Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 144.

⁵³ Turner, ‘Granada Memories’

Many graduates of the secretarial courses outside of Granada entered at first into ‘typing pools’. Jaqueline Turner recalls how, ‘I was offered a job in the pool as a shorthand typist with the possibility of becoming a secretary as and when a position became available.’⁵⁴ This trajectory was one that also reflected class lines, argues Gillian Murray, who has written of how the roles between ‘typist’ and ‘secretary’ were first outlined in the 1930s and ‘became an important marker of differentiation between the working-class typist and the middle-class secretary and [was] also positioned as the ultimate in female ambition and achievement in the office’.⁵⁵ At Granada, a 1964 advert highlighted this sense of differentiation between the two roles, reading, ‘Granada TV have a number of vacancies for shorthand typists, age preferably 19–25, early promotion to secretary possible after initial training’.⁵⁶ In her memoir, Valerie Byron recounts that she was paid 15 pounds a week as a typist and describes the stratifications of the role:

I was soon ensconced in the typing pool at Granada, which was where all we young typists started out. We sat in rows, before old fashioned manual typewriters, and transcribed whatever was given from the head of the Typing Pool. Every once in a while we were selected to go ‘upstairs’ to work for a specific

⁵⁴ Turner, ‘Granada Memories’.

⁵⁵ Murray, ‘Taking Work Home’, p. 64.

⁵⁶ ‘Clerks, Assistants &c, Wanted’, Advertisement, *Guardian*, 3 January 1964, p. 14.

department. Some were boring, like Engineering or Sales, and others were quite fascinating, like working for the Light entertainment department, Press Office or Newsroom. Being chosen to temp for a producer or director of a television drama was or series was what we all yearned for, because it offered the chance of a permanent and exciting position.⁵⁷

This passage reflects not only the strong sense of hierarchy and the top-down structure of the typing pool but also the possibilities of moving between departments. Byron's preferred place was 'the heady atmosphere of the Light Entertainment Office', for which she had to await selection.⁵⁸ She conveys how it offered an exciting and varied environment: 'I hated to leave my temporary job in Light entertainment when the permanent secretary returned and went back to the Typing Pool in a funk'.⁵⁹

Byron's recollections suggest that certain departments such as Light Entertainment afforded greater freedoms. After the typing pool, she was recruited to work for the Head of Sales and Advertising, Rupert Smith. 'The work wasn't terribly interesting', she remembers, but 'I had a nice young woman working with me, and we had lots of laughs'.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 144.

⁵⁸ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 157.

⁵⁹ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 144.

⁶⁰ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 144.

However, she was quickly fired by Smith for not being deferential enough to him. ‘Unfortunately, I had not learned to keep my mouth shut, and it didn’t take long before I angered Rupert by talking back to him in front of a client. To my utter shock and dismay, he fired me.’⁶¹ Byron was reinstated in her role with help from ‘Roy from the Union’, who she recounts called her that evening and ‘explained that I could attend a hearing and perhaps get my job back’.⁶² Byron writes that the possibility of retaining her job through a union had not occurred to her: ‘I had never heard of a union before or what they did for employees’. The experience, she says, altered her attitude towards the work, and when she returned, ‘she was determined to behave myself in future’.⁶³

Byron’s lack of awareness about potential union assistance is perhaps indicative of how it was not until the 1950s that female dominated grades were ‘systematically organised’ by the television union, the ACTT.⁶⁴ (Indeed, as a family run company, Granada’s working environment was in many ways redolent of what Selina Todd has described of smaller, family run businesses of the 1930s, where ‘paternalism also characterised relations

⁶¹ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 145.

⁶² Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 145.

⁶³ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 145.

⁶⁴ Frances Galt, *Women’s Activism Behind the Screen* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021), p.69.

between clerks and their employers' so that: 'women who worked as secretaries were frequently in closer contact with their boss than with more junior workers – which meant less union action').⁶⁵ During the period when Byron began work at Granada, in the early to mid-1960s, male membership of the television branch increased at a higher rate than female membership of unions such as ACTT, although this would rise from 1969 onwards in correspondence to the increase of women's employment in ITV Television Grades.⁶⁶

Byron was eventually able to move out of the typing pool: 'the day came when I was finally offered a permanent position'. This was in the Colour Television Research and Development department, and the change seems to have enabled more freedom, although she writes that she knew the work 'would be dull'.⁶⁷

However, Byron comments on how once she was away from the typing pool, and into a more secure role, there were possibilities to experiment with how she dressed and looked; for instance, she took delight in the introduction of tights: 'to my delight, tights were soon invented and we were able to toss out our garter belts and enjoy more

⁶⁵ Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p, 148.

⁶⁶ Galt, *Women's Activism Behind the Screen*, p. 73.

⁶⁷ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, 159.

comfort'.⁶⁸ Out of the typing pool, she was also free to wear 'bottom-skimming miniskirts'.⁶⁹ Byron's delight in greater comfort, and of new trends such as mini-skirts, are indicative of the developments in women's fashion in the early to mid 1960s, which, as Lisa Tickner has traced, were influenced by the French designer Courrèges' 1964 spring show that had 'endorsed miniskirts and revived the trouser suit'.⁷⁰ They also suggest that there was a relaxation of rules once she was employed in a more permanent role.

Byron's recollections encapsulate the paradoxes for typists and secretaries working at Granada in the 1960s where for 'speaking out of line' she could be sacked, but where, with trade union support, she was quickly reinstated to her role although subsequently more mindful 'to behave'. Her memoir also conveys how she experienced the fluctuating atmospheres between departments at Granada as both stultifying (Colour Television

⁶⁸ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 159.

⁶⁹ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 169.

⁷⁰ Lisa Tickner, 'Women and Trousers: Unisex Clothing and Sex Roles in the Twentieth Century', in *Leisure in the Twentieth Century: Fourteen Papers Given at the Second Conference Twentieth Century Design, 1976*, ed. Terry Bishop (London: Design Council Publications, 1977), p. 65. Rachel Worth, *Class and Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 125.

Research) and invigorating (Light Entertainment). Significantly, Byron's description of her clothing communicates how hierarchies were experienced in a more minutia 'day-to-day' way by 'female employees', which are details missing in previous histories of the company.

The Granada Canteen

Despite the top-down hierarchies she experienced in the typing pool, Byron evokes her life at Granada as full of opportunities to socialise. This is encapsulated in her description of company's staff dining-room, which has been recounted in many memories of the company as embodying an unstuffy atmosphere. Byron's memories of it are no different:

One of the great pleasures of working for Granada Television was the 'canteen'. Located in the basement of the multi-storey television studios, the canteen provided meals almost 24 hours a day. Everyone would arrive for a meal sooner or later – actors, cameramen, floor managers, directors, secretaries, even lowly maintenance personnel. There was no class system in the canteen – everyone was welcome. Of course we secretaries, made sure we had tea breaks twice a day, as well as lunch. The phone could ring in my office several times a day – 'Valerie, meet me in the canteen in ten minutes', and off I would race, cigarette in hand, down the elevator, through the halls, past the dressing rooms and into the hot, welcoming warmth of the basement dining room. Of course I would have

stopped in in the ladies' room along the way, to make sure my long eyelashes were thick with four coats of mascara, and my lipstick was fresh and dewy.⁷¹

Evinced glamour as she moved through the building, the principal sustenance being the promise to socialise, Byron revels here in her description of preparing and descending into the canteen's 'warmth', cigarette in hand. Penny Tinkler has described how throughout the 1960s, the 'cigarette transformed into an accessory for the lithe and liberated young woman'.⁷² Byron's memories of a vibrant, thrumming place where 'everyone', even 'lowly maintenance personnel', would arrive for a meal 'sooner or later' suggests how as 'liberated' young woman in Manchester, Granada offered infinite possibilities for excitement: a carousel of new encounters, socialising and, as she writes, 'pleasures'.

Katie Milestone's interviews with young working-class women and girls who frequented Manchester's coffee bars and discos in the 1960s are reminiscent of Byron's memories of Granada as a stimulating place to work, and to socialise.⁷³ Milestone contrasts these

⁷¹ Byron, p. 164.

⁷² Penny Tinkler, *Smoke Signals: Women, Smoking and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2006), p. 198.

⁷³ Katie Milestone, 'Swinging Regions: Young Women and Club Culture in 1960s Manchester', *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, 7/2 (2018), pp. 179–194.

memories with filmic representations of the North in the 1960s, often portrayed as a place of conflict from which the characters yearned to take flight. Contrary to these fictional motifs, Milestone's interviews show how working-class young women and girls experienced Manchester as a fluid and continually enlivening place to be young – and far from parochial.

Byron's recollections moreover contribute to Granada's enduring popular image as a broadcaster at the forefront of innovative programmes and ventures. She recalls her first encounter with Germaine Greer during one of these visits to the canteen, while sitting with her friend, Min:

Min and I were sitting with several other friends in the canteen when we first saw Germaine. About six feet tall with a huge afro and miniskirt, she swept into the cafeteria like a tornado. All eyes were on this amazing-looking 'Amazon' from Australia, wondering what on earth she was here for. We soon found out. A couple of years later, Germaine went on to publish her feminist book *The Female Eunuch* and become an icon in the women's movement. But when we knew her, she was focused, funny and very direct. I remember her squeezing her long body into my

tiny MG Midget one evening as we dashed off to The Brown Bull, one of our local hangouts, and downed her drinks with the rest of the Granada ‘family’.⁷⁴

In 1968, Greer joined Granada to present on the programme, *Nice Time* (1968–1969) alongside the *Coronation Street* actor Sandra Gough, as well as Kenny Everett, Jonathan Routh and John Surtees, while also teaching in the department of English at the University of Warwick. Greer was one of the earliest women to become a full member of Cambridge University Footlights Dramatic Club, and was a contributor and editor for the countercultural underground magazines *Oz* and *Suck*. *Nice Time* was an irreverent programme, and footage exists of Greer interviewing a guest dressed in a ‘baby-doll’ dress, perhaps as a satirical nod to the ‘telly-bird’ culture referenced previously. Byron’s exoticised description of Greer in the canteen, seemingly ‘out of place’ but also as somebody who ‘downed her drinks with the rest of “the family”’ is suggestive of the collective ‘camaraderie’ employees have described in their memories of Granada.

Protest

After leaving the company, Greer would publish *The Female Eunuch* in 1970. The book was commissioned by her friend from her University of Cambridge days, Sonny Metha, who was then working for the publisher McGibbon and Kee, an imprint of Granada

⁷⁴ Byron, *No Ordinary Woman*, p. 177.

Publishing. Greer would subsequently become a prominent voice and prominent 'celebrity' of the 1970s feminist movement, and Byron's vignette captures in its own way a wider moment of social and political transformation. However, workplace inequalities were not simply being addressed by singular acts of self-presentation, as characterised by Greer's entrance into the canteen, but increasingly through wider industrial action.

More significantly, ITV secretarial workers would also play their part in addressing structural inequalities, which they identified as being articulated and consolidated through clothing rules. In July 1970, twenty clerical workers at Yorkshire Television (YTV), in Leeds went on strike to protest the organisation's dress code that dictated that female employees 'in the administration block' at Yorkshire Television could only wear skirts and dresses, compared to female colleagues in television production roles who were allowed to wear 'slacks, trousers and jeans'.⁷⁵ Their industrial action made national news. The divisional organiser for the ACTT, William Bovey, was called to Yorkshire Television to represent the women. After '5 hrs and 25 minutes',⁷⁶ Bovey's meetings reached no conclusions, with YTV's management insisting that trousers-suits were 'unseemly'.⁷⁷ The women, however, remained resolute. After three days of protest their victory was

⁷⁵ Michael Parkin, 'Petticoat Defiance – in Trousers', *Guardian*, 14 July 1970, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Parkin, 'Petticoat Defiance', p. 1.

⁷⁷ Parkin, 'Petticoat Defiance'.

announced in the *Guardian*. It had taken over seven hours to come to an agreement but eventually ‘formal trouser suits’ but ‘no slacks’ could be worn by what journalist Michael Parkin described as ‘girls in administration’ at Yorkshire Television.⁷⁸

In her memoir of the 1970s, Sheila Rowbotham recalls the influence of a strike organised by members of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW) that also took place in Leeds after the NUTGW had agreed with the Clothing Manufacturers Federation for male members to receive a higher wage rise than female members. Rowbotham recalls that she was ‘astounded to read of such militant direct action in Leeds’, and the significance of the strike was recognised across the region; during that year, Granada commissioned a play about the strike (although this was later abandoned, with the play *Leeds United!* instead taken up and broadcast by the BBC in 1974).⁷⁹

It is evident from documentary records that despite the wider public interest in industrial disputes of this nature, including Granada’s own abandoned drama, most female

⁷⁸ Parkin, ‘Petticoat Defiance’.

⁷⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Daring to Hope: My Life in the 1970s* (Verso: London), pp. 13–14. For information on Granada’s involvement in *Leeds United!*, see: David Rolinson, ‘Women and Work: *Leeds United!* (1974) Part 1 of 3’, *British Television Drama*, 28 (February 2014), <http://www.britishtelevisiondrama.org.uk/?p=4110> [accessed 20 September 2024].

employees, regardless of their aspirations, were still confined to administrative roles within the company. A 1972 personnel list at Granada demonstrated the concentration of women workers in secretarial roles. It included the names of up to 1,000 employees, with each person given in alphabetical order by first and second name, their job title adjacent.⁸⁰ The document was designed to celebrate the company's achievements on the anniversary of their seventeenth year and included a full roster of programmes made, as well all awards won by the company. As the introduction stated: 'there could hardly be a date less round than our seventeenth year but there is a need for an updated index'.⁸¹ (It is important to note that the list is not complete – one page was missing from the copy that I was able to access.) Employees names were listed in alphabetical order at the end of the document, which was clearly intended to emphasise and showcase the 'democratic' nature of Granada.

While the list of employees does not include appellations, the differing status between men and women is apparent in the document. Out of the 922 names listed, 635 had male names and 273 had female ones. By far the highest number of women's names adjacent

⁸⁰ Granada Television Programme Index, 'Year Seventeen: 3rd May 1956 to 31st December 1972'.

⁸¹ Granada Television Programme Index, 'Year Seventeen: 3rd May 1956 to 31st December 1972'.

to any job title was that of secretary; of the fifty-seven employees listed as secretaries fifty-four had female names. Of the fifteen clerks, thirteen were women. Of the fifteen café assistants, all were women, although the café manager was male. Of the thirty-six cleaners listed on the document, thirty-five were women, with two female names listed next to the role of cleaning supervisors. Production assistants were also predominantly female.

The list also illustrates the division of 'feminine' and 'masculine' employment within the company. The roles of make-up artists, wardrobe and costume assistants were all occupied by women, while men dominated in roles on the studio floor. For instance, of the thirty-two names adjacent to the role of 'studio hands', all were male. The number of cameramen on the document was twenty, again all with male names. Of the twenty-nine names next to that of electrician, all were male. Roles such as painters, riggers and floor managers, visibly working in studios and in the creation of live programming, were also all male. Moreover, creative roles were largely dominated by men; of the twenty names listed next to that of 'producer/programme directors' sixteen had male names, three had female ones (with one 'undefined'). The list emphasised how 'women's work' was largely office based while men formed the workforces that were 'active' in building, constructing, directing and designing.

In 1973 a researcher, Sarah Benton, was employed by the ACTT to interview women about their experiences in the workplace. In keeping with consciousness raising groups of the 1970s, Benton organised women only meetings where female employees could

share their experiences of discrimination. These involved discussions with women working across commercial television, the BBC and the film industries. Benton's report, *Patterns of Discrimination*, highlighted the difficulties women faced in all positions across the media. It laid bare quantitative structural differences between 'male' and 'female' roles and reinforced the difficulties faced by secretaries for equal pay and promotion, stating how: 'there is open discrimination in the job that people work in before they enter an ACTT grade, this includes not only the call boy, but also amongst others the job that most women have to do in film and television before they can get anywhere – the secretary.'⁸²

⁸² *Patterns of Discrimination against Women*, p. 3.



Figure 12. Thelma McGough (wearing skirt) and colleagues working at Granada in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Thelma McGough.



Figure 13. Thelma McGough with colleagues.

‘Testing the limits’

This next section turns to explore the career of Thelma McGough (Figures 12 and 13), who worked for Granada at a later stage than Valerie Byron, to illustrate some of the career difficulties women faced while seeking to progress at Granada. McGough was from a working-class background and had originally trained as an artist and ran her own boutique, *Monikers*, in Liverpool in the early 1960s. During this time, she and her friend

Veronica had staged a catwalk show in Liverpool attended by the celebrated designer, Jean Muir. They had been interviewed by the presenter Mike Scott for a local Granada news segment on the show (unfortunately I was unable to trace copies of the interview).⁸³

McGough was unique among my interviewees in that before becoming an employee, she was first ‘the subject’ of an interview, and later a participant on a programme; in her twenties she was involved with a Granada programme *X Plus Ten*. In her thirties, she began a relationship with the Granada presenter Anthony ‘Tony’ Wilson, who was then presenting the music programme, *So It Goes* (1976–1977), and in the midst of setting up Factory Records. McGough was a regular visitor to the Granada building in the mid-1970s and, like Valerie Byron and Jacqueline Turner, she was drawn to its modernist aesthetic.

It was through Wilson that McGough first began to work for Granada, albeit on short-term contracts. She spoke to me of her difficulties in being employed in a permanent role, applying for the role of researcher three times before she was ‘accepted’ by the company. She perceived her background as a hindrance to being employed there and recalled how ‘everyone I knew who worked there had gone to Oxford or Cambridge. That was their recruiting mechanism. So, every time I just thought “that won’t happen”’.⁸⁴ When she was rejected for the role of researcher for the third time, however, she went to

⁸³ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Isabel Taube, 25 September 2019, London.

⁸⁴ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

confront Mike Scott, then in a senior role, who became programme controller at Granada in 1979. She recalls:

So, I went up to the sixth floor and Mike Scott was the one who interviewed myself and Veronica of the boutique many years before, so I wasn't intimidated at all by him, and he said 'the reason I don't think you're suitable for this job is because it's a junior post being a researcher and I think you're too old. I was thirty-four. I said to him 'Would you say that if I was a man standing here?' and he said, 'Yes I would, it's a junior role'. And I said, 'I can do it, what difference does it make?' And then he sat on the desk, and he folded his arms, and he stroked his chin and he said, 'Oh Chris wants you so okay'. And that's how I got the job.⁸⁵

McGough's description of persistence in the face of initial rejection (in this instance on the grounds of age) reflects how women employees had to negotiate a different kind of corporate environment in relation to their age and appearance, in a way that their male counterparts rarely had to endure, if at all.

McGough spoke to me of how 'I always remember Anthony rushing with only minutes to spare and he would always have a tie in his pocket and then he'd put it on'.⁸⁶ The

⁸⁵ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

⁸⁶ Thelma McGough, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

photographer Daniel Meadows joined Granada towards the end of the 1970s and remembers Wilson's seemingly fluid ease in relation to his appearance, recalling how, 'this foppish Cambridge graduate would come in late, wearing a shirt that would look like a blouse, maybe under a leather jacket or a nice coat, and he would fling off his scarf and shake his hair, and over his shoulder would be a pair of Harley Davidson leather motorbike panniers'.⁸⁷ Wilson's blouse, scarf, leather jacket and 'Harley Davidson panniers' evoke the more relaxed way men could express themselves in the 1970s. This was the period of Glam rock, embodied by musicians such as David Bowie, Marc Bolan and bands such as Roxy Music who, via their embrace of feminine dress and make-up, were unsettling received ideas of sexuality and gender. Keith Gildart states that Glam rock was 'a national phenomenon' in the 1970s and particularly significant to young people, including many working-class young men.⁸⁸ Here, Wilson's ease is wryly observed by Meadows, while McGough's memory of the tie in the pocket also suggests the unworried way in which Wilson slipped between formal and informal roles. Wilson's biographer, Paul Morley, wrote of the presenter's almost adolescent relationship with his employer: 'he felt comfortable by never feeling comfortable and always testing the limits

⁸⁷ Jon Savage, *The Searing Light, The Sun, and Everything Else* (London: Faber & Faber, 2019), p. 224.

⁸⁸ Keith Gildart, *Images of England Through Popular Music: Class, Youth and Rock 'n' Roll, 1955–1976* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 173.

of his relationship'.⁸⁹ Morley's description of Wilson's 'comfort' arguably echoes Meadows' description of the presenter's working attire for Granada, and the rebellious reputation he wished to project.



Figure 14. 'Sir Robert Fraser and Lord Aylestone at a meeting with managing directors 1970s' Cecil Bernstein sits third from right. To his left is Lew Grade. Denis Foreman is seated at the far end of the left side of this image. No date given, only that it was taken some time in the 1970s. Courtesy of Independent Television Archives.

Wilson's desire to 'test the limits' at Granada could be read as his own resistance to the 'style' of paternalism represented in Figure 14, a formal photograph of television

⁸⁹ Paul Morley, *Tony Wilson* (London: Faber, 2021), p. 258.

executives at a meeting of ITV managers from the 1970s. Wilson's apparent ease in sloughing off the orthodoxies of uniform are to be compared with the experiences of women like Thelma McGough, who struggled to be promoted because of her age and still remained subject to relatively conservative expectations around appearance and dress-codes, as reflected in Figures 12 and 13.

'Women directors'

While secretaries were where 'women's work' was most present, it was the occupation of 'director' where women's roles were scarcer, although even the lives of those who did have more 'senior' roles were also shaped by questions of glamour, class and their relationship to male bosses. There are no 'women producers' recorded on the 1966 personnel list, and in 1972 the names of just three women — June Howson, Carol Wilks and Pauline Shaw — are referred to as programme directors. In comparison, twenty-five men were listed as 'producers/programme directors'. The following section explores the experiences of two 'women directors', Jenny Barraclough and Linda McDougall, and their experience of Granada in the 1960s and 1970s, at different stages in the evolution of the company how they negotiated their careers working for Granada's most high-profile documentary series, *World in Action* (1963–1998).

World in Action

The series *World in Action* had been founded as a ‘critical reportage’ programme in 1963 and was highly significant to Granada. From the outset, it focused on a single subject or issue for each programme.⁹⁰ While the series had initially intended to focus predominantly on ‘European issues’, it was adopting a more transatlantic and international output towards the end of the 1960s, so that ‘of the 58 editions broadcast by the end of 1968, 19 were shot in America’.⁹¹ The series became associated with left-wing and anti-establishment viewpoints, a reputation that increased during the late 1960s due to its focus on international oppression or dictatorships abroad that ‘took distinctly pro-resistance stances’.⁹² ‘Romance’ and glamour were both attached to and cultivated by those working for the series. The director Leslie Woodhead recalled how the team at *World in Action* liked to describe themselves as ‘fast poets’.⁹³ Glamour was part of the series’ appeal, and the team traded on this as cultural and political cachet.

⁹⁰ Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture*, p. 28.

⁹¹ Peter Goddard, John Corner and Kay Richardson, *Public Issue Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 49.

⁹² Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 49.

⁹³ Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 128.

Godard, Corner and Richardson state that the series ‘made use’ of a number of ‘strong woman up to the 1980s’, listing them as follows: Jenny Isard (later Barraclough), Ingrid Floering, Vanya Kewley, Claudia Milne, Eva Kolouchova, Linda McDougall, Norma Percy and Sue Woodford.⁹⁴ These women had a significant impact on the series, notably Sue Woodford-Hollick, but the programmes on which they worked are mentioned only briefly, if at all. Indeed, Godard, Corner and Richardson do not interview any former female employees in their book. This chapter seeks to redress this deficit by highlighting the experiences of two women at the company to explore the contradictions and paradoxes of their time working in the male dominated environment of the series.

I interviewed both McDougall and Barraclough about their experiences of working on *World in Action* and of Granada. This section is centred on two ‘snapshots’, one centred on the mid-1960s — Jenny Barraclough — and the other in the mid-1970s — Linda McDougall. It includes a visual analysis that attempts to explore how pressures on glamour and femininity influenced and shaped women’s experiences at Granada, even when in more ‘senior’ roles.

⁹⁴ Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 128.

Jenny Barraclough

The photograph shown in Figure 15 was shared with me when I went to interview Jenny Barraclough in 2016. The interview with Barraclough took place right at the beginning of my research when I was unsure of how I wanted to explore ‘women’s work’.⁹⁵ At one point, perceiving my uncertainty, Barraclough placed in front of me a photograph album that appeared to have been put together specifically to ‘showcase’ her life and work in television.

⁹⁵ As a result, instead of my own interview, I have here relied on another interview Barraclough did with the British Entertainment History Project in 2015.



Figure 15. Jenny Barraclough in Golden Square, Soho. Courtesy of Jenny Barraclough and kindly shared with me for the purposes of this thesis.

Penny Tinkler has explored the significance of personal albums in relation to gender, and their use in oral history interviews. While Tinkler's work focuses on how such albums were used by her interviewees to reflect on their experiences of 'girlhood', she nevertheless underlines the way 'present-day adult agendas' can influence how such albums are used in oral history interviews: she describes the way they can convey the 'interviewee's assessments of the purpose of the interview; the impressions about their

past and what they want to project to the interviewer and the audience of the research; how they want to see their past self and its relation to their present self'.⁹⁶ In this instance, the album was presented by Barraclough to retrieve the interview. In the absence of my direction for our meeting, it provided chronology and narrative.

Figure 15 is a photograph from that album. Barraclough sits on a bench and looks away from the camera. One hand is placed across her lap and the other in her hair. She wears a knee-length skirt, high necked-top and high heels. Her legs are crossed, and in describing Barraclough's stance, I find I fix her uncomfortably. Did she feel the same when this image was taken? The image is undeniably glamorous, and it was taken in Golden Square in Soho, London, where Granada had offices and where the *World in Action* team was partly based. There is no record of who took the picture.

Gillian Rose has commented on the salience of photographs in historical research and their possibility to evoke new subjects and themes when interviewing research participants.⁹⁷ While the history of photography has focused on assessing images in

⁹⁶ Penny Tinkler, 'When I Was a Girl ... Women Talking About Their Girlhood Photo Albums', in *Oral History and Photography*, ed. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 49.

⁹⁷ Gillian Rose, 'The Good Eye: Looking at Pictures using Compositional Interpretation', in *Visual Methodologies* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 33–54.

relation to 'the good eye', Rose argues that incorporating varied visual material can be instructive in historical research, and Geoffrey Batchen has commented on how snapshots 'often involve collective hands and/or now-unknown makers (many of them women)', which, he argues, enable the possibility to challenge the 'phallocentric bias of most current photographic histories'.⁹⁸ Batchen continues: 'what makes a snapshot a snapshot is its function, not its pictorial qualities, and this function is determined by the network of social relationships of which it is part'.⁹⁹ The images explored in this section are of individuals and are used to suggest something of the social relationships that women at Granada were engaged in and to illustrate how they negotiated pressures on their appearance. They connect to methodologies of research into histories of women in television, where, as Thumim has described, the experience and type of archival material encountered is often akin to 'snapshots' of the past.¹⁰⁰

World in Action

Jenny Barraclough did not plan to work in television. She had read English at Oxford University, where she was the first in her family to go to university after attending private

⁹⁸ Geoffrey Batchen, 'SNAPSHOTS: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn', *photographies*, 1/2 (2008), p. 127.

⁹⁹ Batchen, 'SNAPSHOTS', p. 135.

¹⁰⁰ Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture*, p. 176.

school. Initially she had ambitions to be a writer. Through contacts with a friend, she became a presenter for ITN. She recalls her Oxbridge education as crucial in helping her find a job in television, as with many people at the time.¹⁰¹ Her friend had spoken to ITN on her behalf. Barraclough quotes this friend as saying: “Well I think this Jenny Isard [later Barraclough] would be OK as a woman reporter”. And so, he said, “Well what's she like then?” “Well, she went to Oxford” says this girl. So, he thought well that's all right then and he just chatted to me for a bit, and I got the job.’¹⁰² However, Barraclough was frustrated at ITN with being given ‘only women’s stories’, remembering how: ‘I was given babies, schools, education, Cowes Week, Glyndebourne [...] nothing wrong with any of them but they weren't the stories I wanted to cover. Not really.’¹⁰³ She again utilised contacts to obtain a move to Granada: ‘I knew somebody who knew Jeremy Isaacs, that's how it went, who was then at Granada and Jeremy said he'd introduce me to Tim Hewat’.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose, 30 June 2015, British Entertainment History Project, <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/jenny-barraclough> [accessed 2 June 2022].

¹⁰² Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose.

¹⁰³ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose.

¹⁰⁴ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose.

Hewat was then the editor of *World in Action*. A former managing editor of the *Daily Express*, he was renowned for his abrasive style. In his obituary, ex-*Daily Telegraph* television critic Philip Purser wrote: 'He was undaunted by seniority and treated everyone the same, except that he was said to be especially rude to women'.¹⁰⁵ Barraclough writes of the culture she experienced when working for Hewat:

World in Action had a great ethos; yeah, quite party loving. And Tim Hewat was very badly behaved. I mean he was so rude, and nobody minded. He'd call me, 'you with the tits' every time he saw me 'Hey, come here, you with the tits'. And another girl, such a very good researcher, had a wooden leg and he used to call her 'Hopalong'. I mean who would dare do that today? I mean you couldn't. So he was outrageous, he was Australian and he was allowed to get away with it and was a brilliant editor. But you don't get that sort of guy today; you know larger than life, crude, marvellous journalist.¹⁰⁶

Barraclough appears to have accommodated herself to the machismo culture created by Hewat but also suggests a comradery 'party loving' environment which she enjoyed.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Purser, 'Tim Hewat', obituary, *Guardian*, 4 December 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2004/dec/04/guardianobituaries.media> [accessed 27 November 2023].

¹⁰⁶ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose.

However, this passage still encapsulates the ambivalent lives of women in the company during that period and how there was little choice but to navigate hyper-masculine working environments.

Barraclough originally started as a researcher on *World in Action* and would eventually be appointed as a director after being asked to take over the editing for another director. The editing was for a programme on the model Jean Shrimpton and fashion photographer, David Bailey, filmed in New York. It included reels of film shot by the celebrated directors, Albert and David Maysles, who were involved in 'a new grammar' of filmmaking in the U.S and Europe, which involved filming more spontaneously with 'portable equipment', and following all events as they happened, later described as '*direct cinema*' by Albert Maysles.¹⁰⁷ They had deployed this technique for their film on the Beatles' first trip to America, *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A.*, commissioned by Granada in 1964 as a 'TV Special'.

Dick Fontaine, who had originally been working on the *World in Action* film on Shrimpton and Bailey, became overwhelmed with the quantity of footage being sent back to the production team, so Barraclough took over, slicing and shaping the programme at the

¹⁰⁷ Jonathan B. Vogels, *The Direct Cinema of David and Albert Maysles*, (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), p. 1; p. 5.

last minute. The significance of this film, 'Models', was later reflected in Noel Chanan's history of Granada by the director Derek Granger:

I used the Maysles to cover the Goldwater election campaign in California. Our own boys were beginning to copy the Maysles technique. Dick Fontaine and Mike Hodges did a programme on Jean Shrimpton, called *Models*, which was thought very very flossy, a reprehensibly thing to do on *World in Action*; decadent, everybody said. I think Tim Hewat pursed his lips from afar, but looking back on it made quite a germinal piece. Shrimpton then being the lauded goddess of the Sixties Dick shot the stuff on her in England and Maysles shot her in New York, her ascension onto the covers of Vogue and Harper's. When Antonioni came to England to start work on Blowup not long after, he asked to see *Models*. That's how influential it was in its day. There was a lot of that kind of experimentation about. People like Dick Fontaine wanted their freedom to put together something which told a story of a different kind; something which might tell a slightly more significant story of the Sixties.¹⁰⁸

While the reference to 'our boys' and the description of the *Models* programme as 'flossy' and 'decadent' says something of the programme making culture of *World in Action* — and also of how Granada's history of 'experimentation' has been told in a way that does

¹⁰⁸ Noel Chanan History.

not include the contribution of ‘women directors’ (since it was Barraclough who was responsible for the final edit), Barraclough would later attribute her promotion to director from the appreciation for her work on the programme, which suggests it may have been recognised at the time by her colleagues and Hewat — although, since her contribution is not recalled here by Granger, this is uncertain.

Barraclough would go on to direct several programmes for *World in Action*, including one entitled *Drugs*, from 1965. However, not all the programmes she worked on for Granada were broadcast, including a documentary portrait of the model Mandy Rice-Davies at the height of the *Profumo Affair*. (Barraclough suggests that the film was not shown as it was ‘too close to the bone’ and featured an emotional interview with Rice-Davies’s father.¹⁰⁹) After leaving *World in Action*, Barraclough worked for *This Week* before joining the BBC’s current affairs series, *Man Alive*. When she moved to *Man Alive*, producer Desmond Wilcox tried to persuade her to become a presenter, but she refused. Barraclough remembers:

He said ‘You’re making a big decision and I think you could be making the wrong decision because you know you’re more glamorous in front of camera, people know you better. Yeah, I think you could be making a silly decision Jenny.’ I said,

¹⁰⁹ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose.

‘No, in no way do I want to be the reporter.’ I remember sitting on his black leather sofa in Kensington House, knowing I'd made a decision for life at that moment.¹¹⁰

Following this decision, Barraclough directed several influential documentaries for *Man Alive*. In 1971 she directed a film on homelessness and addiction entitled *Gale is Dead* (now part of the BBC classic documentaries collection).¹¹¹ In 1972 she made a programme *Women in Prison*, interviewing prisoners incarcerated at Holloway Prison.¹¹²

While she achieved her ambitions to a director, Barracloughs' career was also vulnerable to issues of visibility. Her description of the 'black leather sofa' reflects how 'women directors', despite their experience, were often pressured into more 'decorous' roles, and while her promotion to director at Granada was a result of an appreciation of her talents on 'seminal' *World in Action* programmes such as 'Models', it did not translate into her name appearing on its credits.

¹¹⁰ Jenny Barraclough, interviewed by Simon Rose.

¹¹¹ 'Gale is Dead', BBC Four Classic Documentaries Collection, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p055sys5> [accessed 27 November 2023].

¹¹² "“Women in Prison” Man Alive Series (1972 Documentary)", posted 14 October 2018, by Jenny Barraclough, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34ZNDjRWRY4> [accessed 13 December 2024].

Linda McDougall

Linda McDougall was a director on *World in Action* before becoming an editor on *Granada Reports*. She worked at Granada from 1974 to 1978. While her time there was relatively brief, she made a significant impact on *World in Action*'s output and history with a film she directed in 1975 on Margaret Thatcher, entitled 'Why I Want to Be Leader', which followed Thatcher, then Minister for Education, in the week leading up to the first ballot in the election for Conservative Party Leader (the programme was aired on the evening before the ballot).¹¹³ The film was regarded as something of an anomaly at the time, although it is now widely considered as a 'classic' in the series' history; it is the only programme directed by former female producer or director to appear on the box set 'selection' of *World in Action*'s 'best' documentaries.

Shot by the celebrated cinematographer, Dick Pope, who would go on to have a notable career collaborating with the director Mike Leigh, it captured a seismic moment for Thatcher, whose own image was then being 'shaped' by the former ITV producer, Gordon Reece. Thatcher would eventually win the ballot, becoming leader of the Conservative

¹¹³ Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher, The Authorized Biography*, volume 1, *Not For Turning* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 301.

Party. It was also an important film for McDougall, who had to persuade her male bosses at Granada that she should be allowed to make it.

I undertook three extensive interviews with McDougall, and she described this film as the most important one she made for *World in Action*.¹¹⁴ The following section focuses on the making of this film.

¹¹⁴ Linda McDougall, interviewed by Isabel Taube, 10 July 2020.



Figure 16. Linda McDougall and World in Action Crew at the Finchley Conservative Ball, 1975. Courtesy of Linda McDougall and kindly shared with me for the purposes of this thesis.

The polaroid picture shown in Figure 16 was taken at Finchley Conservative Party Ball during McDougall's time following Thatcher. McDougall is sitting in the centre with her hands placed carefully on her lap; she looks serenely at the photographer. She is surrounded by her all-male film crew who, apart from their hairstyles, appear to be identical in their suits and bow ties. McDougall wears a distinctive Biba long evening

dress.¹¹⁵ Of the photograph, McDougall wrote to me: ‘Here is my treasured faded Polaroid of the film crew that night. It sums up such a lot of things about life then: The ratio of men to women in tv and on *World in Action*. How we were expected to mirror the behaviour of those whose lives we recorded. I think they thought we would blend in with the crowd!’¹¹⁶ McDougall would further explain to me that clothes were important in her life: that they shaped her sense of self, especially when negotiating tricky moments in her professional career.¹¹⁷ While she was required to dress formally for the event, her choice of Biba arguably undermines, or embodies, a more nuanced take on a sense of the ‘formal attire’ prescribed.

¹¹⁵ The label, founded by the Polish émigré Barbara Hulanicki in 1964, became progressively popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s for championing an unusual palette of dark browns, mauves, apricots and dark greens. Hulanicki’s designs drew inspiration from her domineering aunt, a contradictory and stifling figure who nevertheless shaped Biba’s more ‘grown-up’ aesthetic. Hulanicki created garments that alluded to complex femme fatales. See Barbara Hulanicki, *From A to Biba: The Autobiography of Barbara Hulanicki* (London: V&A Publishing, 2018).

¹¹⁶ Linda McDougall, email to Isabel Taube, Monday 20 July 2020

¹¹⁷ Linda McDougall, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

‘Punched, kicked, and beaten’

When McDougall came to work for Granada in 1974, *World in Action* had been under the editorship of Gus Macdonald for several years. McDonald had joined Granada Television as a researcher on the programme in 1967 and had risen to become the editor three years later. That same year, there was an advert for a programme in the *TV Times*; it underscored the muscular way the series presented itself to viewers:

The World in Action team have won awards in Britain, Australia, France and Poland. They’ve also been beaten up in Africa (fractured pelvis, broken ribs, battered face and abdominal injuries), shot at in Jordan (one cameraman wounded in ‘a fleshy part of the body’), punched in Korea (same cameraman – one black eye) and stoned (with stones – not alcohol) in India. These are the hard men – and women – of television [...] It’s the top documentary programme in Britain, according to the most recent viewer poll.¹¹⁸

The glorification of injury and machismo here reflects the atmosphere of filmmaking at the time and was a continuation of the working environment created by Tim Hewat.

¹¹⁸ *TV Times*, London Edition, 21 September 1970; TVTiP, ‘World In Action’, <http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandradio/tvtip/index.php/prog/119708> [accessed 3 November 2023].

McDougall had long navigated her life as one of the few women in male-dominated environments. Originally from New Zealand, she was the daughter of a policeman and a shop assistant and had gained a scholarship to train as an actor at Central School of Speech and Drama in London in the early 1960s. It was at drama school that she became captivated by television and in particular how class worked in Britain. She was passing through the Drama School's Common room at the time and became absorbed by a live event unravelling on the television set which happened to be here. It was in connection to the British Conservative Minister for War, John Profumo, who was then denying a relationship with the working-class model, Christine Keeler. McDougall recalled: 'To my excitement I passed the TV in the drama school, and it said "Today Mr Profumo is going to the races and the Queen Mother is going to be at the races as well. Will the Queen Mother shake hands with Profumo?"'.

After graduating, McDougall went back to New Zealand to work in the newly set-up public television service. Returning to England in 1967, she lived in Oxford while working on the BBC programme *24 Hours*. She then moved to BBC Manchester. Here, she directed two programmes that were broadcast on the newly set-up, BBC2. One was on the rock festival in Bickershaw, Lancashire in 1972 and the other, *Living in Styal*, on life inside a women's prison in Cheshire, made the same year.

While in Manchester, McDougall worked alongside the convicted sex offender Stuart Hall and McDougall later gave evidence against Hall at his trial in 2013. Hall continually made her feel uneasy and self-conscious of her body. As she wrote in an article for *The Times*

about that period: 'I was size 12 and 5ft 10in, unsophisticated, hot and bothered and ever so colonial. He made me feel enormous and unattractive. He cackled with delight at my reactions and never missed an opportunity to tease me.'¹¹⁹ McDougall writes of how male television presenters in regional broadcasting such as Hall at the BBC and Bob Greaves at Granada were treated as 'local heroes' in the 1970s.¹²⁰ The fact that McDougall's partner was the television presenter, later Labour MP, Austin Mitchell, who worked as presenter for Yorkshire Television, did not make it easier for her to deal with the humiliation around her appearance, or make her feel any less of an outsider, as a 'colonial' New Zealander.

McDougall would escape Hall when she went to work on attachment in Northern Ireland. Suzanne Franks has stated how attachment schemes were key for women at the BBC in the 1970s because 'they offered women the opportunity to "have a go" at "something new" in a different department'.¹²¹ As Franks writes: 'individual women have remarked that their initial career progress was helped by going on attachment'.¹²² However, she

¹¹⁹ Linda McDougall, 'He Seemed Unable to Talk to Any Woman without Touching Her', *Sunday Times*, 5 May 2013, p. 18.

¹²⁰ McDougall, 'He Seemed Unable'.

¹²¹ Franks, 'Attitudes to Women in the BBC', p. 131.

¹²² Franks, 'Attitudes to Women in the BBC', p. 131.

also observes how, 'This is probably because there was institutional resistance to giving them a job or promotion'.¹²³ For McDougall, her attachment directly preceded her time at Granada and gave her the credibility needed to join Granada, which was also her aspiration.

In 1974, McDougall applied to Granada and was interviewed by Gus McDonald for a role as director at *World in Action*. The period she joined marked a conscious effort by *World in Action* to increase the number of investigative programmes to 'harden the series journalistically'.¹²⁴ McDougall's background working in Northern Ireland was therefore important.

When I spoke to McDougall about memories of her colleagues on *World in Action*, she repeatedly referred to them as the 'CIA men'.¹²⁵ While a humorous description of McDougall's fellow producers and directors, it was also indicative of the influence of US politics and culture on the series at the time when, as Goddard Corner and Richardson write, the Watergate scandal was making 'folk-heroes of investigative journalists'.¹²⁶ However, this self-importance meant that many working in *World in Action* believed that

¹²³ Franks, 'Attitudes to Women in the BBC', p. 131.

¹²⁴ Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 64.

¹²⁵ Linda McDougall, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

¹²⁶ Goddard, Corner and Richardson, *Public Issue Television*, p. 64.

that their careers would be better based in London. As such, there was internal friction within the series about needing more of the team to be based in Manchester. In contrast to the 'CIA Men', McDougall was keen to be based in the North and credits this with why she was given the job. At first, she was given subjects to work on, which included investigating a corrupt pyramid scheme for a programme entitled 'Misery Magic'. However, in light of Margaret Thatcher's emerging prominence in public life, she went to McDonald to ask if she could make a programme on her.

Thatcher, Thatcher, milk snatcher

Margaret Thatcher had entered the public imagination as Education Secretary in the Heath Government (1970–1974) when in 1971 she withdrew the provision of free milk to school children on the grounds of expense and earned her first political moniker, 'Milk Snatcher, Thatcher', which was to be replaced, a decade later by 'The Iron Lady'. Following the two Conservative election defeats of 1974, Edward Heath conceded the necessity of a new leadership election. Thatcher was initially seen as an unexpected applicant although she was supported by senior members of the Conservative party.

The public relations officer for her campaign was the former ITV producer and director, Gordon Reece. Liverpool-born Reece had been educated at Ratcliffe College, a private boarding school in Leicestershire, followed by Downing College, Cambridge. He went on to work at local newspapers such as the *Staffordshire Sentinel* and *Liverpool Daily Post*, and at the *Sunday Express*, followed by work as a producer at ITV (where his credits

included the ATV drama *Emergency Ward Ten*). Reece gained a reputation for his Conservative party-political broadcasts in the early 1970s when he identified what he perceived to be Margaret Thatcher's wider potential appeal to the British public, in place of Conservative MP Keith Joseph, whom Reece regarded as 'uneasy' in front of the camera when asked about more personal family matters.¹²⁷

In the run up to the first round of voting in the leadership race in January 1975, Reece had been keen to avoid political programmes that concentrated too much on policy. Both he and Thatcher perceived television as 'a medium of impressions' which had 'revolutionised political campaigns' in the 1970s, particularly in the US.¹²⁸ McDougall observed: 'So, I said to Gus McDonald. Please, please can we do this. We have a duty to do this because it's the first woman. And I think they thought "Not a chance". One of my points of my career has always been that you don't get anywhere if you don't try'. She consequently approached Reece about the possibility of making a film on Thatcher and found him to be extremely receptive to the idea.

Although this might seem an unlikely approach from a series better known for hard hitting documentaries and exposés, with a reputation for directly challenging establishment

¹²⁷ Moore, *Not for Turning*, p. 274.

¹²⁸ Charles Moore quoting from unpublished autobiography by Reece; Moore, *Not for Turning*, p. 243.

figures and organisations, McDougall's film would be pivotal for the series. Although the programme concluded with a conventional political interview, a significant part of it involved a novel view of a female politician: Thatcher is shown dancing at a Conservative Party Ball in Finchley, at home discussing the news coverage with her husband and adult children, and on a visit to a waste removal site tip, tiptoeing in high heels across thick mud to speak to two workers. In one scene, she is filmed with a manager for the site but is interrupted by a young man who bends down to wipe the mud off her shoes. Looking on in slight amusement, Thatcher exclaims: 'I've never had this done in my life'. Off screen a voice comments: 'First time for everything', to which a bemused but knowing Thatcher responds: 'Yes, first time for everything'.

Thatcher was a sophisticated operator. Far from being a political ingenue, she deployed deeply conventional ideas of motherhood, femininity and traditional 'family values' to her political advantage. Later, under the tutelage of Gordon Reece, she would develop and project a lower vocal delivery when speaking in public and wear darker formal clothes (a move that was heavily satirised in the 1980s by *Spitting Image*) while retaining her iconic feminine marker, the 'pussy bow'. Marina Warner has commented on the way Margaret Thatcher's presentation was always paradoxical. She was known as 'the best

man in Britain'; she who 'wears the trousers' but renowned for never wearing them.¹²⁹

Beatrix Campbell also encapsulates the Thatcher conundrum: 'We have seen how there is in her both a flight from femininity and from the world of women, and yet an absolute adherence to its appearances'.¹³⁰

McDougall's impressions and memories of the film reveal how she watched this happen. When I asked her if she remembered Reece shaping Thatcher during the making of the programme, she replied:

Oh yes, yes, yes. He would ask us to shoot things again and I obligingly would. Oh, yes, he was moulding her. But that's what you do if you're making a film. I just loved that film. I loved the opportunity to make it because it gave me confidence. As far as *World in Action* was concerned, I wasn't just wanting to make all these films about the CIA that everyone else wanted to make.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: Allegories of the Female Form* (London: Picador, 1985), p. 51–52.

¹³⁰ Beatrix Campbell, *The Iron Ladies: Why Do Women Vote Tory?* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 242.

¹³¹ Linda McDougall, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

Gordon Reece has often been credited with ‘softening’ Margaret Thatcher’s image and deploying her ‘femininity’ to project a rounder, more sympathetic character as a ‘housewife’ in the 1970s. However, it was McDougall who captured this image. She has a very distinct memory of some of the details she witnessed in Thatcher’s domestic life and acknowledges, many years later, that she identified with Thatcher’s seeming capacity to overcome the challenges of a demanding professional life as a working mother:

I had some shot of her with what I now know to be a brioche tin. I doubt if I’d known about that before, at the time. But it was like a jelly mould in the kitchen. And she had a brillo pad. And she was brillo padding inside the brioche pan to get the extra bits off – I suppose she’d been making a summer pudding or something – but it was shaped like a jelly mould. So, she did sort of house wifely things like that. And she wasn’t as far from me as I thought she was [...] we were all women from a period when [...] for any chance of survival we all had to do everything.¹³²

However, McDougall was also aware of the gulf between them, finding Thatcher ‘incredibly middle class’. Reviewing the programme, Clive James remarked on its ‘objectivity’, writing:

¹³² Linda McDougall, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

Since Mrs Thatcher probably ranks somewhere near the Chilean Junta in WIA's scale of affection, it seemed possible that they were examining her as a toxic phenomenon like nuclear proliferation or the non-biodegradability of Greek Colonels. An air of objectivity however was strenuously maintained.¹³³

Instead of adopting the usual adversarial house style of most *World in Action* political documentaries, Linda McDougall's attention to the personal and familial details in Margaret Thatcher's working day gave reviewers like Clive James an impression of objectivity. However, McDougall's film included more complex messaging about the nature of Thatcher's 'role' and the details, the brioche tin and summer pudding, redolent of economic middle-class privilege, both set Thatcher apart while potentially humanising her to potential electors. The programme's legacy was the vehicle it provided for Thatcher's successful political re-brand. Yet it also touched upon the contradictions and issues of 'emancipation' for women at the time.

Thatcher's leadership campaign took place in an era when the understanding of workplace inequality was undergoing a complex and self-conscious examination which would lead to major legislative change with the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. But gender difference would continue to throw-up paradoxes and not unlike Margaret Thatcher,

¹³³ Clive James, 'Getting Mrs T on the Television', *Observer*, 9 February 1975, p. 26.

Granada were capable of reinforcing, as well shifting, traditional expectations of what women could achieve in their working lives.

The photograph provided by Linda McDougall in Figure 16 is a wry encapsulation of this paradox. Despite the mock formality of the black-tie appearance, we are still left with the image of a woman in a world of men. Externally the picture is comic, but it also projects Linda McDougall's engagement with a distinct environment. It is one that in retrospect she found intensely glamorous, but also a period she described as constricting and challenging to negotiate as 'a woman director'. It is no coincidence that the men carry the tools of their trade (clapper board etc), while Linda is placed in a position of centrality who adopts a 'hands in the lap' posture. (This is a nod perhaps to Margaret's Thatcher's desire to present a traditionally decorous image). The picture is both a testament to Linda McDougall's memory of the programme itself, and an implicit retelling of her working life at Granada. Jon Savage, who joined Granada in 1979 as a researcher, the year Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister, remarked that he felt like the company was out of step when it came to the gender and sexual politics of the 1970s. He observed that Granada's own reputation as a 'liberal' broadcaster seemed incongruous to the atmosphere he encountered and recalled that 'it was like being 20 years behind London

...it was, you know, really behind in many, many ways'.¹³⁴ There would come a time, though, when the complexities and ambiguities of inequality would need to be addressed explicitly and directly with the company, and where 'Positive Action' would need to be addressed either by individuals or by Granada at a corporate-wide level. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide a more contextual understanding of Granada in the 1960s and 1970s. By focusing on the experiences of secretaries and 'women directors' during that period, it aims to redress an imbalance in the way the company is remembered. The collective memory of the glamour and dynamism of Granada's approach to broadcasting, experienced by many of the women featured in this chapter, and which drew them to the company in the hope of a more creative career, has resulted, I argue, in an often idealised history that has neglected the significance of secretaries, as well as the aspirations, and achievements, of 'women directors'. While the Granada's programming was undoubtedly innovative, with its strong emphasis on class issues,

¹³⁴ Jon Savage, interviewed by Stephen Kelly and Judith Jones, 11 July 2016, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/interviewees-draft-page-nk/jon-savage/> [accessed 13 December 2024].

expressed through iconic programmes such as *Coronation Street* as well as the *World in Action* series, there was arguably less innovation in relation to the company's own workforce, especially those involved in secretarial and administrative departments. Women in these roles were expected to project the company's 'image', especially in the early days of the company, when they were more likely to become part of the decorative expectations attached to women at the time. However, the women featured in this chapter all found ways or spaces within Granada for creativity and self-expression. The preference for oral histories in this chapter has allowed for a more textured appreciation of the company's varied corporate identity so as to explore the impact of wider societal change on its working environment.

Chapter 5: ‘Race’, recruitment and the establishment of the Positive Action Training Initiatives at Granada Television

Introduction

This chapter explores the history of Granada’s Positive Action Bursary Initiative instigated by director Charles Lauder in 1987, and the later Positive Action Training Initiatives run in 1992 and 1994 and set up by Lauder and producer, Wallen Matthie. They were established with the aim of creating a new recruitment programme at Granada, so that more young people from racially minoritised communities in the North West could be trained in media production and would be given the financial assistance to do so.¹ This chapter focuses on Granada’s history in relation to ‘race’ and recruitment, and contextualises the political, cultural and personal influences that led to the establishment of the Positive Action Schemes at the company. It includes the recollections of the three people directly involved with the schemes, including Lauder

¹ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube, Zoom, 21 October 2020.

and Matthie, who were all interviewed for this thesis. In doing so, the chapter complicates Granada's reputation for being a 'progressive' and 'radical' broadcaster; as producer Wallen Matthie explained to me: 'Granada had this reputation that they were 'up there [...] 'radical' [but] race and diversity wasn't part of their radicalisation at all'.²

In histories of ITV, references to 'race' and 'equal opportunities' training schemes are fleeting and give the impression of an overall reluctance to implement policies that would embed inclusive practices.³ Matthie spoke on the *Granadaland Oral History* site of there being fewer than ten people from 'ethnic minority backgrounds' out of a workforce of over one thousand who were employed at Granada during the 1980s and 1990s.⁴ The site includes an interview with Wallen Matthie as well as a written piece by

² Wallen Matthie, interviewed by Isabel Taube, Zoom, 3 November 2020.

³ Gavin Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 33; Sarita Malik, *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television* (London: Sage Publications, 2002).

⁴ Wallen Matthie, interviewed by Stephen Kelly, 14 February 2014, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/interviewees/wallen-matthie/> [accessed 31 October 2023].

Vanessa Kirkpatrick, one of the earliest female Black presenters for Granada who began working for the company in 1982.

Gavin Schaffer has traced UK television companies' approach to the recruitment of Black and Asian television practitioners between the 1950s to the 1980s, which 'oscillated between complacency and self-righteousness [...] and a disinclination to adopt any policy of positive discrimination'.⁵ Despite external pressures from pressure groups and television practitioners including *World in Action* director, Sue Woodford-Hollick and the academic and cultural critic, Stuart Hall, who briefly worked as a presenter for Granada in 1969, historians have commented on how a passivity and reticence would characterise approaches to issues of 'diversity' and recruitment by ITV executives.⁶ Such narratives are reinforced elsewhere.⁷ In 1989, while working as a TV and Video Officer in the TV unit of the British Film Institute, the academic Kobena Mercer described how

⁵ Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation*, p. 120.

⁶ Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation*, p. 120.

⁷ Malik, *Representing Black Britain*; and Darrell M. Newton, *Paving the Empire Road: BBC Television and Black Britons* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

‘British television has operated like a closed shop as far as [B]lack practitioners are concerned’.⁸

Mercer advocated for schemes that would make television more accessible to those from ‘minority’ backgrounds: ‘a necessary part of a solution [...] would be to multiply the points of access to the institution itself’.⁹ Mercer also called for more research into the history of practitioners of African and Caribbean heritage in British television, writing that this was ‘more complex and contradictory than our received knowledge would have it’, but that ‘research in this direction is just beginning’.¹⁰

As I trace in this chapter, for television practitioners of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain, there was an inordinate amount of pressure to represent or be a spokesperson for their ‘race’. This was articulated by Mercer, who in 1990 wrote of the continual expectations that were placed on Black British television and film practitioners due to ‘a situation of unequal opportunity and scarcity’ so that ‘the few [B]lack people who are able to secure a place in institutions like television or filmmaking may experience an

⁸ Kobena Mercer, ‘General Introduction’, in *The Colour Black: Black Images in British Television*, ed. Therese Daniels and Jane Gerson (London: BFI Publishing, 1989), p. 7.

⁹ Mercer, ‘General Introduction’, p. 9.

¹⁰ Mercer, ‘General Introduction’, p. 10.

inordinate pressure to “speak for” [B]lack people as a whole’.¹¹ Mercer would develop this argument in his seminal text ‘The Burden of Representation’ published the same year, in which he moved from television practitioners to write specifically on Black British artists. Here, he described how this ‘burden’ was experienced by artists of African and Caribbean heritage in Britain due to ‘a consequence of structures that have historically marginalised their access to the means of cultural production’.¹² Due to this marginalisation, Mercer wrote how: ‘the [B]lack artist is expected to *speak for* the [B]lack communities as if she or he were its political “representative”’.¹³ These debilitating forms of pressure were experienced by practitioners in television, including those who worked for Granada.

The work of investigating the ‘structures’ of cultural production was carried through in the 1990s by the former nurse and journalist Beulah Ainley, who was a ‘staunch promoter of diversity in the media world’.¹⁴ Ainley’s doctoral thesis (1994) and subsequent

¹¹ Mercer, ‘General Introduction’, p. 9.

¹² Kobena Mercer, ‘Black Art and the Burden of Representation’, *Third Text*, 4/10 (1990), p. 65.

¹³ Mercer, ‘Black Art and the Burden of Representation’, p. 62.

¹⁴ Adam Ainley, ‘Beulah Ainley’, obituary, *National Union of Journalists*, 14 October 2022, <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/beulah-ainley-obituary.html> [accessed 20 June 2023].

publication, *Black Journalists, White Media* (1998) were hugely significant in drawing attention to the inequalities in newspapers and television. (She was also responsible for setting up a bursary scheme, the George Viner Memorial Fund, for journalists from ‘underrepresented groups’.)¹⁵ In her work, Ainley sought to collate and investigate statistical data and noted how, across television, many employees from ‘ethnic minority backgrounds’ were in administrative roles. As she wrote: ‘The ethnic minority make-up of the BBC workforce in March 1993, was 5.9 percent while network television has 6.8 percent ethnic minority workers overall’. Within this, Ainley further broke down the numbers of in relation to the stratification of roles, detailing how, ‘only 2.55 percent are producers and 0.44 percent are management, while between 16 and 18 percent work in clerical and secretarial jobs’.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ainley set up the George Viner Memorial Fund, ‘which has provided bursaries to more than 150 minority-ethnic students to undergo journalistic training’; Ainley, ‘Beulah Ainley’.

¹⁶ Beulah Rosemarie Amy Ainley, ‘Black and Asians in the British Media: A Study of Discrimination’ (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1994), p. 488.

In considering action being taken in commercial television, Ainley commented that only 'a few' broadcasters that were 'involved in Positive Action policies'.¹⁷ She highlighted 'Central Television in the West Midlands and Granada Television in Manchester' as 'both trying to implement positive action equal opportunity policies by monitoring staff and new recruits and providing training courses for ethnic minorities to compete for jobs'.¹⁸ In her bibliography, Ainley noted how an Equal Opportunity Policy document had been produced by Granada in 1991 and a Positive Action training document in 1993 . She also singled out London Weekend Television (LWT) as being committed to introducing 'monitoring and training courses' to increase the number of Black people in 'higher status' roles, particularly editorial roles. She stated how 'the company also awards sponsorship to six black journalist trainees yearly' and wrote that in implementing 'equal opportunities' policies London Weekend Television had been more ambitious than the BBC and 'set ethnic minority targets: 10 percent by 1995, and 15 percent in the year 2000, nearly twice those of the BBC'.¹⁹ Granada, Central Television and London Weekend Television were the only companies attempting to challenge the recruitment status quo in commercial television in the 1990s.

¹⁷ Ainley, 'Black and Asians in the British Media', p. 488.

¹⁸ Ainley, 'Black and Asians in the British Media', p. 490.

¹⁹ Ainley, 'Black and Asians in the British Media', p. 488.

This chapter conveys the histories and experiences of Lauder and Matthie at Granada and their reasons for setting up the training scheme in the 1990s. It also explores the experiences of Colin Stone, alumni of the first year of the scheme. In doing so, it broadens regional histories of commercial media which barely touch upon ‘race’ or representation. In 2022, Sarita Malik and Clive Nwonka evaluated racial diversity initiatives in UK film and television and highlighted the ‘lack of space for direct testimonies from ethnic minority groups’ and of the ‘limited understandings of the barriers to achieving diversity, particularly of how inequality, discrimination and racism determines the lived experiences of ethnic minorities’.²⁰The following chapter maps some of the ‘direct testimonies’ required to examine a significant but unexplored aspect of Granada’s history, and to record the experiences of former employees who sought to challenge and change the company’s recruitment culture.

²⁰ Sarita Malik and Clive Nwonka, ‘Racial Diversity Initiatives: How Will We Know What Works?’, Brunel University London, 17 May 2022, <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/brunel-public-policy/docs/2022-05-27-POLICY-BRIEF-Racial-diversity-initiatives.pdf> [accessed 2 December 2023].

Oral histories

This chapter is principally based on oral history sources and testimonies from Lauder, Matthie, and Colin Stone. Oral testimony is important due to the lack of archival resources available for researchers, especially in relation to the history of television practitioners of South Asian, African and Caribbean heritage who worked in commercial media. Such histories have historically been positioned as centrifugal to the ‘wider’ history of media companies.¹ Difficulties in accessing archival material have contributed to this, while also underscoring the ostracism experienced by many former employees of television. For instance, Dr David Dunkley Gyimah has reflected on how Black history of the media (as an archive) is often located in people’s homes (he himself ‘headed’ the BBC radio programme *Black London* in the early 90s and explains that most of the material from that period is in his garage). Likewise, Frances Galt, whose work has

¹ This is something commented on by the BBC historian David Hendy, who is quoted in an article on ‘black’ histories and archives by Dr David Dunkley, as saying how they have wrongly been placed as ‘marginal’ to narratives focused on centres of power in the media; David Dunkley Gyimah, ‘The Importance of Archive’, *Representology Journal*, 1, <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/media/research/sir-lenny-henry-centre-for-media-diversity/representology-journal/articles/the-importance-of-archive> [accessed 15 March 2023].

focused on the history of women's activism in the media and television unions, has observed how the voices of Black women were largely 'inaccessible' in the archive material she worked with, 'which was indicative of their marginalisation'.²

In 2020, I undertook three two-hour interviews with Charles Lauder, Wallen Matthie and Colin Stone (over Zoom) on their careers at Granada and their respective roles in setting up and participating in the different Bursary and Training Positive Action Initiatives. This chapter follows the structure of the interviews in that it begins by tracing the trajectory of Lauder and Matthie's careers to understand how they came to work for Granada and set up the schemes. It begins by focusing on their early work in journalism and broadcasting and most importantly their personal experiences with direct and indirect racism to highlight how and why Positive Action schemes were needed. In Stone's case, this was his first job in the media, and I examine the influences that drew him to apply to the scheme.

For this thesis, I approached Sue Woodford Hollick and Vanessa Kirkpatrick to interview them about their experiences of Granada in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as I reflect on in Chapter 4, in the end Woodford-Hollick declined to be interviewed for this thesis.

² Frances Galt, *Women's Activism Behind the Screen* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021), p. 28.

Kirkpatrick also declined to be interviewed but put me in touch with Lauder for the purposes of this chapter.

Charles Lauder joined Granada in 1976, aged twenty-one. He was encouraged to apply for a role as a researcher in the local programme's newsroom by the producer and director Linda McDougall following an article he had written in the *Guardian* on his experiences of confronting the far-right group, the National Front, in West Yorkshire, where he worked as a local news journalist in the mid-1970s. At Granada, Lauder would go on to work in the Sports Department, becoming Deputy Head of Sport but faced considerable challenges in being made a producer. He then joined the Drama and Arts department, working on the series *The Other Side of Midnight* with Tony Wilson (1988–1989) and directing fifty-two episodes of *Coronation Street*, becoming the earliest Black British director of the series. He also produced live concert recordings by bands such as the Happy Mondays. Lauder would go on to direct for the series *Porkpie* (1995–1996) for Channel 4, an offshoot of the hugely successful series *Desmond's* (1989–1994). Following this, he set up Talawa Consulting, as joint managing director alongside Wallen Matthie, specialising in embedding 'diversity and inclusion' practices within organisations. He has since undertaken many significant roles across the North West, including Chair of the Board of Trustees of Contact Theatre, Vice-chair of the board of Culture Northwest (the Cultural Consortium for England's North West) and membership

of the Greater Manchester Courts Board (appointed by the Department for Constitutional Affairs).³

Wallen Matthie joined Granada in 1981 as a researcher. Before working at the company, he had been heavily involved in the Moss Side community as a youth worker and worked as an employment officer for the Manchester Centre for Community Relations. In the 1970s, he was recruited by the BBC, where in 1977 he co-pioneered the groundbreaking radio programme *I 'n' I Rule O.K.* This was one of BBC Manchester's earliest programmes for the African and Caribbean community in the city and was hugely successful, although it struggled to be properly funded. After his work covering the uprisings in Moss Side in 1981, Matthie was encouraged by Granada to apply for a role as a researcher, eventually becoming a producer. He worked on the Granada programmes *Granada Reports* (1992–), *This is your Right* and *Live from Two*. He also worked with Tony Wilson on the series *Upfront* (1989–1997), before producing a series of his own, *Young Upfront*. After leaving Granada, Matthie was invited by the University of the West Indies to run workshops on television production and, alongside Lauder, set up Talawa Consulting, referred to above.

³ See: Charles Lauder, 'Consultant', *Included*, <https://included.com/charles-lauder/> [accessed 1 December 2023].

Colin Stone started working at Granada via the *Positive Action Training Initiative* in 1994. He was employed initially as a researcher before being appointed as a producer of documentaries in regional news. He then moved from Granada to ITN, where he was a producer on the award-winning 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald' before moving to work in current affairs at the BBC. Now freelance, Stone has most recently executively produced the *Guardian's* podcast series *Cotton Capital*, exploring the relationship between transatlantic slavery and the newspaper's founders.

It is important to note that these interviews were set up and conceived with the focus on discrimination and on the Positive Action Initiatives and this chapter follows and focuses on these issues especially. However, as is evident from the brief biographies above, there was more that could have spoken about their experiences of such as their work in theatre, in music, with community organisations and in local politics. Finally, it is important to make clear how I use the term 'Black' in this chapter. I do so with the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy in mind, and with the understanding that it is a socially and culturally constructed term and has been subject to historical fluctuations.⁴ Hakim Adi

⁴ Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, ed. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), p. 249; originally printed in *ICA documents, 7, Black Film, British Cinema*, ed. Kobena Mercer (London Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988), pp. 27–31.

writes of how the term Black became ‘progressively applied’ to people of African and Caribbean heritage in the 1970s.⁵ It was from the mid-1980s onwards the term ‘Black-British first began to gain popularity’.⁶ Mercer has also written of how ‘by the mid-1980s, in the difficult negotiation with the institutional structures of the state, the term [Black] was re-appropriated by the dogmatic discourse of official anti-racist policy and became subject to a kind of bureaucratic essentialism in which ‘black’ simply replaced ‘ethnic minority’”⁷ However, Black was also deployed as a form of resistance by people of African, Caribbean and South Asian heritage in the 1980s; the artist Supta Biswas has spoken of how she identified herself as Black during this period. She recalled that when applying for citizenship there were two boxes to tick in response to the question *Are you white? Are you black?* and wrote of how: ‘the state identified us as Black and identifying ourselves as Black was important to forming critical allegiances between those of us who were “Othered” by the state’.⁸ When I interviewed Charles Lauder he explained at one

⁵ Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History* (Great Britain: Allen Lane, 2022), p. 464.

⁶ Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain*, p. 464.

⁷ Mercer, ‘Black Art and the Burden of Representation’, p. 77.

⁸ As quoted in Lauren Elkin, *Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies in Feminist Art* (London: Chatto&Windus, 2023), p. 124.

point: 'I have gone back to my use of "Black People" as a political term' and for the purposes of this thesis I have adopted this form of description.⁹

'Race' and recruitment at Granada

The following section turns to explore the working lives of three people who, collectively, worked at Granada for over three decades from the 1970s to 1990s during an important time of political and societal change. Transcripts of my interviews with Lauder, Matthie and Stone are reproduced here at length. There is an absence of detailed underlying structural and statistical material in the Granada archives and therefore primacy is given to their nuanced and disparate recollections, allowing an exploration of a spectrum of responses to the changing contexts of this period. These recollections express much more of the complexities experienced when working for a seemingly democratic and 'progressive' broadcasting company, but which arguably failed for many years to appreciate and act upon the impact of direct and indirect racism.

It traces the history of Granada Television and ITV in relation to issues of 'race', representation and recruitment, Paul Long has commented on how within the literature, it is heavy on 'the general and often metropolitan accounts' of histories of 'race' and

⁹ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

representation.¹⁰ My aim here, given the difficulties of accessing Granada's institutional archives, is to contribute a more contextual and regional history to the scholarship of 'race' and recruitment at ITV, and by doing so convey the significance of Lauder and Matthie's efforts in establishing Granada's Positive Action Training Initiatives, which have so far received no academic attention in relation to Granada's history.

Charles Lauder and journalism in the 1970s

Charles Lauder grew up in Manchester and began his career in local journalism after graduating with a degree in journalism from Preston Polytechnic, later the University of Central Lancashire, in 1973/1974. He joined the local *Pudsey News* as a trainee local journalist almost immediately after graduating. Based in West Yorkshire, the newspaper was one of several local newspapers owned by the R. Ackrill group. As Lauder explained: 'At that time the *Pudsey News* would do three change pages: the front page, an internal page and a diary page and be branded as the *Horsforth News*'.¹¹

¹⁰ Paul Long, 'Representing Race and Place: Black Midlanders on Television in the 1960s and 1970s', *Midland History*, 36/2 (Autumn 2011), p. 263.

¹¹ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube, Zoom. Lauder also wrote to me later:

'Pudsey News' was based in Pudsey. Pudsey is 'halfway' between Bradford and Leeds - at different times associated with one or the other. Pudsey News

Lauder, aged twenty-one in 1976, was then the only journalist of Caribbean heritage working on the *Horsforth News*. In 1975, the journalist Lionel Morrison researched the UK-wide numbers of Black journalists working across press in Britain, detailing how 'there are two Black journalists in training on two newspapers in the country at the moment. One in Bradford and the other on the *South East London Mercury*'.¹² Apart from these two, he wrote that many worked 'in the subbing field [...] behind desks away from the public spotlight that accompanies actual reporting'. He continued: 'The number of actual frontline Black reporters is indeed miniscule and in Fleet Street I know of only two others, besides myself'.¹³ In his article, Morrison underlined the duality of visibility faced by Black reporters: on the one hand, news reporters of African and Caribbean heritage were conspicuously present because of their perceived 'difference' and on the other,

journalists belonged to the 'Bradford Chapter' of the NUJ (National Union of Journalists).

The *Horsforth News* was a 'sister' paper, with most content shared except for three or four pages - the front page with a '*Horsforth News*' masthead, different 'Diary' page, usually a different 'Leader' and different 'B, M, D' section.

Horsforth is a proudly separate village a few miles north of Pudsey.

¹² Lionel Morrison, 'A Black Journalist's Experience of British Journalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 4/3 (1975), p. 318.

¹³ Morrison, 'A Black Journalist's Experience', p. 318.

kept away from the ‘spotlight’ and marginalised for the same reason. Morrison also recalls how he was always being given subjects to do with ‘race’. He wrote of the difficulties he faced working for liberal newspapers in particular, who often seemed to project onto, and stereotype him.¹⁴

Charles Lauder’s time on *Horsforth News* included reporting on ‘pretty much everything that came out of Horsforth’.¹⁵ This included knocking house to house for stories, following leads and making sure that all significant events in the area were covered. In 1976, the National Front had identified Horsforth as a possible place for electoral success. Local newspapers were then highly influential spaces where the politics of ‘race relations’ was disseminated, albeit in different ways. As Lionel Morrison stated, the newspaper industry played ‘such an enormous and vital role in shaping people’s ideas and actions about community and race relations’.¹⁶ Indeed, the historian Benjamin Bland has explored the role of the *Lancashire Evening News* in amplifying the views of the National Party, a factional offshoot of the National Front, in Blackburn via the newspaper’s letters page. Bland traces how racist and xenophobic rhetoric was allowed to flourish in the newspaper and may have contributed to the success for the National

¹⁴ Morrison, ‘A Black Journalist’s Experience’, p. 320.

¹⁵ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

¹⁶ Morrison, ‘A Black Journalist’s Experience’, p. 320.

Party in local elections in Blackburn.¹⁷ Bland writes of the ‘under cited’ long hot summer of 1976 as a moment of extreme ‘fracture’ in Britain.¹⁸

When I asked Lauder how he came to work for *Granada*, he described the unusual circumstances which led to him writing an article about his own experiences as a Black journalist and which brought him a national profile:

The National Front determined [...] they saw Horsforth as a potential area for them to get representation on local authority and so they started a campaign there. As the Horsforth reporter I reported on pretty much everything that came out of Horsforth and my then editor asked me whether I would, whether I wished, to step away from reporting that event given the circumstances and I said that I was either the Horsforth reporter or I was not. He said that was pretty much what he had hoped I would say [...] and I was supposed to go to the meeting. It was a [...] an incredibly traumatic affair [...] the effect of which was that I wasn’t allowed into the meeting. There were a series of threatening circumstances and incidents, and I was refused entry to the meeting. So, when I got back to the office the following day (it was an evening meeting) the then editor asked me how things had gone. I

¹⁷ Benjamin Bland, ‘Publish and be Damned? Race, Crisis, and the Press in England during the Long, Hot Summer of 1976’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 37/3 (2019), p. 165.

¹⁸ Benjamin Bland, ‘Publish and be Damned?’, p. 163.

explained it to him and he took what I consider, even now, to be a remarkably brave step and offered the opportunity to me to write a first-person piece – which is almost unheard of – which he then put on the front page of the newspaper.¹⁹

The *Guardian*'s Northern editor Harry Whewell commissioned Lauder to write a much more substantial piece for the 'Features' page detailing his encounter with the far right. The article was a wide-ranging and powerful analysis of the systematic difficulties he had encountered while working as one of the only Black journalists in West Yorkshire. It was also a personal account of his early experiences as a young journalist.

While Lauder's first-person piece chronicled the events that had taken place at the Mechanical Institute in Horsforth and described the violent aggression of the National Front and far right, reflected in the article's title, he largely focused on the nuances of his day-to-day working life. He wrote of a largely supportive working environment: 'I am in a newspaper office where I am more likely to be liked or disliked for my beliefs whether social or political, than for my race or colour.'²⁰ Yet, he also described how some of his working experiences were 'spoiled by some event that brings back the awareness of differences'. This 'awareness of difference' echoed Mercer's description of 'the burden

¹⁹ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

²⁰ Charles Lauder, '... Being a N— in the Woodpile Is One Hell of a Responsibility', *Guardian*, 23 August 1976, p. 10.

of representation'. Lauder wrote of the burden of 'walking the ambassadorial tightrope' in relation to issues of 'race' and described the constant acrobatic stamina needed to negotiate other's people's projections on, and of him. Like Morrison, Lauder was also frustrated with being stereotyped, and the impoverishment of his experience as a journalist through having to navigate endless diplomacy around the issue of 'Blackness'. He wrote of how 'everyone expects impartiality from an ambassador'; and 'I have to be careful about the views I voice on controversial topics'. As he explained: 'I am the standard against which others like me will be measured [...] It is a frightening responsibility, an unfair one, and one which results in myriad inhibitions.' He continued: 'The greatest handicap has to be the fact that everybody assumes they know just where I stand'.²¹

His words were reminiscent of those of Lionel Morrison, who wrote a year previously in 1975 about his experiences of working as a Black journalist in London: 'One resented the Fleet Street assumption that Black journalists were only good and expert at reporting exclusively about Blacks'.²² Nevertheless, Morrison would decide to focus on these issues in his journalism: 'Fleet Street is saturated and there is a vogue, whether one likes

²¹ Lauder, '... Being a N— in the Woodpile, p. 10.

²² Morrison, 'A Black Journalist's Experience', p. 320.

it or not, for specialisation'. This meant that for Morrison, he reluctantly had to 'capitalise on blackness'.²³

Describing the tokenism in the media, Lauder was both scathing but also acutely honest about the possibilities his own presence in media might mean for his future:

This increased awareness in newspaper offices and other areas of media makes me and those like me 'wanted men', a rare commodity which has suddenly become valuable. And it's not just selfishness that makes me glad I am in this position. I believe the further I get, the more clout I will have and the more I will be able to do and help achieve that total acceptance and harmony that many dream of seeing. But maybe I flatter myself. This could well be another, even bigger, con.²⁴

Entering Granada

Lauder described to me how Granada had 'not been on his radar' as a company where he would find an opportunity to develop his media career. However, his outspoken,

²³ Morrison, 'A Black Journalist's Experience', p. 320.

²⁴ Lauder, '... Being a N— in the Woodpile', p. 10.

personal and scathingly honest article drew the attention of *World in Action* producer Linda McDougall, who was then living in West Yorkshire. At the time it was common to recruit via the regional press. Local newspapers were where many former employees worked before joining ITV; a 1977 Royal Commission on the press noted that ‘ITN and the independent companies generally recruit from newspapers’.²⁵ Lauder remembers that McDougall got in touch to say that there may be a post going in the newsroom and ‘would I care to apply?’. He recalls ‘I had an interview in two stages. First, informally at a “dinner party” with Linda and some other people from Granada and then I had a formal interview with, if I remember correctly, Gus McDonald and Chris Pye on a panel of three people.’²⁶ It was then that he was hired. His first appointment was as a news journalist for Granada, with a few instances of onscreen reporting (unfortunately, I could not find any archival footage of this).

In my interview with Lauder, I asked if there were any other Black people at the company when he joined. He replied:

I figured you’d ask that. I was trying to think of who I saw. I was aware of [...] a senior producer [...] [then] Sue Woodford. There was a guy somewhere in the

²⁵ Oliver Ross McGregor, *Royal Commission on the Press Final Report*, (London: HM Stationery Office, 1977), p. 172.

²⁶ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

technical department. Again, I wasn't entirely sure if he was of mixed heritage and on the staff at Granada. That was it. There were a couple of other people at Granada who I got to know who were freelancers who came into the company on assignment, one of whom has turned out to be one of my best friends, a guy called Oral Ottey, who's an amazing, absolutely unbelievable, film editor. And that was it.²⁷

Oral Norrie Ottey is an esteemed film editor, having been nominated for Emmys and Royal Television Society Awards, and known for editing the *Band of Brothers* US TV drama. In an interview from 2020 on YouTube, Ottey spoke with two members of the Black British Post-Production Collective where he reflected on his early working life.²⁸

I was unable to interview Ottey for this thesis and it is therefore difficult to find dates for the period he was employed at Granada. However, from Lauder's memories, it is apparent that he worked there prior to his own arrival in 1976. Oral Ottey would later go on to edit *Granada's 28 UP* in 1985, produced by Michael Apted.

²⁷ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

²⁸ Ruth Antoine and Francine Leach, 'An Interview with Black British TV/Film Editor Oral Norrie Ottey', posted 28 September 2020, by Black British Post Prod Collective, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ugw82ZHtTwU> [accessed 20 January 2023].

In an online interview, Ottey described how he had originally wanted to be an architect and seeing a job going for a trainee in Soho, applied for the role. After he was informed it was already taken, he then started working as a runner on films in London. It was during this time that he was approached by ‘Greendow Film Productions’, based in Manchester, to work for them as an editor. On arriving in Manchester, Ottey did freelance work for Granada, working on *Coronation Street* and edited work for the celebrated documentary filmmaker, Norman Swallow. Swallow had joined Granada in 1963 where he directed several prize-winning documentaries with filmmaker Denise Mitchell, before moving to the BBC in 1968. Swallow then returned to Granada as a programme executive in 1974.²⁹ Ottey remembers being in a meeting with Granada executives. Looking back, it was in these spaces, that he felt an acute sense of ‘difference’. Talking to two members of the Black British Post-Production Collective in 2020, he was taken back to that moment: ‘Here I am as a Black person with twelve senior executives; it is so scary I can’t begin to tell you’. As Ottey explained to the Collective in the interview:

I didn’t lose sight of my Blackness [...] I knew I had to be really, really good, better than my white counterparts really. That was my driving force. You can’t afford to make a mistake [...] You realised that you’re the only Black person [...] there’s a

²⁹ ‘The Medium: Norman Swallow Back to Granada’, *Broadcast*, 8 July 1974, p. 767; *Entertainment Industry Magazine* Archive, p. 6.

lot riding on you [...] You want other people to come in [...] You want other people see you're Black and you can do the job [...] I probably didn't articulate it at the time, but it was in my head.³⁰

Ottey's reminiscence echo the pressure Lauder had described in his article for the *Guardian*, articulating 'the burden' of being a representative of his 'race' and the complexity of that in relation to 'opening' up access for others. This 'burden', was also experienced by presenters and performers of African and Caribbean heritage in the 1970s. Recalling his experiences of watching British television during this period, the young Black British artist and filmmaker, Isaac Julien, would remember how presenters or performers of African and Caribbean heritage: 'could be doing anything, from being in a game show to *Top of the Pops*, but there was an awful lots of pressure on whatever the person was doing'.³¹

³⁰ Antoine and Leach, 'An Interview with Black British TV/Film Editor Oral Norrie Ottey'.

³¹ Isaac Julien, 'Revealing Desires', *Looking at Class: Film, Television and the Working Class in Britain*, ed., by Sheila Rowbotham and Huw Benyon, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2001), pp. 173-184, p. 173

‘Race’ and television in the 1970s

For Lauder, some of his early experiences at Granada in the 1970s were traumatic. He explained that at the company during this period prejudice, discrimination and racism were prevalent. Lauder describes how when he arrived to work at Granada, he would get messages in the internal mail that would be abusive: ‘That would reference my colour, my ethnicity, comments about not being worthy and all those kinds of things’. In one incident, a violent racist message was sent to him in the internal mail which he shared with his news editor to seek his advice on what to do. This form of racism was systemic but was often batted away as ‘banter’. As Lauder explained to me:

I think it was 800 employees. There would be instances of casual comments that you’d overhear and if you’d challenge it, they’d say, ‘Oh we don’t mean you’ or ‘It’s just banter [...] it doesn’t mean anything’. And that was not uncommon, occasionally depending on circumstances that you would challenge, occasionally the response would be, ‘Oh I didn’t mean anything by it, it was only a joke’.³²

³² Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

Sarita Malik and Stuart Hall have documented how the early 1970s were characterised by television's failures to really grapple with the issues of 'anti-black sentiment' in society which, Malik writes, had become more 'sporadic'.³³ In the 1970s 'race' was treated on television with thoughtlessness and with stereotypes. This was exemplified in comedies such as *Till Death Do Us Part* (BBC) and *Love Thy Neighbour* (Thames Television, 1972–1976). These series featured storylines that did little more than inscribe ideas of 'difference' further. Granada's *The Comedians* was also case in point. Running from 1971 to 1993, the show was founded around the idea of the Northern Working Men's Club, where different comedians based in the North would be given slots or 'residencies on the programme' to perform a stand-up routine. Two of these comics, Bernard Manning and Charlie Williams, frequently included 'jokes' around race.

The Comedians was produced by Johnny Hamp, who was regarded as one of Granada's most successful producers. In the 1960s, he had been involved in producing a series of programmes featuring African American artists performing in Manchester, such as the performance of Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Muddy Waters performing at Chorlton Train

³³ Malik, *Representing Black Britain*, p. 15.

Station.³⁴ In 1971, Hamp commissioned Charlie Williams, a former professional football player for Doncaster Rovers, where he had been one of the earliest Black British players for the club, to begin a long-term residency on *The Comedians*. Williams' humour was often extremely crude. Hamp's description of it reflects how 'race' was understood in the early 1970s and conveys the tokenism that prevailed in the media at the time:

Charlie was [B]lack with a very strong Yorkshire accent and was working a unique gag which had a go at [B]lack and white prejudices. Like 'if you're not careful I'll come and live next door to you' delivered in a cheeky style which somehow seems to do more for race relations than all the political pundits put together.³⁵

However, this form of joke did little more than consolidate ideas of 'difference' around 'race'. A young Lenny Henry watching Charlie Williams during this period later recalled the influence of his humour: 'Charlie told jokes against himself in order to get the audience on his side [...] At the time, that was the way forward.'³⁶ As Henry would write

³⁴ Chris Long, 'Muddy Waters and Sister Rosetta Tharpe's "mind-blowing" station show', *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-27256401> [accessed 2 December 2023].

³⁵ Johnnie Hamp, *It Beats Working for a Living* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2008), p. 177.

³⁶ Lenny Henry, *Who Am I, Again?* (London: Faber, 2019), p. 67.

of watching *The Comedians* as a young person: ‘Here was a miniscule of black talent getting regular work on TV but with no black producers, writers, script editors, directors, etc. – that was the 1970s’.³⁷

The absence of Black directors, producers and writers working in television was exemplified in a 1972 series of programmes on BBC North West, focusing on Moss Side and Old Trafford and directed by Su Dagleish, who had previously made films for Granada’s *World in Action*. The programmes captured the views of Mancunians of Caribbean heritage, who spoke about the effects of discriminatory practices in finding employment and in relation to local policing. The films were first broadcast regionally, then nationally.³⁸ The films also reflected on discrimination in the television industry. They featured the Grenadian-born youth activist Gus John, who was involved in the making of the second programme. A voiceover described how John was approached because it was impossible to ‘find a Black producer’ in Manchester to work on the film.

³⁷ Henry, *Who Am I, Again?*, p. 67.

³⁸ The three programmes screened in 1972 were *Long Live Our England: A Tale of Black Families*, *Long Live Our England: Mother Country* and *Long Live Our England: Gifted and Black*. (BBC 2). The screening event was part of a special screening: ‘TV time machine’ *Long Live Our England*, HOME, Manchester, 15 February 2023.

Sue Woodford-Hollick

One of the earliest people to speak out against racism in the media in the 1970s, and to call for more training initiatives, was Sue Woodford-Hollick, who joined Granada in 1969 after graduating from the University of Sussex with an English degree. She had grown up in the 1950s as a mixed-heritage child in a white family, not knowing until reaching adulthood that her father was the celebrated Trinidadian war hero, Ulric Cross, the most decorated Caribbean flyer to serve in World War Two.³⁹ Woodford-Hollick worked as a presenter for Granada on a nightly programme *Newsview*, where she was ‘Granada’s first Black woman newsreader’.⁴⁰ She then worked as an investigative journalist and producer on Granada’s *World in Action* in the 1970s. During her time on the series, Woodford-Hollick made a number of high profile investigative programmes, one of which focused on the rise of the far right National Party (NP), a factional offshoot of the National Front in

³⁹ Sue Woodford-Hollick, ‘Who I Was Then, and Who I Am Now’, in *New Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Women of African Descent*, ed. Margaret Busby (London: Penguin, 2019), pp. 107–111.

⁴⁰ ‘Television Today’, *The Times*, 24 October 1969, p. 19.

Blackburn (the programme is now part of the British Film Institute Archive).⁴¹ In 1976, the party had two councillors elected to Blackburn Council, the only place in Britain where it would gain electoral representation. Woodford-Hollick's film exposed the criminal backgrounds of the two elected councillors from the NP and highlighted local resistance from the Blackburn community, including the Indian Workers' Association, which had independently recorded the scale of violence and intimidation experienced by the South Asian community in Blackburn.

In 1978, Sue Woodford-Hollick gave a speech alongside journalist and academic, Margaret Walters, to industry professionals at the *Edinburgh Television Festival* on the lack of opportunities for Black and Asian people in television. In the opening paragraph Walters and Woodford-Hollick stated that: 'Despite the fact that a whole generation of non-whites born here are growing British, there are still pitifully few black or brown faces on the screen – or behind it'. On the presence of Black people in television organisations, they described the underlying and pervasive structural causes of racism in the media:

We tend to think of racism as aggressive and overt; it can operate as powerful through evasion, inertia or simple thoughtlessness. Most television companies

⁴¹ 'The National Party', Granada, 1976, British Film Institute Archive, <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-the-national-party-1976-online> [accessed 20 July 2023].

today claim sympathy with the problem of non-whites, and an open-minded policy towards black talent. But their *practice*, conscious or unconscious, can be fairly regarded as racist. The liberal refusal to make an 'issue' out of race or formulate a 'self-conscious' policy on employment, the insistence on the need to keep up standards by hiring 'the best available talent' in open competition – all these things in effect maintain barriers. Blacks and browns are simply not getting their fair share of TV work, either as performers or in production. There are no non-whites in senior management posts; perhaps two or three programme makers, and only a handful of reporters, researchers and technicians. Only two non-whites have written at all regularly for British television.⁴²

One of these 'non-whites' was the celebrated writer Michael Abbensetts, whose landmark series, *Empire Road*, directed by Sir Horace Ové, was to be broadcast on the BBC the following year (1979) and was set around a Black family in Handsworth, Birmingham. However, Woodford was critical of what she described as the 'mandarins of broadcasting' who, as she stated: 'can display a startling insensitivity to the needs and

⁴² Margaret Walters and Sue Woodford, 'Race: Memo to Programme Controllers Subject: In 1968 a Black Family Moved into No.8 Coronation Street, Where Are They Today?', *Edinburgh International Festival Official Programme* (1978), p. 27, Black Cultural Archives.

feelings of our minorities'. They were particularly critical of the *Annan Report*, published a year previously, which had advocated for the introduction of a fourth channel.⁴³ While the Annan Report stated that more programme making should reflect Britain's 'multi-ethnic' and 'multi-cultural' society, Sue Woodford-Hollick argued that the report neglected to explore the necessity of addressing those who worked behind the camera. As she and Walters elaborated: 'the Annan report spends less time on race than sex and skims over minority employment'.⁴⁴ The influence and importance of the speech was reflected by the scriptwriter Troy Kennedy Martin, known for his work on *Z Cars* and the *Italian Job*, who commented on the importance of changing recruitment in broadcasting and the introduction of 'Positive Discrimination' in the media.⁴⁵

The need for legislative encouragement for positive action by public and corporate institutions was reflected in the 1976 Race Relations Act. Previous similar Acts (in 1965 and 1968) had been regarded as inadequate to deal with an increased awareness of the wider consequences of 'race' discrimination. Section 35 of the Act, in relation to the

⁴³ Christian Potschka, *Towards A Market Broadcasting: Communications Policy in the UK and Germany* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 84.

⁴⁴ Walters and Woodford, 'Memo to Programme Controllers'.

⁴⁵ Michael Church, 'Integrated Casting is Urged for TV Dramas', *The Times*, 31 August 1978, p. 3.

special needs of 'racial' groups in regard to education, training or welfare, stipulated: 'Nothing (in Parts II to IV) shall render unlawful any act done in affording persons of a particular racial group access to facilities or services to meet the special needs of persons of that group in regard to their education, training or welfare, or any ancillary benefits'.⁴⁶ While positive or affirmative discrimination of the kind championed by Troy Kennedy Martin was still not sanctioned, positive action schemes in the form of appropriate and specific training projects were to be allowed, without fear of litigation.

The championing of anti-racist employment practices was taken up by the television union ACTT, who in 1978 announced: 'Members should press for equal employment for all people, regardless of their race, colour, creed or national origin and should insist that the TUC's Equal opportunities clause is included in all agreements with employing bodies'.⁴⁷

All the major television broadcasters were slow to respond to the legislative encouragement provided by the 1976 Act. In 1979, the BBC initially supported, then disavowed, a programme entitled *It Ain't Half Racist, Mum* included in its *Open Door* slot.

⁴⁶ 'Race Relations Act 1976', UK Parliament (London: HM Stationery Office, 1976), available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/enacted> [accessed 14 December 2024].

⁴⁷ ACTT General Council Code of Practice, May 1978, Black Cultural Archives.

This was a programme fronted by Stuart Hall and made in association with the Campaign Against Racism in the Media (CARM). The programme was spliced with clips of well-known television figures showing a disregard for, or underplaying, the impact of racist stereotypes in the media. The Corporation later apologised for airing the programme and for injuring the reputations of BBC stalwarts.⁴⁸ An invite to a screening of the programme highlighted the level of frustration felt by members of CARM at the failure of the BBC and ITV to address issues of race and inequality:

You are invited to a preview of this unique programme, which will be held on Tuesday February 27th at 1200 hours. Unique? Yes, because this 'Open Door' access programme has been made by people who mostly work in television themselves but have been driven to 'Open Door' by the refusal of BBC and ITV alike to confront the question of their race on the air. Although limited by the inherent restrictions of 'Open Door's' small resources, *It Ain't half racist Mum* has been well researched over a nine-month period. The results are devastating: even

⁴⁸ 'Transcript: It Ain't Half Racist, Mum', *Representology Journal*, 1, <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/media/research/sir-lenny-henry-centre-for-media-diversity/representology-journal/articles/it-aint-half-racist-mum-transcript> [accessed 28 November 2023].

CARM members have been shocked by the overt and covert racism to be found at all levels of broadcasting.⁴⁹

In the same year, Sue Woodford-Hollick would again write of television's failure to employ Black actors. In a letter to the *Guardian*, she advocated for those working in television to take up the Annan Reports recommendations: 'Surely, the time has come for both television and theatre managements to take the plunge and follow the Annan report recommendations "that clear policies on the employment of ethnic minorities should be formulated and propagated throughout the organisation." Surely too, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality could act more positively?'⁵⁰

Wallen Matthie and the 1980s

This chapter now turns to consider the experiences of Wallen Matthie, a key figure in the introduction of positive action at *Granada* who was instrumental in attempts to address and reshape the company's internal understating of race inequality. As with all

⁴⁹ 'Campaign against Racism in the Media', Received 20th February 1979, Black Cultural Archives.

⁵⁰ Sue Woodford, 'More Roles Needed for Black actors', Letters to the Editor, *Guardian*, 30 January 1979, p. 9.

interviewees it is necessary to understand their prior working lives and, most importantly, their personal experiences of direct and indirect racism in the print and broadcast media of the time.

Matthie did not initially set out to work in the media. Brought up in the Moss Side and Whalley Range areas of Manchester, he graduated from St Margaret's Church of England School in Whalley Range and was encouraged to go into a trade by his father. In 1970, he began an apprenticeship with Burma Oil. The company had offices in Trafford Park and Wythenshawe as well as internationally. Here, he worked as what was then called a 'rate fixer'. When I asked him about this role, he highlighted his conspicuous position as the only person of Caribbean heritage working at the company:

The people who manufactured these components were given a certain amount of time to do it. I would be one of the people who would decide how long it would take [to make] certain components. Part of my job was designing that component. I would time it [...] whether it was an hour or an hour and a half. It's quite interesting because at the time I was the only Black person working for the company. 'Raters' weren't particularly liked because they were dictating what

people got paid for a piece of work etc, so it was a baptism of fire, let's put it that way.⁵¹

During this time at Burma Oil, Matthie also volunteered with young people and became a part time leader of a local youth club in Moss Side. Through this, as he recounted to me: 'I got slightly involved in local politics, depending on what was going on in Moss Side at the time'. He joined the Manchester Centre for Community relations under the leadership of Archie Downie OBE, a well-known community figure. Downie had arrived in Manchester following the Second World War in 1949 and encountered discrimination in the city where many public spaces, including restaurants, pubs and dancehalls, imposed 'colour bars'.⁵² Downie was 'passionate about the work of MCCR'.⁵³ In the mid-

⁵¹ Wallen Matthie, interviewed by Isabel Taube. 2020.

⁵² 'Pan-African Congress 50 years on – Archie Downie', posted 2019, by Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Company, Soundcloud, <https://soundcloud.com/aiucentre/sets/pan-african-congress-50-years-on-archie-downie> [accessed 20 March 2022].

⁵³ Dan Thompson, 'Archie, Tireless Campaigner for Justice, Dies Aged 85', *Manchester Evening News*, 18 April 2010, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/archie-tireless-campaigner-for-justice-dies-888364> [accessed 15 March 2022].

1970s he approached Wallen Matthie about working as employment officer for the organisation.⁵⁴

Matthie would also later join the BBC, creating the landmark programme *I 'n' I Rule O.K.* alongside broadcasters Elaine Wilks and Vince Herbert. This was the earliest BBC radio programme specifically dedicated to the African and Caribbean community in Manchester. Matthie had been approached to start the programme by his friend Chris Walmsley, who was a producer at BBC Radio Manchester and a Liberal Party candidate who 'chaired the party's ethnic minorities working group'.⁵⁵ When Matthie told me how he came to create the programme, he explained:

A friend of mine, a guy called Chris Walmsley approached me and said to me that BBC Radio Manchester were thinking about launching a radio programme aimed at the Black community in Manchester and would I be interested in sort of taking part in that initiative and after the discussion I met with Alan Shaw who was the station manager.

At the time part of the BBC's mandate was to look at how they catered for the minority communities. [The] Chinese, Black community [and] Asian community.

⁵⁴ Thompson, 'Archie, Tireless Campaigner for Justice'.

⁵⁵ Tom McNally, 'Chris Walmsley: Hinterland of Politics', *Guardian*, 19 May 1995, p. 14.

Myself, a guy called Vince Herbert, and a woman called Elaine Wilks. The three of us [...] sat down and decided we should do a little bit more on this, and did some research and [...] . eventually came up with a proposal for Chris Walmsley and Alan Shaw, which they accepted.

Matthie remembers that getting the project off the ground was difficult. The BBC had made many excuses about working on the television programme. Reticence and vacillation from the BBC radio controller meant they struggled to get the programme going. They had to appeal to BBC governors.

We thought, who could we turn to for assistance? [...] There was only one Black woman who was on the board of the BBC, Dame Joycelyn Barrows. The first female Black member of the BBC's Board of Governors. I met up with her, I think I contacted her and she said: 'Leave it with me' and we explained what we were trying to do and, lo and behold, a couple of weeks after, we got a call from the station manager that there'd been contact from the powers that be, and yeah, we can go ahead with it.

During the 1970s, several programmes were initiated by the BBC to reflect African and Caribbean regional audiences, however they struggled to gain internal support from the corporation and the BBC acquired a reputation for being evasive. Alex Pascall, the presenter of *Black Londoners*, which began in 1974, had also struggled to gain more airtime from the BBC. In an interview from 1982, he described the difficulties the

programme faced financially and the lack of support from the BBC. (A preface to the article explained how in 1981 Pascall had been ‘involved in a series of struggles with BBC management over the programme’s form and funding’.) He spoke of how, ‘we started off with little money – we were told we could have the airspace but there was no budget, so for the first six months I didn’t get paid’.⁵⁶ In an interview with the *Guardian* over thirty years later, in 2020, he recalled: ‘When the show began in 1974, the station chiefs doubted there was the audience or material to sustain a regular slot’.⁵⁷ However, this would change four years later when ‘One survey found that his show was listened to by 59% of Black Londoners, and that 60% of the station’s audience would listen to his broadcasts’.⁵⁸ By 1978, *Black Londoners* had a daily slot. Pascall would come to

⁵⁶ Alex Pascall, ‘Black Autonomy and the BBC: Alex Pascall interviewed’, *It Ain’t Half Racist, Mum: Fighting Racism in the Media*, ed. Phil Cohen and Carl Gardner (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1985), pp. 5–10.

⁵⁷ Wallen Matthie, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

⁵⁸ Joseph Harker, ‘Alex Pascall, the Broadcaster Who Gave a Voice to Black Britain – and Is Now Taking on the BBC’, *Guardian*, 3 September 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/sep/03/alex-pascall-the-broadcaster-who-gave-a-voice-to-black-britain-and-is-now-taking-on-the-bbc> [accessed 14 December 2024].

Manchester to advise Matthie, Herbert and Wilks and gave encouragement for their treatment of the programme.

I 'n' I Rule O.K. began in 1977, but its success meant that it was extended to one hour and launched again on 2 April 1978. The programme aired on Sunday evenings at 9pm. It combined music with local and national politics. Matthie remembers 'it was filled with music, reggae music, content about what was happening locally and nationally in the Caribbean'. The show had an overwhelmingly positive response from the African and Caribbean community. Matthie remembers:

It was amazing. It was absolutely amazing because for the first time they could turn on the radio and hear music which was about them. We had discussions, we had phone ins, local phone ins. We had people sending greetings from parts of the Caribbean around Christmas time [...] we did all sorts of stuff, people just loved it. Everybody tuned in on a Sunday night to listen to programmes because these were people who were local, myself, Vince and Elaine; they knew us and we were bringing something larger to the wider community in regard to the Black community in Manchester.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Wallen Matthie, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

While there is minimal archive material on the programme, there is a single image of Matthie with his co-stars, Elaine Wilks and Vince Herbert, from an April 1978 issue of the television and radio magazine, *Broadcast*.⁶⁰

Despite its large audience figures, there were huge difficulties in financing *I 'n' I Rule O.K.* In the Manchester City Archives there is a document from the early 1979/1980s (no date on document) appealing for more money for the programme but firstly speaking about its successes:

Although *I 'n' I Rule O.K.* was designed specifically for the Afro-Caribbean community, the programme has a large following of listeners from the host and other ethnic-communities - this is reflected in the number of letters and enquiries etc. which we receive. Our aim is to inform, educate, communicate and entertain; we cover a wider area of topics from current affairs issues to sports and the theatre - at local, national and international level [...] *I 'n' I Rule O.K.* is one of the

⁶⁰ 'Radio', *Broadcast*, April 10, 1978, Issue 957, p. 13.

BBC's most established Afro-Caribbean programmes, and has been extensively used as a model on which similar ethnic programmes are based.⁶¹

However, the document goes on to highlight the lack of investment and significantly the social consequence of providing inadequate support: 'In development terms, the programme is limited by financial constraints and the necessary manpower required for information gathering and other duties which are vital to the maintenance of an effective multiracial society'.⁶²

The success of the show with Mancunians was reflected in a 1983 article in the television industry *Broadcast* magazine, which wrote that: 'I 'n' I Rule O.K. attracts 55% of Manchester based Afro-Caribbeans'.⁶³ At a screening of BBC films on Moss Side at HOME In April 2023, as part of the Q & A discussion, an audience member asked about

⁶¹ 'I 'n' I Rule Okay', Elouise Edwards archive, 'Report of the I 'n' I radio programme entitled 'I 'n' I Rule OK, Access Programme, [no date] BBC Radio Manchester' GB3228.5/3/33.

⁶² 'I 'n' I Rule Okay'.

⁶³ *Broadcast* (Archive: 1973–2000), no. 957, p. 13.

what had happened to the programme and commented on how much they had enjoyed listening to it at the time.⁶⁴

Matthie indirectly attributes this marginalisation to the workings of the BBC during the period. However, he decided to use the opportunity to be trained in journalism: ‘It was very clear it wasn’t a natural home for Black folks. We were there with our programmes. When you went into the canteen for example you looked around and it was me, Vincent and Elaine. It was a totally white organisation.’⁶⁵

Uprisings, 1981

By the early 1980s, Matthie was heavily involved in the Moss Side community, and it was through his work covering the uprisings in 1981 that he came to be employed by Granada, bringing with him an extensive experience of innovative broadcasting as well as community politics.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ ‘TV Time Machine’, *Long Live Our England*, HOME, 15 February 2023.

⁶⁵ Wallen Matthie, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

⁶⁶ The choice of the word ‘uprisings’ is deliberate and follows that of the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre & Education Trust; see ‘Rearranging the “Social

The uprisings had first started in Brixton, ignited by tensions between police and the local community stemming from police practices in which young people, especially young Black males, were being indiscriminately stopped and searched in an operation in South London police had code-named ‘Swamp 81’. A few weeks later, disturbances took place in Southall, London and in the Toxteth/Liverpool 8 community. In Liverpool, they started after an unknown man was chased in the area by police who suspected his bicycle of being stolen. In the fray, with community groups trying to explain to the police whose bicycle it was, another young man — photographer Leroy Cooper — was arrested. At the time, Cooper’s father was ‘seeking civil damages against the chief constable of Merseyside for the alleged harassment of his other son’.⁶⁷ The uprisings began on 3 July 1981 and lasted until 11 July.

In Moss Side there were uprisings against police harassment and violence. These had started on 8 July and lasted for three days. Wallen Matthie’s role as an important community figure at the time is reflected in a BBC news programme on the disturbances.

Kaleidoscope’?: Looking Back at the 1981 Moss Side “Disturbances”, nd, <https://www.racearchive.org.uk/not-a-race-riot-looking-back-on-the-1981-moss-side-uprising/> [accessed 4 November 2023].

⁶⁷ Michael Ignatieff, *London Review of Books*, 20 August 1981 (reprinted in Gus John, *Moss Side: More Than Just a Riot* (Surrey: Gus John Books, 2011), p. 69.

The North West film archive describes how: 'Community relations officer Wallen Matthie was interviewed about the "atmosphere" of Moss Side'.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the actual recording is lost.

While Matthie was given the opportunity during this period to make documentaries for BBC Radio 4 on the uprisings, the media's collective coverage of the events was heavily criticised by the Moss side communities. Prominent figure Gus John, a youth worker and resident of Moss Side, was scathing about the media's response.⁶⁹ John had first-hand experience of the young people in the decade preceding the uprisings.⁷⁰ He was part of the Moss Side Defence Committee that was initiated in response to the government produced *Hytner Report* on the disturbances. The Defence League argued that the report was 'riddled with inconsistencies'. It also pointed to the highly inaccurate representation

⁶⁸ North West Film Archive, 'Debi Davies, SNF, Talking to Community Relations Officer Wallen Matthie about the Atmosphere in Moss Side This Evening. Commag. Park', 8 July 1981.

⁶⁹ John, *Moss Side*, p. 52. John was also one of the founders of The George Jackson House Trust, a hostel for young people of African and Caribbean heritage in Whalley Range and had worked as a community youth worker in Handsworth and also taught Black history in Wakefield prison.

⁷⁰ John, *Moss Side*, p. 32.

of young people in the media. John wrote of how: 'The coverage in the media of Manchester, Toxteth, Brixton and St Pauls (Bristol), was just totally racist'. (Focusing on coverage of the uprisings in Manchester, John did not refer to Granada at all, but did reflect on local newspaper coverage. He recalled that: 'On a good day the *MEN* [*Manchester Evening News*] wrote respectable articles; on the other days they had some very stupid articles').⁷¹ Sarita Malik has written that ITN news reports at the time deployed 'unsubstantiated evidence' that the Toxteth/Liverpool 8 was 'engineered'.⁷²

Granada and the uprisings

Granada's coverage of the uprisings was highly criticised in the national press for its slow response to the disturbances which was attributed to restrictive union practices. The dispute was detailed in *Broadcast*, which reported that Granada's head of news, Rod Caird, based in London, hadn't been alerted to the uprisings until the following morning. *Broadcast* compared Granada's response to that of LWT, who visited the site of the uprisings in their local area immediately.⁷³ There had been more visceral criticism of

⁷¹John, *Moss Side*, p. 56.

⁷² Malik, *Representing Black Britain*, p. 86.

⁷³ 'Granada Misreads Its Riot Act', *Broadcast*, 13 July 1981, p. 1116.

Granada in *The Times*, newly taken over by Rupert Murdoch. The journalist Peter Watson was damning in his criticism of the ACTT:

The weekend rioting at Toxteth in Liverpool was, arguably, the biggest local story in *Granada's* catchment area since commercial television state. But what were the viewers of its local news programme, *Granada reports*, offered on Monday evening? A half hour Flintstones cartoon. The reason for the lack of coverage was indeed Stone Age farce. A crew was sent to Liverpool to shoot a half hour special. Unfortunately, someone overlooked an agreement with the film technicians' union, the ACTT, which forbids local news crews to shoot more than 800 ft of film (roughly seven minutes on screen) without the aid of a bigger unit. The crew got the programme together only for the ACTT – which in this instance might stand for the Association of Cretaceous and Triassic Technicians – to show its fossilised attitude by pulling the switch.⁷⁴

It was no surprise that *The Times* decided to focus its attack on legitimate employment protection working practices of the ACTT, as Murdoch was himself in a war with the press unions at the time. But despite the slanted criticism of the company, it still remains the case that Granada offered what can be regarded as weak coverage to the uprisings.

⁷⁴ Peter Watson, *The Times*, 10 July 1981, p. 12.

Devil's Advocate

One effort made by Granada in the months following events in Liverpool and Manchester was via the series, *Devil's Advocate*, which was broadcast in September and October 1981. The series was presented by Gus McDonald and produced by Maxine Baker. Baker was a talented director and producer, who had cut her teeth making social and political documentaries for television companies such as Tynes Tees, Thames Television and the BBC and was heavily involved in the 'Troops Out Movement', calling for the withdrawal of British military in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.⁷⁵ The series featured 100 young people responding to questions from MacDonald, chiefly about their experiences of unemployment and policing. MacDonald claimed the series had been conceived in Warrington when he had witnessed hysteria over unfounded claims that an invasion of 'violent youths' were about to encroach upon the town following disturbances in Toxteth/Liverpool 8.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Maxine Baker, 'Lessons for life — some of the things I have learnt about making documentaries', in *Documentary in the Digital Age*, ed., by Maxine Baker, (Oxford: Focal Press, 2005) pp. 255-275

⁷⁶ Gus Macdonald, 'Anarchic Voices from the Dole Queue', *The Guardian*, 17 Oct. 1981, p. 9.

The series also claimed that the young people who appeared on it had been identified by the market research group, MORI. MORI had been asked by Granada to recruit a hundred 16-to-21-year-olds from the 'dole queues of Manchester'.⁷⁷ However, researcher for the series, Helen McMurray, recalled how most of the young people originally identified by MORI were too middle class. She recounted how the company 'had been a bit slapdash and wondered around places like Altrincham and Cheadle Hume [more affluent areas of Manchester] [...]they were sending people for us to talk to [...]but they were all middle class girls from quite well off families so we thought: this is never going to work'.⁷⁸ It was McMurray who was then tasked with finding the young people to feature on the series. She identified some of the young people via contacts in youth clubs.⁷⁹ One of the participants was the future broadcaster, Terry Christian, who had been identified via the local Catholic youth club he attended in Trafford. Christian would recall in his memoir that as 'a staunch socialist', his political beliefs had been influential in getting him on the programme.⁸⁰ Christian warmly recalled his encounter with the series' producer Maxine

⁷⁷ Gus Macdonald, 'Anarchic Voices from the Dole Queue', p. 9.

⁷⁸ Isabel Taube interview with Helen McMurray, Manchester, 12 February 2019.

⁷⁹ Isabel Taube interview with Helen McMurray, Manchester, 12 February 2019.

⁸⁰ Terry Christian, *My Word*, (London: Orion), p. 43.

Baker: 'Maxine was really nice and not the slightest bit patronising...asking us about our opinions on sexism, racism, the riots, nuclear weapons, the class system, everything'.⁸¹

Christian, who had grown up less than a quarter of a mile from where the uprisings had taken place, in Moss Side, cited aggravation towards young people from the police as the main cause of violence.⁸² In an article on the series, Gus McDonald would comment that the response from the young people was 'overshadowed perhaps by Moss Side and Chief Constable Anderton'.⁸³ Manchester's Chief Constable, James Anderton, who had been appointed to the role in 1975 had refused to co-operate with the formal inquiry into the disturbances initiated by the Greater Manchester Police Authority (GMPA).⁸⁴ Nicknamed 'God's copper' (he claimed, 'to speak with God') Anderton was abhorrently homophobic

⁸¹ Terry Christian, *My Word*, p. 43.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gus Macdonald, 'Anarchic Voices from the Dole Queue', p. 9.

⁸⁴ Kath Fry, Karen Cropper, 'Police Monitoring', *Manchester 1984*, <https://manchester1984.uk/chapters/section-2/chapter-7/> [accessed May 2024]

(he had described people with HIV/AIDS as ‘swirling in a cesspit of their own making’) and following the uprisings, had described them as ‘anarchy’ and ‘lunacy’.⁸⁵

Devil’s Advocate claimed to present a group of young people which reflected ‘all sections of the community and all parts of Greater Manchester,’ yet of the hundred young people featured on it, only twelve of the young people were of South Asian, African and Caribbean heritage.⁸⁶ But as Christian’s memory of producer Maxine Baker attests, it marked an effort by Granada to listen to the experiences of young people in the city, especially in relation to policing, and to hear their experiences – albeit in a limited way - of politics, ‘race’, and class.

Wallen Matthie’s memories of 1981

It was after the uprisings that Wallen Matthie was contacted by Granada. He recalls how, while working at the BBC, ‘Moss Side was seen as this alien place’. Matthie’s words

⁸⁵ Guest Blog, ‘Anarchists, agitators, and looters’: Why Media Coverage Matters’, Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Archive, <https://www.racearchive.org.uk/anarchists-agitators-and-looters-why-media-coverage-matters/> [accessed May 2024]

⁸⁶ ‘Youth Speaks Out’, *Manchester Evening News*, 5th September 1981. p. 8

evoke those of the Moss Side Defence Committee at the time, especially how they would describe the way the area was treated by police in the 1970s and 1980s: ‘as if it were a dangerous, alien colony in an otherwise wholesome society’.⁸⁷

As part of his role as employment officer for MCCR, and preceding the uprisings, Matthie had been in touch with Granada about the lack of Black representation at the company but had had no response. After the uprisings, he was contacted by Rob Caird, head of regional news at Granada for a face-to-face meeting. At this meeting, Caird asked him how Granada could improve as a company. Matthie described to me how he was later recruited by Granada:

I was contacted by Rob Caird after that meeting and after the riots had taken place: would I consider joining them? I’d never thought about [it]..Granada’s never been on my radar. I need to have a think about it, and I said, well [...] what’s the process? And well they said, it’s a standard process, you have to be interviewed and if we like what we see and if you like what you see, there will be two interviews etc [...] then we can take it from there.

⁸⁷ Moss Side Defence Committee, *Hytner Myths*, p. 5, quoted in Simon Peplow, ‘Policing Liverpool and Manchester, July 1981’, *Race and Riots in Thatcher’s Britain*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), p. 58

So, I thought about it, and I thought, well I've got nothing to lose. I had been at MCCR by this stage for almost four years. And I thought, well, yeah, I'll go for an interview. So, I went for an interview with them. And I remember there were four people on the panel. And they were asking me what I thought about their programmes [...] particularly their local programmes and I thought their local programmes certainly did not reflect Manchester as a city or indeed the North West and what was going on in regard to equality and diversity.

I asked him whether Granada acknowledged this in the interview:

Yes, they did. That was part of the reason that they wanted me on board. But they knew at the time that it looked bad. And certainly, when I joined Granada and just looked at the stats – it was bad. I recall at the time there were 800 staff at [the] Manchester offices and there were maybe thirty/forty [staff] in our Liverpool offices.

When I'm talking about 'staff' I'm talking about you name it, cleaners, secretaries, technical [...] you name it. Forty in Liverpool, who were broadcasting outside of Exchange Flags at the time which is just behind Liverpool town hall. Like I said, we had offices in Golden Square and obviously Quay Street in Manchester. And in Manchester out of the 800 staff that they had there, there were eight Black people including myself and that was 1981/1982 [...] They had a secretary there, they had one guy who worked [...] as a stagehand. There was one guy – Oral Ottey —

Charles would have mentioned him, he was a film editor. There was Charles, there was myself [...] there were eight people altogether. On the production side there was myself and Charles.

External Pressure: Changing the media in the 1980s

The 1980s were a contradictory, frustrating period for progress towards 'equal opportunities' in television. On the one hand, there was a greater awareness that more effort was needed to make television more 'accessible' yet there were frustrations with the slow rate of institutional change. These included criticism of the internal disputes among activists seeking that change. Charles Lauder recalls his disenchantment at a national meeting of the technicians' union held at the Trades Union Congress HQ in London:

I recall vividly being in a room where of the 45 minutes we'd gone 15 minutes in where the discussion was a wrangling whether someone who wasn't 'Black', as in skin colour, belonged in the section that was being called the 'Black' section, what about people of Asian descent, Chinese [heritage]. I was disgusted because at that time I was very much part of a movement or engaged with a movement where 'Black' was a political umbrella term for all who were non-white, and I just thought: we're in this union who is itself reluctant to afford this grouping a discreet

voice. And we are spending our time with this factional game about title and name and label. And so [...] I left at lunchtime, got back on the train and went back to Manchester.

However, as Charles later explained to me: 'This was not an abandonment of union involvement. Later, I was elected joint representative of the producers' and directors' section of the technicians' union and was a designated speaker for the ACTT Black Section at the conference in 1991 when ACTT merged with BETA [Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance] to become BECTU.'

Despite Lauder's own frustrations with internecine squabbling over different interests, some external pressure groups had success in forcing change within the media in the early 1980s. One of the most important pressure groups formed during this decade was the Black Media Workers Association (BMWA), which was specifically preoccupied with collecting statistical data. The group had initially formed in 1980 on an 'informal basis' to challenge the mainstream media in relation to its employment practices and depictions of Black communities. Members included figures such as 'Mike Phillips, Julian Henriques, Diane Abbot, Parminder Vir and Belkis Belgani'.⁸⁸ Officially founded in February 1981, the BWMA's inaugural meeting was attended by over 100 workers

⁸⁸ Malik, *Representing Black Britain*, pp. 59–60.

employed as freelancers for mainstream and independent media.⁸⁹ Introducing training schemes was key to its strategy. As Lionel Morrison, a member of the group, commented, it 'vigorously pushed for an equal deal in training and employment opportunities for Black workers in the mainstream press and broadcasting'.⁹⁰

One of the BMWA's earliest newsletters announced the creation of a register, the main aim of which, it explained, 'is to help print and broadcasting companies locate trained Black personnel. But it also draws attention to a number of problems in training and recruitment faced by Black media-workers'.⁹¹ Research for the register was conducted by broadcaster Marina Salandy-Brown and funded by the Greater London Council, with plans to 'update the register every year'.⁹² This research was vital in underscoring the absence of figures from 'ethnic minority backgrounds' across the media. The 1982 research 'identified 684 people working in all mainstream newspapers and broadcasting, representing dismally 0.07 percent of the total British media workforce of approximately

⁸⁹ Lionel Morrison, *A Century of Black Journalism in Britain: A Kaleidoscopic View of Race and the Media (1893–2003)* (London: Trubay, 2007), p. 57.

⁹⁰ Morrison, *A Century of Black Journalism in Britain*, p. 57.

⁹¹ 'Register', *Black Media Workers Association Newsletter*, 1/3 (June 1983).

⁹² 'Register'.

40,000'. In British television, the register identified thirty-five people of African and Caribbean heritage out of the entire television workforce.⁹³

That same year, Sue Woodford-Hollick moved from Granada to become Channel 4's 'Founding Commissioning for Multicultural Programmes' and the channel 'became the first mainstream television channel to institute equal opportunities policies in its programming'.⁹⁴ In an interview at the time, Woodford-Hollick stated that she felt more still needed to be done and that instead of getting better after her speech in Edinburgh in 1978, 'everything has got marginally worse'.⁹⁵ She advocated more points of access: 'I think there has to be positive action. Just to have a few more black faces on screen is not going to change anything at all. The fundamental thing I think is to get more black people into the industry, at all levels of production including technical grades'.⁹⁶ It would take Granada another decade to openly address positive measures to redress racial inequalities arising from disadvantage as a consequence of racial discrimination.

⁹³ Morrison, *A Century of Black Journalism in Britain*, p. 57.

⁹⁴ Morrison, *A Century of Black Journalism in Britain*, p. 77.

⁹⁵ 'Tony Freeth, 'Race on TV: Switching Channel? Sue Woodford Interviewed', in *It Ain't Half Racist, Mum: Fighting Racism in the Media*, ed. Phil Cohen and Carl Gardner (London: Comedia, 1982), p. 101.

⁹⁶ Freeth, 'Race on TV', p. 95.

1980s: Charles Lauder

Charles Lauder's experiences of working for Granada at this time reflect something of a disjunction between the company's external ambition to be a forward thinking and democratic broadcaster, and the internal realities of its corporate structure. During this period, Lauder worked at the sports department at Granada. This small team was then presided over by Paul Doherty, who Lauder describes as a brusque character but also extremely supportive. Of the department, Lauder recalls: '[Doherty] ran it like he was running a football team'. One of Lauder's co-workers included the Oscar-winning director, Paul Greengrass, who recalled how Doherty 'was a larger than life [...] he was a sort of "proto-Alex Ferguson"-type figure. He had a tremendous temper, which he would deploy at all times.'⁹⁷ Lauder further recalls: 'There was a sense that the people who ran a department were masters of how that department conducted itself'.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, Lauder does recall a profoundly collegiate working environment, and a sense that, 'within Granada at that time if you had an idea, you could punt it. There was

⁹⁷ Paul Greengrass, 5 May 2020, *Granadaland: Histories and Memories of Granada TV in the North West of England, 1954–1990*, <https://www.granadaland.org/paul-greengrass> [accessed 30 May 2023].

⁹⁸ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

almost a kind of religious fervour for challenging new, different ideas’. This applied equally to the sports department:

In the Sports Department one of the things that we had as a staple was that anyone could come up with an idea. And in the discussion about that idea, there was no moratorium about where a good idea could originate. And in the discussion of the idea, the voices within the room had equal weight. So, the researcher that had just joined the team, would be respected in their view on the same level as the Head of the Department.

Lauder later qualified these remarks by explaining to me that ‘this was not an abrogation of decision-making leadership, rather a focus on reasoned argument instead of imposition by hierarchy. The caveat was Doherty’s reference to it being “a democracy till I say it’s not”, sometimes used when it was time for a decision.’

Lauder describes this period of his career as fruitful, and he was allowed to champion what were at the time thought to be marginal sports for a British audience: ‘I made a brief abortive attempt at getting basketball on a television screen in this country which was my initiative’. He was also given significant responsibilities to make decisions about programme content and presentation within the sports department as a matter of routine:

I was officially a researcher for a long period of that time. What happened was that as the department grew, more and more situations would arise where I would

effectively deputise for the Head of Sport [...] including going to network sports meetings when he couldn't make it. And that time he had other interests outside of Granada that meant that he would travel to European football matches, for example midweek, whilst we were making decisions about what would go into the programme. So European football games were played on a Wednesday, usually. Our programme went out on a Friday. We would usually do filming sometimes on Wednesday afternoon, primarily it was all day Thursday. So, if he was in Vienna on the Wednesday night he wasn't back in time. So, a lot of the decisions about what would be made in the programme would be devolved to me and for a long time whilst still technically a researcher at Granada, I was de facto deputy Head of Sport.

However, while there were opportunities for independence, these did not translate necessarily into opportunities for more senior roles within the company. Lauder describes his frustrations at the way his request for better recognition was resisted by senior management outside the department. Indeed, he applied for the role of 'producer' three times before he was made 'sports producer':

There were other people who had come along who did nothing like as much as I had and were appointed as producers. And I recall sitting in the third interview and starting it by saying before we begin my interview, it is important that you are made aware that the department needs a producer. You can either appoint me or not. But I will not continue to do the work of a producer which is what I am doing now

without being made a producer. If you do not appoint me, you will need to appoint a producer [pause] and there was some comment made about whether I was holding a gun to their heads and was I somehow determining whether it was my call as to whether I was a producer. And I repeated that I wasn't suggesting that. It was entirely up to them to determine whether they would give me the post, however there was no question that the department needed one.

The result [pause] sorry, I just went back to then. The result was that they did something which had never been done in the organisation before. They appointed me as a 'Sports Producer'. At that time in Granada being a producer was a *role*. And the organisation – similar to being a director – the organisation reserved the right to determine where you carried out that role, with the exception of Drama. So, once you were a producer you could be assigned to be the producer on Show X Show A, Show G whatever and for the first time they *specified*. And to this day I am entirely confident that the reasoning behind that was that they did not wish to give me the role.

The title 'sports producer' was a specious and placatory job title designed to give the appearance of status and advancement; it was also a cosmetic gesture that Lauder experienced as racist. This was demonstrated, when as Lauder explicated: 'fairly shortly

afterwards, when it suited another agenda, it was readily agreed to drop the *sport* qualifier'.⁹⁹

1987–1994: The creation of the Positive Action Bursary and Training Initiatives

By the late 1980s, there was an increasing awareness of the structural nature of underrepresentation and discrimination in many industries, including the main television broadcasters. Lauder remembers the 'huge amount of nepotism' at the time and explained to me how recruitment seemed to operate at Granada: 'The son of such and such a body ends up being director and they get to make programme X, the cousin of so and so is invited on placement to begin with, and then they get a job. It's no different from what's happening in the industry even today'.¹⁰⁰

Channel 4 is often remembered as playing a significant role in 'moving the dial', although, as Sarita Malik has observed, its 'core objectives, like the founding principles of UK public service broadcasting, were not based exclusively on market share but on providing programmes that large sections of the public often did not really want to

⁹⁹ Charles Lauder, comment on this chapter, 14 December 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Lauder, interviewed by Isabel Taube.

watch'. This allowed the company, in contrast to the BBC, to address the issue of 'diversity' with 'something edgy, modern, fluid and decentred'.¹⁰¹

However, the freedom provided by Chanel 4's funding model was not shared by other independent broadcasters where commercial considerations, as Charles Lauder has observed, were an often used but rarely challenged excuse for not engaging with positive action schemes.

One person in senior management at Granada who was receptive to the idea of positive action was Tony Brill, who had a shifting role at the company and was by 1987 its general manager. He was described as the company's 'finance director' in an article from 1988, and in 1989 he became director of Granada facilities.¹⁰² He was described as having a 'hands on approach' to management and was also involved in the ITV sub-committee on industrial relations.¹⁰³ He was sympathetic to the issue of positive action when the subject was raised with him by Charles Lauder in 1987 after taking up his role as finance director.

¹⁰¹ Sarita Malik, 'Keeping it Real: The Politics of Channel 4's Multiculturalism, Mainstreaming and Mandates', *Screen*, 49/3 (2008), pp. 343–353.

¹⁰² 'News: Granada Facilities Team Named'. 1989. *Broadcast (Archive: 1973–2000)*, p. 4.

¹⁰³ 'News: Granada Facilities Team Named'.

Following Brill's involvement, Granada decided initially to set up a Positive Action Bursary Initiative requiring minimal administration resources: 'a few thousand pounds to a very small number of people – a couple of people at a couple of universities.' Brill directed Lauder to Douglas Hall, then Head of Personnel, to develop the project. This entailed the two of them having sessions with the relevant admissions and head of faculty at Salford University and University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) to work out the particulars of the bursary. (The latter was Lauder's *alma mater*, previously Preston Polytechnic.)

Wallen Matthie recalls of this period that 'Granada had brought in a new woman called Felicity Bridgewater who became head of training and development for the organisation'. Bridgewater was also key in assisting with setting up the bursary. As Matthie explains: 'One key aspect of the positive actions scheme was that there needed to be a bursary, and Bridgewater was part of facilitating this'. As part of the Positive Action Bursary, Lauder recalls, applicants would 'get support from the company, direct support, not a loan'.

The bursary was designed to fund postgraduate students on broadcast journalism courses (there would be a 'no qualifications required' policy for the later training scheme) and there was no stipulation regarding their home addresses (also unlike the later training scheme). These were students whose application to the institutions was already successful, so the funding of course materials, subsistence, travel and so on was already taken care of without the need for additional financial input from Granada.

Lauder had some further limited administrative duties, including drafting the bursary application materials and liaising with the institutions regarding processing the applications of the candidates. His role also included sitting on the interview panel:

I sat on all of the interviews because one of the things that I said: 'First I'm more likely to understand what's going on in the head of the person who's sitting on the other side of the room than you are. Secondly, I already know how debilitating it is for a Black person to walk into an interview where everybody on the other side of the desk doesn't look like them. You start from a position that is already insecure.'

It was made clear that while candidates could apply for posts at the company, a successful application onto the bursary scheme did not ensure employment at Granada. Lauder recalls that this was a distinct difference from the subsequent training scheme where some form of placement/job experience was part of the offer. He also recalls there were only two iterations of the initiative.

By the early 1990s some public institutions in Manchester were more proactive about their statutory right to address racial inequality through positive action. In the North West in 1992, the *Manchester Evening News* announced that the town council was to run a Positive Action Scheme. Matthie recalls this period as follows: 'Especially in the early 1990s there was a recognition that Granada had fallen way behind in terms of diversity, while the BBC were saying the right things, not necessarily doing the rights things, but saying the right things'. While he had noticed that there had been a shift from when he

first started working for the company and a willingness to try and change the recruitment culture, there was an occasional reticence too. As Matthie described: 'It's not that they didn't want to do the right thing, I think they did want to do the right thing. But it was something that they weren't familiar with and because they weren't familiar with it, it became a huge challenge for them.'

In the early 1990s, therefore, Lauder and Wallen Matthie began to have discussions about extending the Bursary Initiative to what Lauder describes as 'a more developmental provision, which would look at attracting a wider pool to more of the production roles'.

Granada management approved their proposals, and in 1992 an article appeared in the *Manchester Evening News* announcing the launch of a new initiative with details of the new scheme:

Granada Positive Action Training Scheme in Media Production – Manchester

Applications are invited for a 20-week media production training scheme for members of ethnic minorities – Black, Asian, Afro-Caribbean and Chinese. Starting in August, the course will give thorough grounding in Television, Radio and Magazine production. The course is open to men and women of all ages. While formal qualifications are not necessary, good communication skills and genuine interest in the media are essential. Applicants must live in Manchester and be unemployed for 6 months or more at the time of starting the course. Trainees will

receive an Adult Allowance and, where appropriate, help with childcare costs. The scheme is run by Community Service Volunteers with support from Granada television, Manchester Training and Enterprise Council and European Social Fund, and comes under section 37 of the Race Relations Act.¹⁰⁴

The article included a reference to the company's commitment to apply £20,000 funding to train sixteen people in television production. The newspaper spokesperson for the scheme added: 'People from ethnic minorities are severely under-represented in the media. The television industry currently recruits less than 2 percent of its workforce from ethnic minorities.'¹⁰⁵

Charles Lauder recalls that his involvement with the scheme was thereafter limited to providing some input in the development of the scheme curriculum and making guest appearances as speaker for a few of the sessions relating to producer and director roles.

The paucity of historical material about the Positive Action Scheme is indicative of wider problems in relation to sourcing material – especially difficulties in accessing the Granada archive – and the way so much material on commercial television was

¹⁰⁴ *The Advertiser*, 4 June 1992, p. 56; Carl Palmer, 'Search for the Media Moguls of Tomorrow', *Manchester Evening News*, 2 July 1992.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

dispersed following shifts in management. In considering the legacies of the course, Lauder put me in touch with Colin Stone, alumnus of the first cohort of the training course and the following section traces his experiences of being on the Positive Action Scheme and then working for Granada and later at the BBC in Manchester.

1990s: Colin Stone

Colin Stone grew up in Hulme, the adjacent district to Manchester City Centre, in the 1980s. When I asked if he'd been aware of Granada before he worked there, he replied: 'Of course, yeah [...] the way you've got to see Hulme, although poor it was very music and arts focused – it had that vibe around it, so we grew up around musicians, artists, filmmakers, it was just in the DNA of the place'.¹⁰⁶ Hulme was then home to the largest housing estate in Europe, built in 1972, which had fallen into dilapidation by the late 1980s. Manchester City Council stopped charging rents on the flats and many artists and musicians moved into them; Hulme became a fulcrum for creativity in the city.¹⁰⁷ Stone recalls how:

¹⁰⁶ Colin Stone, interviewed by Isabel Taube, Zoom, 20 November 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Dylan Wray, "It was like Blade Runner meets Berlin rave": The Manchester Sink Estate with the UK's Wildest Nightclub', *Guardian*, 27 September 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/sep/27/it-was-like-blade-runner-meets-berlin->

Going for a career in television didn't feel so ridiculous, because I grew up walking past the BBC, and walking past the Granada building, and walking past actors from *Coronation Street* [...] it was tangible, and if I lived in a different part of Manchester and it didn't have those touchstones and references [...] I wouldn't have the lunacy of thinking I could go and do that.

Stone studied electronic engineering at Manchester Metropolitan University. However, he found himself being increasingly drawn to the arts. As he explained to me, there came a turning point during his studies:

My brother is a designer, he got into the arts, and we sort of had very similar interests and points of view and then basically, I had a 'road to Damascus' enlightenment moment. I saw the movie *Do the Right Thing* by Spike Lee and I went to see it two more times within days. It kind of changed everything for me. I know it sounds weird, but it did. [A] lightbulb went on and I said: 'I want to do that'.

Following this moment, Stone recalls:

I couldn't shake this thing. So, I wanted to [...] create something, I found there was a local programme taking place which was being run by someone called Tony

rave-the-manchester-sink-estate-with-the-uks-wildest-nightclub [accessed 30 November 2023].

Reeves, which was a local evening video night class. Tony Reeves taught camera work and some else taught editing. And I just wanted, rather than having a dream of doing this, I just wanted to know a bit more about it, to know whether it was something that I really wanted to do. So, whilst looking for work, as an engineer, I was going to night classes and I got more and more involved. I got directly involved with the organisation and behind the scenes, working with Tony and others, by a kind of supplementary course for local people who wanted to be filmmakers [...]

And then Tony said to me, 'Colin I've heard about this positive action course, I think it'd be really good for you, do you want to go and try and do it.'

Stone was successful in his application to the Granada course: 'The lead person was somebody called Brian Kelly. He was from Ireland. Brian led the TV/film things'. In our interview, he paid tribute to the contribution made by Wallen Matthie and Charles Lauder. He recalled how they 'used to come in, say hello, maybe give lectures and talk, you might see them now and again, but you weren't quite sure what their relationship was with the programme [...] I only found out more as time went on about what they were doing, and it was them who were driving it'.

Stone undoubtedly went into the scheme with the highest of expectations, but he has mixed feelings about the quality of the training. Not everyone who came to speak to the trainees made a strong impression: 'You had these people come and see us now and then, people would come and see us and talk about working in TV and what not. They were relatively useless to be honest.' He felt it was more of a 'branding' exercise for

Granada TV and that the course was peripheral rather than a central project for the company itself: ‘I was expecting to be in the Granada Building’.

In 1994 he was hired by Granada, where he would later become a director and producer, leaving the company in 2003. In the initial period he was largely working in the newsroom, but he also did placements in other departments. He describes this early period at Granada as ‘a proper baptism of fire, which I just about survived’. He attributes his survival to having ‘clarity’ about wanting ‘to direct’ in a department where ‘there was a certain level of democracy in the way it works. People didn’t really care where you came from, they cared if you could do the job.’ Nevertheless, there was a sense that being a graduate of the scheme was a mixed blessing: ‘I became increasingly aware of two things, being seen as trainee from a Positive Action course and some people seeing it as a positive thing, and some people thinking at the back of their minds “what the fuck are you doing here?”’

The *Guardian* journalist Gary Younge was also the recipient of a Bursary Scheme in the early 1990s, via the Scott Trust (who own the *Guardian*). He wrote that the award emerged ‘in response to the uprisings among Black youth in the 1980s [...] Black people were always in the news but rarely in the newsrooms’.¹⁰⁸ For Younge, the newspaper’s bursary scheme was vital in setting him on the path to a career in journalism: ‘Without it,

¹⁰⁸ Gary Younge, *Dispatches from the Diaspora* (London: Faber, 2022), p. 240.

I would have chosen another profession’. However, Younge described the way in which positive action can be used to devalue achievement, something he himself witnessed while working as one of the few Black journalists at the *Guardian*: ‘I had some conversations with white colleagues and was shocked by what they had to say about their Black colleagues. Many assumed that they were all affirmative action hires.’¹⁰⁹

Stone clearly admired Charles Lauder and Wallen Matthie, describing both men as quite ‘regal’. He attributed this to their different journeys into working for Granada: ‘You’ve got to have that. I suspect that they needed to have that to survive in that environment because, I suspect, it wasn’t necessarily that easy to get on and be from a Black background’. Stone would later work for the BBC, where he experienced a sense of isolation: ‘I became more acutely aware of my race at the BBC. I cannot think of another Black person. There wasn’t a Wallen or Charles Lauder. I didn’t see any Black editors [...]’.

¹⁰⁹ Gary Younge, ‘A Black Journalist at the Guardian’, *Representology Journal* 2, <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/media/research/sir-lenny-henry-centre-for-media-diversity/representology-journal/representology-journal-vol-2/a-black-journalist-at-the-guardian> [accessed 15 December 2023].

He contrasted this isolation with his time at Granada, where he enjoyed a warmer welcome:

The people were very familiar, being mostly Northern, mainly a bit more like middle class, upper middle-class people, but the culture was completely different. It was a completely different mindset [...] the mindset [...] is sink or swim and if you're good enough [...] they [Granada] will facilitate you to go and express yourself. The BBC was, I felt, 'stay in your lane', you're here to do this particular job, and you should be grateful to work for the BBC.

As is evident from this recollection, and from Charles Lauder's memories of his time at the company, Granada could be equally guilty of deploying an informal hiring system based on class privilege and nepotism. Here though at least, in a much smaller organisation, there was a collegiate atmosphere fostering independent and original production values. Wallen Matthie also speaks enthusiastically about these qualities at Granada: 'Once you were being productive in terms of your role within the company, they would allow you to do all sorts of stuff [...] to be fair to *Granada* they were extremely good at that. Allowing people to do things.'

Stone retains a strong sense of the company's legacy not just for his own life but also collectively: 'Most people who worked for Granada, you might have heard this, have a

very strong affection for Granada and I do as well. I have an affection for Hulme, and I have an affection for Granada, as an organisation.’¹¹⁰

Conclusion

The detailed contextualised recollections of former employees featured in this chapter are not provided though merely as a subset of the Granada ‘story’. Each interviewee in their own way reflects a richly individuated and complex engagement with the evolving wider political and cultural debates of the time about how to combat racism, inequality and underrepresentation. A company like Granada, with a reputation for ‘left leaning’ and ‘informed’ producers, directors and production staff, might easily be persuaded that its output during this period expressed the best egalitarian principles and reflected an inward corporate culture of ‘equal opportunity’.

Reflecting on the legacies of CARM’s *It Ain’t Half Racist* for an event at the Stuart Hall Foundation in 2019, Sue Woodford-Hollick told the audience: ‘Watching this film forty years on, I really understand why we were so angry in those days. It was as bad as you just saw, it was actually worse.’¹¹¹ She was also reminded during her speech of the

¹¹⁰ Colin Stone, interviewed Isabel Taube.

¹¹¹ London Short Film Festival, ‘It (Still) Ain’t Half Racist Mum!’, ICA London, 17 January 2019, sound recording.

commitment she had made at the advent of Channel 4 in the early 80s for more people from African, Caribbean and Asian heritage to be involved in all aspects of production through training: 'Now you've reminded me of that quote, you could use that quote now – it couldn't be more relevant than it is today', but as far as she could see, 'the training is (still) not as it should be to change the landscape dramatically'. For many Black and Asian practitioners, the conspicuous attention paid to their 'race' leading to a sense of intense visibility, created the 'burden of representation' – a real concern that any converse underachievement will have an adverse impact on their community. All of the people featured in this chapter who worked at Granada seemed to have experienced that 'burden' and concluded that positive initiatives would lead to meaningful change.

Conclusion

Granada's reputation as a dynamic, progressive cultural influence is undeniable. The company forged a powerful identity around Manchester and the North West. Granada's output was respected, admired and noted for encouraging regional talent. The company also expressed many of the contradictions of the Post-war period. It voiced the excitement and experimentation of cultural change but manifested older attitudes around gender, 'race' and sexuality, which were not substantially challenged in British society until the late-1960s and which, even then, did not disappear. It was a great time to be young in Granada's heyday and iconic programmes such as *World in Action* (1963) attracted young people keen to make their mark in the male-dominated environment of television current affairs and share the kudos of working for a cutting-edge series. Yet, if Granada was perceived as a heady, glamorous working environment, a broader range of employees also often experienced it as more equivocal. This thesis has sought to draw out some of the contradictions of working in a company where a sense of superiority to other broadcasters was strong and where programme-makers saw themselves as expressing the cultural zeitgeist, albeit through what would subsequently come to be seen as a narrowly defined radicalism.

From the outset, Granada aimed to acquire a reputation for serious programming that connected with major issues of the day. The *Youth* series broadcast between 1956 and 1959, stood apart from the more leisure-focused youth programmes launched by the

BBC in the same period, such as *Six-Five Special* (1957) and *Juke Box Jury* (1959). Indeed, Chapter 2 argued that the *Youth* series was indicative of Granada's early efforts to build its reputation as a serious broadcaster and expressed the company's intention to carve out an identity separate from the BBC as an 'anti-establishment' broadcaster. The series aimed to reflect a new kind of innovative current affairs programming – as well as announcing a new kind of broadcaster – but was initiated under the more patrician, closely monitored landscape of 1950s broadcasting, whereby the company's ambition to create meaningful and distinctive television was tempered by commercial and political considerations. The *Youth* series picked up on the growing attention being paid to youth as a distinctive social identity in the mid- to late 1950s, but it was also a medium through which to develop staff expertise and a vehicle through which Granada could try out a novel format to explore wider 'controversial' issues of the period. An important part of the company's early programming, it was seen by insiders as making a critical contribution to shaping Granada's 'brand'. The series was hugely popular with reviewers, although its significance in understanding Granada's evolution as a progressive and radical broadcaster has received little academic attention. This contrasts with the company's reputation for investigative journalism, which quickly grew through the likes of *Searchlight* (1959–1960) and *World in Action* (1963–1998). The *Youth* series was a neglected but important part of the company's early history of producing challenging political and social issues programming in a more restrictive broadcasting environment. It suggests how Granada's ambition in its very early days was to push at societal and cultural boundaries, in this case presenting a traditional idea of 'youth' through its choice

of Grammar School participants to ‘show off’ young people as serious-minded and thoughtful, in contrast to the negative, rebellious youth images which newspapers were promoting in the same period. The series’ interest in young people’s future was also expressed in *Seven Up* (1964), which interviewed seven-year-old children about their hopes for the future in what was originally a one-off film to reveal the persistence of class divisions in the revolutionary 1960s. *Seven Up* went on to chart the children’s lives at seven-year intervals until 2019, although the lack of diversity in the original programme became increasingly apparent over subsequent decades and was something its director, Michael Apted, would come to express regret about.

Close examination of the history of the *Youth* series in Chapter 2 also provided an opportunity to nuance understanding of Sidney Bernstein’s personal involvement with the content of political programming and the complex tensions between his own avowed socialist principles and his wider commercial instincts. Additionally, it highlighted the influence of Elaine Grand, whose contribution to the development of the company’s early reputation has been overlooked.

Granada’s political and cultural ambitions were not only expressed through its programming but also through its art collection, which until now has attracted no extensive academic attention, despite its centrality in the working lives of the company’s employees and significance in embodying and defining Granada’s reputation for ‘difference’ as an employer and broadcaster. Chapter 2 used the collection as a lens through which to examine the company’s evolution over several decades and to

contextualise Granada's engagement in new ways. This chapter was an attempt in many ways to 'rehang' the art collection and demonstrate how a detailed history of it provides a more complex visual representation of the company's identity, reframing an understanding of the issues that arise when considering Granada's evolution and legacy. This 'art chapter', by providing a detailed analysis of specific notable pictures and sculptures in the collection, aimed to show how it is possible to reach a more complete and richer understanding of the international modernist influences on the company and its early ambitions to align itself with popular culture and new artistic movements. This method enabled a more detailed look at Granada's desire to change the way art was understood and viewed. Chapter 2 charted how the make-up and character of the collection shifted as Granada became more commercially successful in the 1960s and how changes in managerial culture were reflected in the selection of artworks. The chapter provided new analysis of the way this unique and abundant collection influenced Granada's employees by examining their complex range of not always positive responses. These responses to art in a corporate context reflect a wider ambivalence about the role of art in employment settings and extend knowledge in this area of academic study where there has been a greater emphasis on the impact of artwork in public spaces.

An important aim was to consider aspects of Granada's progressive and seemingly democratic corporate philosophy, which intended initially to rebalance class and regional inequalities, and to explore how this eventually came to reflect the company's wider commercial and national identity. In doing so, the chapter once again sought to

highlight the complex, often improvisational and extemporaneous way Granada operated. Art was also another lens through which to examine how Sidney Bernstein engaged with Granada's identity, arguing for a more refined understanding of how others within the company, including Sir Gerald Barry and John Berger, contributed in a strategic manner to the company's identity as a cultural entity, over and above its broadcasting reputation.

The second half of the thesis 'turned inward' so to speak, to explore how the fault lines in Granada's progressive and democratic ethos affected employees of African and Caribbean heritage and female employees, and how they negotiated their careers and appearance in Granada's ambivalent working environment.

There has been little academic study of women at Granada and a gender bias has hitherto privileged the perspective of male employees in histories of the company. Chapter 3's exploration of 'women's work' consequently included a lengthy examination of the experiences of secretarial workers and 'women directors' to demonstrate how all women in the company experienced the gendered structural inequalities of that period. While some academic work has tended to describe secretarial workers as 'invisible', this chapter followed the work of Gillian Murray in highlighting their heightened visibility in a voguish broadcasting company such as Granada. The chapter explored how this visibility translated into something that was at once both restrictive and freeing, seeking to chart how changing societal and corporate expectations around the intersecting issues of dress, glamour and femininity provide a way to consider the company's own fractured

relationship with its self-professed democratic, radical reputation. Likewise, examining the history of ‘women directors’ who worked on *World in Action* enabled a closer examination of Granada’s production culture to demonstrate how even in senior roles, making notable contributions to the series’ reputation, similar issues of dress and appearance also required challenging negotiation and navigation.

The thesis’s final chapter on the establishment and implementation of the Positive Action Bursary and Training Initiatives between 1987 and 1994 aimed to consider Granada in relation to ‘race’. This topic has received no academic attention, leading to an underappreciation of Black British actors, directors and producers in later celebrations commemorating the company’s history. Chapter 4 examined the causes for this deficit, notwithstanding Granada’s persisting reputation as a ‘progressive’ broadcaster, attributable in part to the company’s ‘sink or swim’ approach described by interviewees and which appears to have been an unwritten company motto – an ad hoc attitude that leaves little room for introspection. While this in some ways could seem like an advantageous opportunity, a structural understanding of inequality and underrepresentation was arguably never embedded in Granada’s corporate culture, which meant that there was a continual failure to redress direct and indirect racism. Granada’s reputation for ‘pioneering programming’ was class-based and it took a long time for a flagship programme such as *Coronation Street* to recognise the reality of ‘race’ and the experiences of people from racially minoritised communities in the region.

As explained in the Introduction, access to the ITV archives was problematic and the Granada records there were fragmentary and incomplete, necessitating the use of archival material from other sources, including catalogues, archives and my own oral history interviews. Future researchers on this topic should be more fortunate, with the announcement that the Granada Archive will soon be accessible via the John Rylands Library, as part of the University of Manchester's British Pop Archive (BPA). There are, however, some concerns. The launch for the BPA was reviewed critically in the *Guardian* for the archive's absence of Black history. Journalist Lanre Bakare described how a 'photograph taken of all those attending showed an almost exclusively white crowd' and noted the absence of the city's Black artists as part of the BPA archive.¹¹² The archivist Mat Bancroft has acknowledged this absence and criticism and is currently working to correct it. As he explained: 'Our focus is very much on the BPA being as diverse and a total representation of UK pop culture as possible and much is going on behind the scenes to make that the case – and this will become more evident during 2024'.¹¹³ His

¹¹² Lanre Bakare, 'The Struggle for a Black History of Manchester', *Guardian*, 31 March 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2023/mar/31/a-tale-of-two-cities-the-struggle-for-a-black-history-of-manchester> [accessed 17 December 2023].

¹¹³ Mat Bancroft, email to Isabel Taube, 1 September 2023.

reply is encouraging and is hopefully a promising moment for the Granada archive as well.

This thesis has questioned many assumptions made about Granada in previous works, reframing perceptions of the company as radical and seeking to draw out the complexities of Granada's corporate identity and institutional assumptions which were at variance with an ostensibly progressive and democratic world view, especially in relation to gender and 'race'. It has argued for a new approach to how Granada has previously been contextualised and, in so doing, has aimed to create a body of work that is wide ranging in scope and, as Helen Wheatley has encouraged, incorporates a range of approaches to draw out unexplored aspects of Granada's history and influence. Its array of sources and materials has given new insights into Granada's complex and ambivalent corporate culture.



Figure 17. Granada Television Building (no date given) Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives

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