

From Documentary Film to Television Documentaries: John Grierson and *This Wonderful World*

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Abstract:

In October 1957, John Grierson, the founder of the British documentary film movement, made the transition to a new medium: television. His series for STV, *This Wonderful World*, which ran in its original form until August 1965, introduced audiences to international documentary in an 'inter-generic' magazine format and was among the most popular broadcasts of the fledgling station, which was formed in August 1957 following the introduction of Independent Television (ITV) in 1954. This article analyses how cinematic documentarists made the transition to television and what their experiences reveal of the documentary's place in British society in the 1950s and 1960s. It argues that Grierson's series stood at the centre of debates over 'prestige' programming and 'cultural uplift', as well as over fears of the allegedly negative influence of ITV on the mass audience, and shows how British television negotiated an increasingly global media and the emergence of the modern television personality. It concludes with an examination of the legacy of early British documentary on television and demonstrates how its pioneers exploited the memory of the 1930s in order to carve out their place in the genre's history.

Keywords: documentary films; film canons; Independent Television; John Grierson; representing otherness; television personalities; *This Wonderful World*.

From the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, television developed into a pervasive form of communication that revolutionised how media were produced and consumed. Its scope, ranging from light-hearted comedies, quiz shows, drama and variety performances to news and factual programmes, was considerable, as were the opportunities it

Journal of British Cinema and Television 10.3 (2013): 498–523

DOI: 10.3366/jbctv.2013.0152

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www.euppublishing.com/jbctv

presented for both education and diversion. That television was regarded as trivial, a medium that catered to popular taste and reflected mundane everyday interests, created a desire to regulate output and to counterbalance shows thought to be superficial with more substantial, serious programmes, including documentaries.

The documentary film-makers who had come to prominence in the 1930s and during the Second World War were understandably keen to exploit the opportunities presented by the advent of television. But how effectively did they make the transition from film to television, and what do their experiences reveal about the characteristics of the new medium and its place within British society in the 1950s and 1960s?

John Grierson made the transition to television in 1957. His series, *This Wonderful World*, initially produced from Glasgow and, from December 1959, Cardiff, ran in its original form from October 1957 to August 1965 and comprised 350 episodes.¹ The series spanned the period in which television emerged from being merely a 'relay device' (Corner 1991b: 13), a means of bringing outside events and news to a wider audience, to 'a separate cultural form' with its own practices and visual conventions (Strinati 2000: 233). From the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, approaches to television were tested and adapted, and its distinctiveness—'visual immediacy, liveness and intimacy'—was identified and consolidated (Bennett 2011: 44; see also Corner 1991b: 1). These characteristics set it apart from film. This article traces how Grierson responded to television, and how the genre which he so heavily influenced, the documentary, adapted, with varying degrees of success, to its demands.

This Wonderful World was conceived following the introduction of a rival to the BBC via the Television Act 1954, which established the commercially funded Independent Television (ITV). However, it was not long before ITV prompted fears in certain quarters that it was debasing popular culture, and these fears were crystallised in the 1962 report of the Pilkington Committee, which had been formed to enquire into whether a third channel should be allotted to the BBC or ITV. The report was scathing about ITV which, its authors felt, was forced to give viewers what they wanted as opposed to what they needed, notably educational and moral 'uplift', because of the need to attract the advertisers (Corner 1995: 163; Black 2005). As John Corner notes, contemporary debates on the introduction and nature of what came to be known somewhat pejoratively as commercial television uncovered 'the stress lines, fracture points and... convergences' in British postwar culture: the notion of television's responsibility to provide 'compulsory uplift' exposed elite views of the mass audience

and an undercurrent of ‘cultural management’ or ‘taste imposition’ from above, and unleashed a challenge to Reithian principles that had dominated British broadcasting since the 1920s (1991b: 10, 1995: 163).

This Wonderful World stood at the intersection of these debates over commercial television: as the ‘prestige’ programme for Scottish Television (STV) and one of the few local productions to be networked across the UK, it attempted to uphold the public service remit imposed on commercial broadcasters by the 1954 Act while meeting popular demand, as well as negotiating the complexities of ‘exporting’ regional programmes to other areas of the UK. It also faced the challenge of creating a mode of presentation that worked within the emerging terms of the modern television personality and the increasing globalisation of the media. In short, it had to address the question of how television was best to contribute to modern society.

This was a question already very familiar to Britain’s documentarists, and particularly to Grierson, who had argued that the modern media, and specifically the documentary genre, should have a social purpose. Having been among television’s early advocates, former members of the documentary film movement, in particular Paul Rotha, contributed to debates on its social influence and how documentary should make the transition to the new medium.² This was contentious, since television came increasingly to expose the limitations of the Griersonian documentary tradition: by the 1960s, television documentary included hard-hitting reportage (such as that found in Granada’s *World in Action* strand (1963–98)) infused with the desire to challenge the establishment, confronting rather than deferring to state authority, and with a willingness to elide education and entertainment, fact and fictional reconstruction. *This Wonderful World* might thus be viewed as a last attempt by Grierson, a sharp critic of the modern media, to stem the tide, to reinforce (or even memorialise) rather than reinvent his documentary principles. At times, the series steadfastly clung to a traditional conception of the documentary form, and was steeped in nostalgia for a period of perceived social and political influence in the 1930s and throughout the Second World War. Alternatively, and in contrast to a pervasive view that the documentary film movement could not adapt to the new medium (see, for example, Curran and Seaton 1991: 171), *This Wonderful World* can be seen as a reconciliation with a changing televisual world, an initial foray into ‘infotainment’ that established an individual, intimate relationship with the viewer – the hallmark of modern broadcasting. Many episodes in the series brought together an eclectic mix of culture, sport, natural

history, politics and entertainment, interspersed with a 'personal conversation' between Grierson and the viewer. This reflected the contemporary need to navigate a path between 'serious' content and 'popular' appeal. An early episode, for example, emphasised the diversity of the series as Grierson guided audiences between a feature on land reclamation at Culbin Sands, the life cycle of the king penguin, Norman McLaren's *Boogie Doodle* (1940) with Albert Ammons on piano, before concluding with a segment on Leonardo di Vinci. *This Wonderful World*, like modern documentary production, emerged, therefore, as both a reaction against, and an integral part of, mainstream programming.³

Textual study of *This Wonderful World* is complicated by the fact that seemingly only one of the original programmes survives—that of 1 January 1960. As Helen Wheatley has recently observed: 'The archiving of early television programmes is, at best, scant and unrepresentative of what was actually shown on television in its earliest years; at worst, it is non-existent' (2007: 6; see also Ellis 2003: 280). This was because television was thought of as an ephemeral, temporary medium as compared to, for example, film. Television 'is immediate and contemporaneous, belonging to the specific day of its broadcast' (Ellis 2003: 281), and, as such, systematic recording was patchy or impractical, having a direct benefit only for repeat screenings rather than historic preservation (Jacobs 2000: 10–14). As Jason Jacobs noted, the historian of early television is obliged, therefore, to 'reconstitute' programmes from the 'shadows' (ibid.: 14). And while *This Wonderful World* falls outside Jacobs' timeframe for early television (pre-1955), the problems in studying it are similar to those faced by investigators of the earlier era.

John Ellis points to further challenges in writing the history of television, namely the problem of scale, television's 'pervasive, everyday nature', and how the historian is to capture 'the temporary meaningfulness of programmes at their initial broadcast' (2003: 280, 283). Historians should use, he suggests, the existing quantitative data and archival materials in order to 'establish the typicality and importance (or otherwise) of those isolated programmes that still exist'. While this task is aided by significant collections of BBC programming, there is a dearth of materials relating to ITV. *This Wonderful World* is fortunate in one respect: a full run of scripts and documentary material on the administration of the series survives in the Grierson Archive at the University of Stirling. By combining analyses of the written ephemera, the context of production and the surviving visual material, it is possible to understand the purpose,

nature and ‘feel’ of the programme, while bearing in mind that each episode may have been subtly different in its presentation: as Ellis notes, even when ‘series episodes . . . closely resemble each other, each one is nevertheless distinct’ (2003: 281). Surviving material makes it possible to trace how the programme made its arguments, how its style developed and how it addressed its audiences (Seaton 2004: 156), but also how it both contributed to and was the product of the broader contours of television history.

The documentarists’ engagement with ITV

The advent of television prompted lively debate within the documentary film movement. Paul Rotha, in particular, initially found himself excited at the opportunities which it presented to reinvigorate the movement following the Labour government’s refusal to place the documentary at the heart of postwar official communications strategy. He wrote to fellow film-maker Stanley Hawes in 1953 that, like film in the 1930s, television, as a public service, had the potential to perform a social, educative function. He claimed television as ‘our medium’, one that was dominated by a ‘new and infectious enthusiasm . . . reminiscent of the ’30s in documentary’, and that, as a ‘distribution outlet’, it offered unparalleled access to audiences.⁴ Documentary, he noted, ‘according to the tradition, must surely move in where the new distribution lies, and this time the hand is stacked on our side . . . It is . . . the biggest expansion of the non-theatrical field we ever envisaged.’⁵ As Rotha predicted, the television audience grew exponentially: in 1955, five million households had purchased a combined television and radio licence, by late 1960, this figure had increased to sixteen million (Corner 1991b: 4), and by 1963 it was estimated that 89 per cent of the population had access to a television set (O’Sullivan 1991: 161).

Rotha seized the opportunity to become the head of the BBC’s Documentary Department in 1953, a position already refused by both Grierson and Stuart Legg.⁶ His tenure was short-lived: he was dismissed from the BBC in 1955 and his documentary unit dismantled. Rotha was informed by his former employer that he was ‘still too “film minded”’.⁷ As Tim Boon noted, he struggled to adapt to the culture of television: its demands for increased outputs and immediacy left no room for the ‘perfectionism’ of the cinema (2008: 207; see also Boon’s contribution to this issue of the journal). Rotha had assumed that his remit was simply to produce documentaries, but Cecil McGiven, Controller of Television Programmes at the BBC, and other executives

were 'looking to define a new medium' (Boon 2008: 208). Rotha concluded that he should reluctantly follow Harry Watt and Sydney Newman into the fledgling independent television sector, despite his conviction that ITV was pitched at a 'really low level', a view that chimed with contemporary concerns over television's 'triviality'.⁸

Rotha's experience pointed to the challenges that cinematic documentarists faced on making the transition to television: they had both to master a new form of communication that was developing a unique visual identity and mode of address, and to renegotiate their relationship with the documentary form. This proved difficult for Rotha at the BBC. However, Grierson's series for STV, *This Wonderful World*, was more successful in meeting the demands of the new medium, reaching the top ten most viewed programmes in January 1960 (Sendall 1982: 343). At the height of its popularity it reached six million viewers, and by August 1960 was seen by 'one Scottish home in two and one British home in six'.⁹ By 1957, audiences for ITV were rising by 50,000 per week, suggesting that the 1954 Act had introduced a sustainable and profitable model and had successfully countered the 'Londonisation' of existing provision (O'Sullivan 2003: 32). STV, which was an independent television service for Scotland, was launched in August 1957 by the majority shareholder Roy Thompson, Chairman of Scotsman Publications Ltd, with a predicted coverage of 3.7 million viewers (Sendall 1982: 205).¹⁰

The arrival of independent or commercial television, however, was not universally welcomed. For Lord Reith, the arbiter of standards in public service broadcasting, it was 'akin to the introduction into Britain of smallpox, the Black Death and the bubonic plague' (ibid.: 208; see also Black 2005: 554–7), a view reflected in Rotha's concern that commercial television was 'committed to nothing beyond observing the normal disciplines of public behaviour and certain restrictions on what products it can advertise' and would not 'improve the minds of the public' (1956: 16–17). As Bernard Sendall notes, this opinion quickly became part of the folklore of the intelligentsia and the middle classes, and the charge against ITV was that it was 'selling the cultural pass, that it was crassly commercial, and that it was "playing down to the lowest common denominator"' (1982: 328). These perceptions were not dispelled by Thompson's proclamation that ownership of STV was 'like having a licence to print money' (quoted in O'Sullivan 2003: 33) or by other ITV executives claiming that public taste would drive commercial programming. However, such perceptions were also misleading. The Independent Television Authority (ITA), established by the 1954 Act, specified that commercial programmes 'ought to

express the coherent policy and outlook of a group of people conscious that what they have in their hands is a social responsibility, a life-charging force for the direction of which they are responsible.’¹¹ Moreover, ITV wanted to establish itself as a legitimate broadcaster capable of producing quality programming comparable to that of the BBC. This was particularly important to smaller, regional units such as STV, who ‘could not afford to invest in expensive programmes unless they were guaranteed a national showing’ (Curran and Seaton 1991: 181), that is to say, unless other regional companies could be persuaded to broadcast their programmes. *This Wonderful World* was one of the few STV productions to be regularly aired south of the border, being purchased by AR, ATV, Tyne Tees, TWW, Channel and Westward, Border, Grampian and Ulster.¹²

Not only was the series well positioned to take advantage of independent broadcasters’ desire to move beyond their own regions, it also fitted Lord Thompson’s aspirations for prestige cultural outputs by commercial broadcasters which would challenge the BBC’s dominance in ‘serious’ programming.¹³ Thompson accepted that *This Wonderful World* would not draw the biggest audience but ‘the most intelligent audience... a class audience’, impress the ITA, which was responsible for STV’s licence to broadcast,¹⁴ and counter critics’ claims that commercial providers were responsible for sustaining ‘the anti-cultural trend which is today the fashion in some circles’ (Rotha 1956: 16–17). This was particularly important following the Pilkington Report’s criticism of ITV for its ‘crass commercialism and the alleged triviality and sensationalism of its programmes’ (Gorman and McLean 2003: 133–4). Pilkington had pointed to a perceived ‘quality crisis’, judging ‘triviality’ to be ‘the natural vice of television’ (Corner 1995: 166–7). This continued the trend, noticeable from the interwar period, as Dan LeMahieu (1988: 107) has shown, of conflating mass appeal, commercialism and ‘low culture’, and of viewing audiences as indiscriminate and unintelligent (Corner 1991b: 6–7). Throughout this period, then, independent television companies competed against negative impressions of their priorities, and series such as *This Wonderful World* were seen as a means to redress the balance.

Recognised in Scotland as a serious commentator on media and education, Grierson was an ideal figure to raise the esteem and cultural cachet of STV; he confessed in a private letter that Thompson had authorised *This Wonderful World* ‘because and only because he [had] to, to keep his commission’, and boasted that he had Thompson ‘over a bloody barrel... [by] giving him and Scotland... the only

programme they think fit to bring into England'.¹⁵ In fact, while Grierson had been and continued to be critical of television as a 'trivial medium', a 'simpleton record', and resented working for commercial channels as opposed to the BBC, he could not afford to baulk at the opportunity Thompson offered: the investigation into his communist ties in Canada and the United States, his failed tenure as Head of the Central Office of Information, the Group 3 debacle and sustained illness due to alcohol abuse had all affected his reputation.¹⁶ In short, Grierson needed STV as much as they needed him.

This Wonderful World and global citizenship

This Wonderful World was thus to be an antidote to fears that commercial television would pander to popular taste rather than provide serious, informative programmes.¹⁷ Responding to the criticism made by a Glasgow minister that STV was endangering the soul of Scotland, Grierson defended his series to his audience in the programme of 3 January 1958: 'I have only one instruction from Scottish Television and that is to go as high as I like and as deep as I can take it—that, reverend Sir, is commercialised corruption's only instruction to me.'¹⁸ Few ITV programmes drew television critics' praise for high-mindedness. However, they lauded Grierson's ability to persuade people to 'look, to think and finally to feel: to resist the sludge of mediocrity in entertainment that has submerged so much individual taste'.¹⁹ Maurice Wiggin of *The Sunday Times* wrote that: 'It is here, if anywhere on television, that you are likely to encounter one quiet night without a word of warning, the burning eyes of the proud beast Truth, ambling solitary and disdainful through the jungle of the ready-made.'²⁰ Grierson aimed to raise television standards by adopting a new approach for 'a world in which you have communication from everywhere—education and inspiration from everywhere—and you can take your pick of more things than ever were offered to the working man before.'²¹ In particular, *This Wonderful World* set out to broaden audiences' cultural horizons by introducing them to global documentary film. Each programme consisted of film extracts from world cinema punctuated by an educational, and often personalised, commentary by Grierson, who invited audiences to journey with him to consider 'some of the rich and strange things, the wonderful things, the camera has seen all over the world on the many, many frontiers of observation'.²² In this way, *This Wonderful World* fitted with STV's wider publicity that promoted television as the modern day 'minstrel', telling its stories with the aid of a 'magic box'.²³

Grierson's team of researchers in Glasgow and later Cardiff, among them Olwen Vaughan, former Secretary of the British Film Institute and founder of a wartime film club frequented by members of the Crown Film Unit (Drazin 2007: 235–45), were charged with finding 'films about people working their crafts, or how they lived, how they did things that would interest people in this country, to show how other people went about their work and business,' with a view to making 'everybody understand other people... it was a pretty large sort of idea'.²⁴ But it was not a new idea. The BBC's documentary unit, under Rotha, had already aired *The World Is Ours*, a series which ran from 1954 to 1956 in cooperation with UNESCO and the Film Division of the United Nations. In his introduction to the series, Ritchie Calder stated that:

Television can bring into the home the remote parts of the world and strange peoples, who are not strangers for long when we recognise them as human beings like ourselves. It can help viewers to share something of the excitement and experience which some of us have had by going out into the world and seeing things being done, people working together, not bickering together, and finding that peace has its victories no less renowned than war.²⁵

Writing for Rotha's *Television in the Making*, Henry R. Cassirer, Calder's colleague at UNESCO, stressed television's 'decisive role' in 'building a constructive, informed democracy and strengthening peace' by enlarging 'the individual's range of personal familiarity so that it may match the range of outside forces working upon him' (1956: 165).

Cassirer's essay echoed Grierson's thoughts during his time in Chicago in the 1920s on the social purpose of mass media in constructing an active citizenry. Without doubt, Grierson, like Rotha, saw the potential of using *This Wonderful World* to promote the wider international mission of the documentary film movement in creating a peaceful global citizenship.²⁶ The series reflected his view, expressed in 1946, that documentarists must not forget that they are

part of a worldwide movement. Documentary in one sense is national. It has native roots and native tasks in [the nation]. But in a larger sense it is supra-national. The problems... it seeks to clarify are problems common to every land. The understandings... it seeks to create are understandings demanded by all men. The imagination... it seeks to fire is an imagination necessary to the whole world if human progress is to be orderly and concerted.²⁷

John Grierson and This Wonderful World

This statement emanated from a deep-seated belief, shared with other documentarists, that realist film could collapse barriers between nations and lead to international understanding and a global educative framework. Writing for the *International Film News* in February 1948, Thomas Baird of the Crown Film Unit declared the documentarists to be the 'great navigators' of the modern age, 'making the maps by which we understand the world'. Film technology compressed time and space, allowing the 'documentary film producer to chart the new astronomy, the new geography, the new politics, the new economics, and the new science of this one world.'²⁸ Two years earlier, National Film Board of Canada documentarist Ralph Foster had also stressed the unique contribution of documentary to 'the demands of a winged generation', with its 'roving and microscopic eye' able to penetrate 'the mass of conflicting data' that modernity generated. It leapt over 'barriers of space and language', drawing 'together the great internationals of people whose interests are jobs, housing, food and children'.²⁹

This language was replicated almost exactly in Calder's tribute to *The World Is Ours* and the publicity surrounding *This Wonderful World*. Duplicating the 'armchair journey' format (Corner 1991b: 12) of the BBC's documentary series *Panorama* (1953–), each episode of the STV series normally contained between two and five films chosen from over 30 countries. It was described as 'comparable to a global tour... a number of flights, as it were, during which you make sudden descents on whatever portion of the earth's surface holds something that has caught Mr. Grierson's eye.'³⁰ Television permitted

a multitude, an hundredfold... to know this wonderful world in armchair comfort within their own walls. Bullfighting in Spain, tribal gathering in East Africa, football in Brazil, gold digging in the Klondike, pearl diving in the Pacific, shipbuilding in Europe... Whole worlds of visual interest are being brought into the public domain. People are being given eyes to see with and patterns to be seen. Numberless images are awakening countless imaginations. The black and white of a seventeen-inch screen are being given tasks that hint massively at the fullness of life's colour.³¹

The promise of such travels was created in the introductory sequence of each episode: the titles play against a cloudy sky until the camera pulls back to draw the viewer through the window to find Grierson gazing out and standing above a desktop globe. The theme tune was appropriately entitled 'Window on the World', which was also the subtitle of *Panorama*. Grierson welcomed his viewers every week by

offering to bring ‘some of the rich and strange things, the wonderful things, the camera has seen all over the world on the many, many frontiers of observation’. Such was the centrality of this motif that a proposed set re-design in 1964 had to ‘retain the feeling of “a window of the world”’, and differed only in placing ‘the revolving globe outside a window with... a night sky backing’.³² These were thought to be the ‘trademarks’ of the series, the globe standing for Grierson’s work-room ‘as he travels the world in search of film; the clouds which drift behind him as he introduces each film [representing] the free-as-air judgement he uses to select each clip’.³³ At the close of the opening sequence, ‘turning from the universe spread before him, Mr. Grierson then looks into the camera himself, a small, grey Ariel with eyes glittering enthusiastically behind his spectacles’, promising to negotiate the ‘frontiers of surrealism; frontiers of abstraction... the frontiers of scientific research; the frontier of agonising technical achievement’, the series being an eclectic mix of entertainment, science, nature, sports, animation, dance, music and world cultures intended to showcase ‘the excellencies of the world,’ wherever they were to be found.³⁴ It took the viewer from films about detergent and plants to those about Chinese variety shows and the performances of Pete Seeger.

Grierson’s film choice seemed unconstrained by the geopolitical climate of the Cold War. Throughout this period, *This Wonderful World* received and screened a steady stream of films from his contacts at SovExportFilm, later Plato Film, the Soviet Film Agency, and through Olwen Vaughan’s sourcing of experimental film behind the Iron Curtain.³⁵ Sensing that a propaganda opportunity could not be missed, the series’ producers were contacted by both the Soviet and US embassies: there was pressure, for example, from the United States to screen films on NASA to counteract the influence of films on Soviet space exploration.³⁶ No doubt *This Wonderful World* excited the US authorities in other ways too, notably in confronting topics such as the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement. While the Soviet material was, to a certain extent, included for practical reasons (royalties were not owed to Soviet composers for film scores, for example), it also echoed the hopes of Baird and Foster in the immediate postwar period that media could overcome international tensions.³⁷ These hopes were extended to the new medium of television, which became a further means of promoting the political and social aims of the documentary film movement. Grierson told his audience in the 14 July 1964 edition that ‘so long as we guard the sometimes wonderful cultures of the little countries from the

sometimes arrogant and unwonderful cultures of the big countries, there is still a profound truth in the idea that getting to know each other—and above all getting to appreciate and value each other's differences . . . is a fundamental of peace in our modern world.³⁸

But how far was a programme such as *This Wonderful World* able to understand and overcome national differences and illuminate world cultures? Its format frequently evoked an imperial 'treasure hunt' cloaked in the rhetoric of scientific discovery. Ella Shohat has pointed to the function of the image of the spinning globe in reinforcing colonial narratives with 'an overarching global view [that] sutures the spectator into a godlike cosmic perspective' (1997: 29), and one could be forgiven for applying her description of colonial films as 'ethnographic tour[s] of a celluloid-"preserved" culture which celebrate the chronotopic magical attitude of cinema for panoramic spectacle and temporal voyeurism' to episodes of *This Wonderful World* (ibid.: 32). Despite Grierson's disdain for the reductive 'travelogue', each 30-minute journey became the equivalent of Robert Stam and Louise Spence's 'magic carpet ride', creating 'armchair conquistadors' and opening opportunities for 'making the inhabitants of the Third World objects of spectacle for the First World's voyeuristic gaze' (1985: 636).

Grierson's opening lines each week reminded viewers of the 'strangeness' of the films they were about to see, inadvertently pointing to their 'Otherness' or exoticism, which in part doubtless explained the appeal of the programme to British audiences. The strangeness of the films' content was often compounded by the practice of showing only their more unusual scenes and the failure to translate films from their original language.³⁹ This was not necessarily a stylistic choice, however: it was symptomatic of a new medium without the technical ability or experience to overcome the challenges of cross-cultural understanding within a globalised mass media. Reflecting on whether television could 'link the world', Cassirer pointed out that the 'experience of the cinema is unfortunately of little help'. Television could not, for example, use subtitles, since they were 'cut-off or unreadable on most home receivers, unless they are placed so high on the screen that they obscure the scene' (1956: 158). This was unlikely to be acceptable to Grierson. Dubbing was also prohibitively expensive, particularly for a low-budget production on a regional channel such as STV. Such limitations explain the predominance of simple illustrative natural history pieces, music films or those depicting national dance, the latter being both a solution to the problems of language, in that it was purely spectacular, and, being 'both respectable and seductive', a means of eliding the high art



Fig. 1. John Grierson's window onto the exotic in *This Wonderful World*. Courtesy of the John Grierson Archive, Special Collections, University of Stirling.

that was demanded by Thompson and the titillation that the channel thought would appeal to audiences (Studlar 1997: 105).⁴⁰

If the opening sequences of *This Wonderful World* captured the international, then Grierson's sign-off addressed the local, bidding goodnight to 'all in the Highlands and Lowlands'. Global films were framed by Grierson's 'local' commentary which provided STV audiences with recognisable reference points: thus *Birth of a Volcano* (1949), a film from Mexico, was not far removed from 'douce Scotland', since Castle Rock at Edinburgh was the old plug of a volcano; the promise of electrified rails in Glasgow was likened to the Soviet development of atomic power; a film on Vincent Van Gogh was concluded with reflections on spirituality in Scottish schools; the violence of the bullfight depicted in films such as *Fiesta of Death*, screened in December 1957, was equated with a romanticised Scottish past that celebrated 'bloody battles... torture chambers... and the wonderful mysterious fellows in masks with their beautiful axes and heads rolling into baskets'.⁴¹ Grierson denounced the sensibilities expressed in letters that complained of films' brutality as a uniquely

English phenomenon: 'There is obviously a minority* of super-sensitive people in England on the subject of animal life which is not matched anywhere else. I myself take the view that you can't be really sensitive to animal life unless you appreciate its reality.'⁴²

The fusion of the cosmopolitan and the parochial simultaneously served the higher cultural purpose of the series and made the obscure palatable to a general audience, with Grierson, a local yet international personality, acting as the guide. The format of the series appealed both to national and local audiences, the former through the diversity of documentary films screened and the latter through local reference points. This was important to STV's ability both to 'export' programmes to other independent networks, and capitalise on regional 'alignment[s] and loyalties' (O'Sullivan 1991: 174) to which the BBC, as a national network, could not respond, thus challenging what it considered to be the 'dilution of Scottish culture by programmes initiated by the South' (Sendall 1982: 205). Grierson contended that he and his audience shared a 'mental language' that allowed Scots to communicate across differences. By speaking specifically in this 'tongue', he claimed to be able to read 'instinctively between the lines of Scottish thought'.⁴³ Moreover, Grierson sensed that, by exploiting the local angle, the series brought serious matter into the pub, empowering his 'favourite low-level "locals" to engage with high culture'.⁴⁴ This challenged the contemporary view that there were 'two kinds of people, a cultured elite and the masses, both of whom must be catered for by different types of programme' (Sendall 1982: 340).

Indeed, the series format allowed 'high' and 'low' cultures to coalesce: the juxtaposition between 'Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt and the like [and] boxing or bullfighting', or between Basil Wright's ethereal *Greek Sculpture* (1959), Robert Flaherty's *Industrial Britain* (1933) and excerpts from fictional features such as *Whisky Galore* (1949) and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954) or Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and *Dumbo* (1941), meant that fantasy segued into documentary reportage and artistic expression.⁴⁵ In this way, the programme combined aspects of what Roland Gillet, the Controller of Programmes at Associated Rediffusion, identified as the two faces of television in the 1950s: what the public wanted ('girls, wrestling, bright musicals, quiz shows and real-life drama') and what producers deemed suitable or culturally uplifting ('the Halle Orchestra, Foreign Press Club, floodlit football and visits to the local fire station') (quoted in Sendall 1982: 328 and Corner 1991b: 15). STV made a virtue of this in its publicity: the network provided 'entertainment

in a way that is always wholesome'.⁴⁶ That *This Wonderful World* rejected the conventional dichotomy between 'popular' and 'serious' programming, opting instead for an 'inter-generic' magazine format (Corner 1995: 84), might be interpreted as a concession to a changing televisual world, a foray into 'infotainment', based around the modern television phenomenon of an individual, personalised relationship between presenter and viewer, while maintaining the social purpose of the documentary in its desire to tempt the viewer out of his or her narrow circle. This reflected Cassirer's suggestion that international television's ability to mediate between 'the familiar and the strange' and thus link us powerfully to our fellow human beings would determine whether 'television is destined to fetter the world like a chain or to tie it into a band of brotherhood' (1956: 165).

However, *This Wonderful World*, and arguably television more generally, failed to resolve the tensions between the cosmopolitan and the strange, worldliness and insularity, enlightenment and spectacle, and 'high' and 'low' cultures. While the series occasionally proved its potential to contribute to the band of brotherhood, it also revealed its capability to fetter individuals to their own provincial communities. The riches of the wider world prompted an anti-cosmopolitan attitude in certain viewers, for whom television's ability to transport them to distant lands simply convinced them that they did not have to look elsewhere for beauty or knowledge, thus reinforcing local mindsets rather than challenging them.⁴⁷ Publicly, Grierson praised his audience's openness and intellectualism; privately, he became increasingly frustrated with its narrow-mindedness, writing to a former Canadian colleague that Scotland was 'wee and parochial and complaisant... hard to take going back after all the dream life we've lived about it. I now think of Moose Jaw [Saskatchewan] as positively metropolitan.'⁴⁸ Grierson's statement to the press that 'if you travel a lot the one thing you learn is how very local you are', while interpreted by contemporaries as a positive statement about his return to Scotland, may also be read as a commentary on the ways in which travel (whether physical or mediated) exposes prejudice and provincial attitudes.⁴⁹ Works purporting to show individual nations or cultures 'as they are' often take on new meanings when translated into different cultures where spectators may 'appropriate' films through a process of 'cultural indigenisation' (Shohat and Stam 1994: 15), a process which may actually distort that which it seeks to understand. While Grierson saw that television provided a more direct means of connecting to the world, towards the end of his life, he also recognised the failure of earlier documentary ideals that sought to transcend national barriers

and contribute to a global citizenship. Modern society's 'new man' was 'a villager', he admitted, 'but not of a global village. He is a villager of a very, very small and private village which he is manifest in and symbolised in: the television audience itself.'⁵⁰ The experience of *This Wonderful World* was indicative of the challenges of negotiating between documentarists' pragmatic and idealistic views about what television could achieve in an increasingly globalised and connected media network during a transitional moment.

Grierson as a television personality

Other aspects of the changing nature of television from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s can be interrogated through *This Wonderful World*, specifically through the creation of Grierson as a television personality. Despite contemporaneous claims that the British documentary movement, given its commitment to objective 'authoritative reality', did not understand that modern television programmes had to be 'dominated by the personality of the commentator' and 'illustrate a personal experience', the construction of an on-screen persona lay at the heart of *This Wonderful World*.⁵¹ The overall 'feel' of each episode was in tune with contemporary debates over television's distinctive ability to generate a feeling of intimacy. The early format of the series, where individual experts (normally university professors) offered a detailed commentary on specialised films, gave way to an increasingly personalised 'tour' by a single presenter. The series thus conformed to contemporary 'assumptions that depended on tropes of "nearness" in order to differentiate television as a medium' (Jacobs 2000: 133) and moved away from the traditional documentary film commentary. Intimacy was visually established in the original set design, which took on the appearance of a home office into which audiences were invited. This collapsed 'film's space-expanding possibilities' (ibid.: 7) and audiences were returned to the 'private', enclosed studio after each brief filmic experience. Here, Grierson shared tales of his childhood, remembered the loss of loved ones such as his sister Ruby and spoke of his friendships.⁵² His 'all-embracing fashion' and 'compelling personality' enabled seamless movement from consideration of world cultures to snapshots of his personal journey.⁵³

Just as audiences were invited into the studio space, the personality was invited into the intimacy of the private home. While Grierson described this as 'the old battered presence spewing its ugly experience on every decent hearth rung without shame', he recognised that television fostered a personal relationship with his audience and

required a particular mode of address.⁵⁴ 'You behave', he stated, 'like anyone entering someone's home and measure your address to the normal courtesies' (Hardy 1979: 218). This connection was expressed in the programme through terms normally reserved for close friends: thus he addressed his viewers by name in various episodes, and spoke of his seasonal programmes as 'personal filmic Christmas cards'; they in turn wrote to him of their private interests (from pigeon-fancying to judo), thanked him for bringing 'beauty and kindness into our lives after a busy day', sent him good wishes for the New Year and told him how he joined their families through the viewing experience.⁵⁵

Such was the strength of the individual experience in the series that episodes were peppered with references to the achievements of the British documentary film movement. Grierson's career was used by the producers to shape him into a modern television expert or vocationally skilled presenter. He had particular local appeal, seemingly unchanged by wealth or fame, and, by talking of his regional upbringing, he embodied the 'ordinariness' of the audiences themselves (Bennett 2011: 53–62). However, the use of Grierson's past was not simply a means of reinforcing the personal 'feel' of the programme by offering an insight into his life, work and travels and by merging the public and private personae: it also served to mythologise the documentary movement by declaring its works to be the 'classics', the documentary 'canon', and to stake its claim to television, with the movement emerging as progenitor of the modern documentary form. The early British documentary films, Grierson claimed, were 'unique' and deserved, 'like all classics, to be read again, or, in our case, to be seen again'.⁵⁶ *Night Mail* (1936), *Listen to Britain* (1942), *Song of Ceylon* (1934), *Monkey into Man* (1940) and *Industrial Britain* were all screened at least once during the series, and references to the work of the movement were frequent in episodes from the 1950s. The episodes of 13 December 1957 and 28 February 1958 featured homilies to Arthur Elton and the Shell Film Unit, and the episode of 20 March 1958 prefaced a screening of Allan King's documentary *Skid Row* (1956) with a discussion of how *Housing Problems* (1935) invented direct-to-camera interviews, a prominent feature of King's work.⁵⁷ Grierson continued to promote those with connections to the movement, for example his former colleagues at the National Film Board of Canada, the Shell Film Unit or Hawes' Film Division in Australia.

Although, practically, this provided a steady stream of material, it also contributed to the construction of the movement's past and its legacy. The programmes drew attention to a shared narrative that valorised the 1930s and pointed to the movement's international

reach. This was not simply an act of nostalgic reflection but, rather, in the immediate aftermath of the Labour government's failure fully to exploit documentary for public information purposes, a means of asserting power and agency and of reconciling division and failure after 1945. A potent validation of its past was required if the movement were not to become a footnote in the history of film. *This Wonderful World* in the late 1950s, then, contributed to a mobilisation of the past in the construction of master narratives that stressed the universal importance of the movement's activities and reinvented its story for the modern age as the forebear of television documentary.

Grierson's discomfort with aspects of modern television explains the tension in the construction of his on-screen personality: it was simultaneously intimate and withdrawn, personal and removed. Jan Bussell's 1952 book *The Art of Television* made it clear that audiences 'do not want to be lectured or harangued, but to partake, and to be chatted with' (quoted in Jacobs 2000: 133). Just as in drama, performance had to be 'restrained' and 'conversational' rather than 'declarative' (ibid.: 7). This was not Grierson's style, and it represented a revision of his original documentary principles: as Corner notes, 'the overall lightening of the tone of the documentary project [created] a shift from the "social" to the "sociable"' and re-inflected 'the Griersonian perspective on public information... towards the generic imperatives of popular entertainment' (1991a: 56, 58). It was perhaps in response to this that Grierson undermined the programme's 'feel' of a personal conversation by emphasising that he was not in 'a private domain'. In a certain way this connects back to his deference to state authority in the 1930s and 1940s, since, for Grierson, the television personality was a 'public artist' with concomitant responsibilities.⁵⁸ He criticised the modern television personality (exemplified by Robin Day) for eroding the larger authority of the politician and parliament more 'than he has any right to do'.⁵⁹ Indeed, he rejected the term 'television personality' altogether, equating 'show-biz' with the 'Scarlet Woman of Babylon'. He preferred instead to be regarded as a 'television educator'.⁶⁰ Redolent of his Calvinist past, Grierson treated his on-screen desk as a dais and pulpit, and spoke of the audience as his 'congregation'.⁶¹ He continued to believe that, in order to counteract the effects of modernity that had 'gravely undermined the commitment to collective duty, ethical value, and social conscientiousness', a 'matrix of interdependence' should be created whereby 'artists, educators and the state are conceived of as working in unison within a process of education whose objective was to consolidate social accord around the institutional structures, priorities and needs of state' (Aitken

2006: 147). This idea, along with the primacy of an educated, technocratic elite using the media as a means of engagement and raising social awareness among the 'uneducated' masses, was a constant undercurrent in the overall conception and execution of *This Wonderful World*. Grierson's on-screen persona then – an amalgam of 'educator', 'uplifter', 'magician' and 'medicine man', simultaneously mystical and yet 'so close to his audience that they only barely recognise him as he walks down the street, because, he is, in fact, one of them' – reflected a transitional moment in British television.⁶² It sat uncomfortably between the promise of television as the educator and cultural guide of the modern age and its status as the primary medium of mass entertainment and diversion. That *This Wonderful World* sought to bring them together signifies the production team's attempt to respond to debates on the form and meaning of the televisual experience in the late 1950s and early 1960s. That, in the process, tensions were exposed reveals a media environment that had not yet come to terms with the nature and possibilities of this new form of communication.

Television and documentary film's legacy

STV's booklet for *This Wonderful World* claimed that, in keeping with ITV's mandate, television producers had the ultimate responsibility 'of conditioning human attitudes'. Television's 'self-perpetuating magnetism' gave it a uniquely modern duty, it claimed, the likes of which 'any manner of man or estate has ever yet been called to face. John Grierson and his small team behind *This Wonderful World* are doing more than just facing it. They are defining it.' In their description of the medium, STV, like the ITA, made assumptions about the power of television – an all-encompassing experience enveloping a passive audience. This reflected contemporary debates over the pervasive potential of modern media, debates that were infused with the social fears and moral panics that tend to accompany technological advance. It was a process familiar to those who had witnessed the advent of film and one which is now being repeated in the Internet age.

However, the producers of *This Wonderful World* were not defining the modern television form, they were encountering it. The series was produced at a liminal moment in the history of broadcasting, and it was naturally affected by changes in the media environment. Debates surrounding independent and regional programming, specifically in relation to popular and 'serious' programmes, fed into the series' content, form and publicity. Discussions within the documentary film

movement itself pointed to the possibilities and limitations of a globalised media, illustrating how television might be able to compress local, national and global space, but ultimately fail to create a basis for genuine international cultural exchange. Working within television revealed to the documentarists the changing nature of spectatorship in the establishment of an intimate relationship with a celebrity presenter. Although this was anathema to Grierson, the importance of audience size, particularly in the commercial broadcasting sector, meant that he had to comply. Like many of his contemporaries, he never came to terms with the 'trivialities' of television. He claimed that 'the greatest problem in television' was 'to take it seriously'.⁶³

The transition to television of certain members of the documentary film movement presents an alternative reading of its 'fall' and attempted reinvention. It was unable fully to take control of or make a significant impact on the medium, partly because it could not wholly reconcile its inflexible principles with the new form, and partly because it was the victim of a media revolution in which new pioneers emerged. This process of innovation naturally meant that the old guard ceased to be the revolutionaries. In fact they became the reactionaries, and television the means of challenging the established order. In the midst of this revolution, the documentarists expressed a continued preference for film and, in doing so, failed to submit to the demands of the new medium. Rotha was dismissed from the BBC on account of his propensity toward film practices. As Boon notes, he was ten years beyond his period of great success and his model of the documentary was dead (2008: 208). In some ways, Grierson could tolerate working on *This Wonderful World*: it was, after all, a showcase for cinematic documentary. He admitted that television was

a bad version of the motion picture, because the pictures look so static on television. Television isn't real for a variety of reasons. It is so caught up with blood and thunder of a romantic-fictional kind, that when something with real blood and thunder comes up, the impact is dulled... The presentation is so various and full of different aspects of reality than nothing makes an impression.⁶⁴

Television was 'predisposed to the amateur', and, in its 'cheapness of methods', failed to capture documentary's 'wider and more aesthetically important aspects' (Grierson 1979: 212, 214). In keeping with the original aims of the documentary film movement, Grierson concluded that television had failed to 'honour... this splendid area of opportunity which is wide open to the camera; to the master of montages; to the poet... and the composer and the other creative

figures of film-making.⁶⁵ There remained ‘something special... *sui generis* in what the motion picture could do’ (ibid.: 211).

But documentary film and its principles from the 1930s could not be transferred intact to television, which had its own set of unique characteristics. Television increasingly became, according to Legg, a marker of the first phase of the post-Griersonian era of documentary.⁶⁶ There was a dawning realisation of what television documentary could achieve and what, in Grierson’s view, ‘the medium is capable of’. In this, he asserted that emergent television documentary and reportage ‘derived from a movie tradition’, and specifically the work of the documentary film movement (ibid.: 215, 214). Gus Macdonald, the director and producer of *World in Action* (1963–98), dismissed the resentment displayed by certain members of the old documentary school towards ‘the presumption of television’, claiming that:

The Griersonian ideal of art and entertainment married to social purpose is alive, reasonably well, and now living in television. In defence of that claim I call Grierson: ‘Where did the tradition go?’ he said. ‘The good thing went with television to the BBC—*Cathy Come Home*, *Z Cars* and the rest’. One of independent television’s earliest recruits was Grierson himself... I suggest no simple causality and certainly no apostolic succession—but it is worth remembering that you don’t have to have documentary on television: much American television manages quite well without it.⁶⁷

This Wonderful World provided an additional outlet for Grierson’s documentary idea at a time when it was under attack. The original concept was sustained in some form just long enough for it to have an enduring postwar legacy, to contribute to the memory of profound influence that survived the transition to a new media age, and to foster a belief that, in some ways, television documentary could be claimed as Grierson’s ‘own child’ (Duncan Ross, quoted in Bell 1986: 65).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Nicholas Pronay for his comments on this article, and for offering his thoughts on working with Grierson on this series. I am also grateful to Harley Jones, who also worked on the series, for his comments. I would like to thank Philip Williamson, Justin Willis, the anonymous readers and the editors for their thoughtful comments on the draft article.

Notes

1. R. M. S. Magee memo, ‘Move and administration of Dr. Grierson’s unit to Cardiff’, 11 December 1959, John Grierson Archive, Special Collections, University of Stirling (GA) G8:63:253. Full schedule of programmes, GA G8:2:17:1.1. n.d. There

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- was also a series of eighteen special programmes produced for ATV (the Midlands ITV franchise) from 19 September 1961 to 29 May 1962. Olwen Vaughan claimed that there were over 500 programmes: interview, n.d. (c.1972), NFB Series 2, Blais Interviews, 000-2527.01.2.10, McGill University Special Collections, Montreal, Canada.
2. For early advocacy see, for example, 'Broadcasting and Television Manifesto', 1936, signed by Grierson and Alberto Cavalcanti (cited in Jacobs 2000: 30).
 3. Script, 11 October 1957, GA:G8:2.1.
 4. Paul Rotha to Stanley Hawes, 29 June 1953, Stanley Hawes papers, National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, Australia (Hawes papers), box 83.
 5. Ibid. Rotha also edited a collection of essays on early television (1956).
 6. On Rotha's appointment and Grierson's refusal, see Bell (1986: 70). On Stuart Legg's refusal to apply for the position, see Legg to Hawes, 5 January 1952, Hawes papers, box 84: 313.
 7. Rotha to Hawes, 2 February 1955, Hawes papers, box 83.
 8. Rotha to Hawes, 2 February 1955, Hawes papers, box 83; Rotha to Hawes, 17 February 1956, Hawes papers, box 83.
 9. 'This Wonderful World as seen in films of fact', newspaper clipping, n.a., n.d., GA:G8:89:11; draft publicity booklet, 17 August 1960, GA:G8A:4.
 10. However, technical difficulties prevented reliable reception, with an estimated loss of ten per cent of the potential audience (Sendall 1982: 208).
 11. Ibid. This point is also emphasised by Curran and Seaton (1991: 168-9) and O'Sullivan (2003: 33).
 12. 'Important STV choice', newspaper clipping, n.d., GA:G8:8:89; regional screening schedules for August 1964, GA:G8:54:16.
 13. That *This Wonderful World* became STV's flagship programme in this respect is confirmed in a letter from Gerry Le Grove, Productions Controller, to T. Singleton of ABC Television, 8 December 1958, GA:G8:62:22.
 14. Interview with Lord Thompson, McGill, NFB Series 2, Blais interviews, 000-2527.01.1.18, McGill, n.d. (c.1972). In the transcript for 22 December 1960, GA:G8: 21:3, Grierson first challenges the BBC's 'monopoly on variety' and points to the relative inexperience of its staff. Grierson's attitude probably stemmed from its rejection of him (see interview with Olwen Vaughan, McGill, NFB Series 2, Blais Interviews, 000-2527.01.1.18, McGill).
 15. Grierson to Canadian colleague, 16 December 1958, GA:G7:23:24.
 16. Interview with Grierson for McGill News, March 1971, McGill, Grierson Series .3, 000-2527.3.1, McGill; Grierson 1979: 212. For baulking at working for commercial television, see Grierson's letter to a Canadian colleague, 16 December 1958, GA:G7:23:24. A detailed account of Grierson's illness can be found in a letter from Legg to Hawes, 7 July 1953, Hawes papers, box 84: 313.
 17. 'Mass medium addressed to individuals', press clipping, 19 April 1961, GA:G8:81:4.
 18. Script, 3 January 1958, GA:G8:4:1.2.
 19. 'Mass medium addressed to individuals', press clipping, 19 April 1961, GA:G8:81:4.
 20. Maurice Wiggin, *Sunday Times*, 15 February 1959, p. 16. Wiggin was a particularly favourable critic. See also 18 October 1959, p. 23; 12 February 1961, p. 40; 16 April 1961, p. 48; 21 January 1962, p. 40; 21 April 1963, p. 39.
 21. Script, 3 January 1958, GA:G8:4:1.2.

22. Script, 11 October 1957, GA:G8:2:1.
23. Advertisement for STV's programmes, including *This Wonderful World*, *Sunday Times*, 4 March 1962, p. 6.
24. Interview with Olwen Vaughan, McGill, NFB Series .2, Blais interviews, 000-2527.01.2.10, McGill. Film historian Nicholas Pronay became Grierson's researcher when the series moved to Cardiff, watching films and working on scripts (correspondence with the author, 6 April 2011).
25. Ritchie Calder, quoted in Marris (1982: 88). On *The World Is Ours*, see Rotha (1955). Rotha was committed to the idea that television could 'raise immeasurably the thinking, conduct, the very way of thinking of the world's people', and *The World Is Ours* was produced with this in mind (Rotha 1956: 11). The series saw the first screening of Paul Rotha and Basil Wright's film *World Without End* (1953). For more information on this film see Druick (2011) and Richard MacDonald's article in this issue.
26. It should be noted, however, that this had been a long-standing aspect of documentary production, both within and beyond the British movement. See, for example, Druick (2008).
27. Parting letter to the National Film Board of Canada, c.1946, Hawes papers, box 68.
28. Thomas Baird, 'The British approach to documentary', *International Film News*, 1948, Hawes papers, box 1, RMM 214-5.
29. Ralph Foster, 'Documentary film and Australia', ABC broadcast, 26 October 1945, Hawes papers, box 68.
30. 'Mass medium addressed to individuals', press clipping, 19 April 1961, GA:G8:81:4.
31. Draft publicity booklet, 17 August 1960, GA:G8A:4.
32. David Johnstone. Producer for news, current affairs and documentaries, STV, to Grierson, 3 December 1964, GA:G8:68:774.
33. Alan Brown, 'His native heath', press clipping, 15 June 1962, GA:G8A:3:4.
34. 'Mass medium addressed to individuals', press clipping, 19 April 1961, GA:G8:81:4; conversations with Grierson I: interviewer Rod Chiasson, collected between February 1969 and July 1971 in Montreal, series .10 000-2527.01.10.2, p. 82, McGill.
35. See, for example, Vaughan to Rai Purdy, 14 June 1960, GA:G8.64.39; interview with Olwen Vaughan, McGill, NFB Series .2, Blais Interviews, 000-2527.01.2.10, McGill. I would like to express my thanks to Sarah Davies for her help in locating references to the Soviet Film Agencies.
36. See, for example, GA:G8:19:22 and 8:20:1.
37. Plato Films to Jimmy Sutherland, 28 February 1958, GA:G8:62:89.
38. Script, 14 July 1964, GA:G8:32:13.
39. Grierson edited much of the material himself, frequently destroying prints on loan from distributors or keeping them for an inordinate amount of time, much to their consternation.
40. While there are viewing figures for the series and a collection of correspondence from individual viewers, there is no clear sense of the make-up of the audience itself, particularly when those who wrote in to the programme were not necessarily representative of the wider viewership.
41. Script, 29 November 1957, GA:G8:5:10; script, 22 November 1957, GA:G8:3:5:8; script, 15 November 1957, GA:G8:3:5; script, 6 December 1957, GA:G8:3:14. Unsurprisingly, the edition featuring *Fiesta of Death*—along with later episodes

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- depicting child cruelty, alcoholism, drug abuse, neglected animals, cockfighting and more bullfighting—provoked complaints that such films were in poor taste. This included letters from regional operations controllers (see, for example, the letter from RO at ATV, Keith Rodgers, to Noel Stevenson at STV, 24 August 1962, GA:G8:66:183), as well as from the general public (numerous examples can be found in the folder GA8:68).
42. Grierson to Christine Russell, 13 March 1964, GA:G8:68:208. The asterisk pointed to a footnote in the letter which explained that only two complaints had been received, despite the programme having been screened in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This reflects Grierson's staunch anti-Englishness, which peaked during this period (correspondence between the author and Nicholas Pronay, 6 April 2011). Similar objections were raised to the 'Madrid Bullfight' episode of *Around the World With Orson Welles* (16 December 1955).
 43. John Grierson, 'Highbrow and lowbrow—that's *This Wonderful World*', newspaper clipping, GA:G8A:3:1.
 44. Script, 20 December 1957, GA:G8:4:1.
 45. John Grierson, 'Highbrow and lowbrow—that's *This Wonderful World*', newspaper clipping, GA:G8A:3:1.
 46. *Sunday Times*, 4 March 1962, p. 6.
 47. See, for example, viewer letter to Grierson, 3 February 1964, GA:G8:68:92.
 48. Letter from Grierson, 16 December 1958, GA:G7:23:24.
 49. David Griffin, 'Around the world with John Grierson', newspaper clipping, n.d., GA:G8A:3:7.
 50. Conversations with Grierson II: interviewer Rod Chiasson, 18 June 1969, series .10 000-2527.01.10.03, p. 259, McGill.
 51. *The Listener*, May 1959, quoted in Curran and Seaton (1991: 171).
 52. See, for example, script, 27 December 1957, GA:G8:4:5.
 53. Robert Kemp, 'Personality of Dr Grierson', newspaper clipping, 1961, GA:G8:89:2.
 54. Grierson to Canadian colleague, 16 December 1958, GA:G7:23:24.
 55. See fan letters in folders GA:G8:67 and 68.
 56. *The Viewer*, 27 October–2 November, GA:G8:89:70.
 57. See programme schedule, GA:G8:1:1 for a full list of the films screened in the series; on Elton, see G8:3:17, 5:16 and 4:1; and for *Housing Problems* see G8:5:21.
 58. Conversations with Grierson I: interviewer Rod Chiasson, collected between February 1969 and July 1971 in Montreal, series .10 000-2527.01.10.2, p. 51, McGill.
 59. Conversations with Grierson II: interviewer Rod Chiasson, 18 June 1969, series .10 000-2527.01.10.03, p. 190, McGill.
 60. *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 222.
 61. Grierson to Canadian colleague, 16 December 1958, GA:G7:23:24.
 62. Conversations with Grierson II: interviewer Rod Chiasson, 18 June 1969, series .10 000-2527.01.10.03, p. 221, McGill.
 63. McGill Papers, Grierson, 0000-2527.01 series .3; 0000-2527.01.10.03. Conversations with Grierson II: interviewer Rod Chiasson, 18 June 1969.
 64. McGill Papers, Grierson, 0000-2527.01 series .3; 0000-2527.01.10.03. Conversations with Grierson II: interviewer Rod Chiasson, 18 June 1969.
 65. Interview with Grierson for *McGill News*, March 1971, McGill, Grierson Series .3, 000-2527.3.1, McGill.
 66. Legg to Hawes, 5 January 1952, Hawes papers, box 84: 313.

67. Gus MacDonald, 'The documentary idea and television today', John Grierson Archive Inaugural Address, 1977, in *The John Grierson Archive: Occasional Papers 1* (Stirling: John Grierson Archive), pp. 23–5.

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