

Anthony Smith

Born 1938. Broadcaster, author and academic.
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1. Introduction



Anthony Smith, CBE, is a British broadcaster, author and academic, who was President of Magdalen College, Oxford, between 1988 and 2005. He was born in 1938 and attended Harrow County School for Boys (now Harrow High School), from 1949 to 1956. He read English at Brasenose College, Oxford.

Anthony Smith had a career in broadcasting starting as a producer of BBC current affairs programmes in the 1960s. He became responsible for running the nightly news programme *Twenty-Four Hours*. In the early 1970s, he became a Research Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford. He worked for the Annan Committee on The Future of Broadcasting, and became engaged in the national debate which led to the foundation of the UK's Channel 4. He was subsequently appointed a Board Director of Channel 4 (1981–1985). He also carried out research for the McGregor Commission on the Press, which presented its report in 1976.

Between 1979 and 1988 he was Director of the British Film Institute and was involved in the conception and establishment of the Museum of the Moving Image on London's South Bank. In 1988 he was appointed

President of Magdalen College, Oxford University, and he retired from this position in 2005.

He served for four years as a Member of the Arts Council of Great Britain and he has had a long association with the Writers & Scholars Educational Trust, (which produces Index on Censorship), acting for several years as its chairman. He served for ten years as a member of the Cambodia Trust for the rehabilitation of landmine victims, and served also for a decade as Chairman of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation which was active in helping intellectuals and academics in Czechia and Slovakia in the years before and after the Velvet Revolution of 1989.

Smith currently serves as Patron of the London Film School, Trustee of the Prince of Wales's School of Traditional Arts, and as a board member of the British Institute of Florence, of the Choir of the Sixteen and of the Medical Research Foundation. He is also currently chair of the Hill Foundation, which provides scholarships for very able Russian students to study at Oxford University, and is also chair of the Oxford-Russia Fund, which provides scholarships for students attending universities within Russia, provides English-language books to Russian universities and also sponsors public discussion of topics affecting higher education in Russia.

Smith has written on broadcasting and the Press, and on the modern information industries in general. He was made CBE in 1987, and was awarded an honorary degree (Doctor of Arts) by Oxford Brookes University in 1997.

2. Childhood and Education

Q. Firstly, Tony, where were you born?

A. I was born in Harrow on the Hill, in 1938.

Q. Were your parents anything to do with media?

A. Not at all. My father had been a sailor in World War 1. I came rather late in life to both my parents, but particularly my father. He retired from the Navy at the end of the twenties, and went into the Admiralty. Then came the Geddes axe, and he got into another branch of the civil service, in the Ministry of Works as a fairly humble clerk, and that's where he remained until he died in 1951. In the meantime we had all been evacuated to Wales, during the war, so I was really brought up in Rhyl, on the north Wales coast.

Q. Can you remember the schools you went to?

A. Oh yes, I went to school in Rhyl, where I learned a bit of Welsh. I've only got the obscenities left, I've forgotten everything else. Then I came back to London at the end of the war. I remember going to the Victory Parade in 1945, VJ Day. Then we lived on the slopes of Harrow on the Hill, and I went to Harrow County School, and then I went to Brasenose College Oxford in 1956. And then I went into the BBC in 1959, and stayed there till 1971.

3. Joining the BBC

Q. When you went for interview at the BBC can you remember who you saw?

A. I can remember the interview, but I can't remember his name. It was a man who was very famous for mountaineering. The BBC in those days had the first interview done by outsiders. They were looking for good chaps, the sort of people who could become officers in the army, or that sort of thing. The BBC rather aligned itself with that view of Britain. So I got one of their general traineeships - much prized. That year they gave three general traineeships, this was in 1959. One was a man called Michael Simpson, who is still in religious broadcasting in Birmingham, and came here about a year ago. The other one was Dennis Potter (above) and Dennis left after six weeks. And Dennis would leave after six weeks. Nothing that anyone else could do would be good enough for Dennis. He left and started writing, and eventually writing plays.



Q. Can you remember who ran the producer's course you went on?

A. I don't think I did a course. I think it was before they did that. I went straight into radio - the general traineeship was for the BBC as a whole. I went to Bush House for two months, covering the 1959 general election. There I got to know Keith Kyle, who has been a great friend ever since. Then I went for several months to BBC Bristol, and then I came back to Broadcasting House and worked in Lawrence Gilliam's features department, with those wonderful people like Nesta Payne. Sasha Mawson was there. And then I fought my way into BBC Current Affairs. I fought my way past, I will not say I was selected by, that dreadful Grace Wyndham Goldie (right).



Q. When you went for the original interview, am I right that at that time had you not had a degree you would not have got through?

A. Oh no. I think most of the candidates were either Oxford or Cambridge, and they only took three people. But they couldn't have made more than two mistakes, because Dennis Potter was obviously quite a good choice, although things didn't work out in that particular form. But of my contemporaries at Oxford lots and lots more went into television, into the BBC, by lots of other routes. The general traineeship, although it was the much lauded one, and gave you security for life, or so it seemed, there were lots of other ways in through research jobs and training jobs.

Q. Can you remember your first thing on television?

A. I went with John Grist to a thing called Gallery. It was a political programme, and Jack Ashley, now Lord Ashley, was the producer there. I went to cover the party conferences for a couple of years. So I know all that generation, like Margaret Douglas. Then Alasdair Milne let me into Tonight, and I stayed with Tonight until it closed.

4. The Tonight Programme



Q. What are your memories of Baverstock?

A. Baverstock had just gone. I hold a very different view from everybody else about those times, I'm afraid. I think Grace Wyndham Goldie did not create BBC Current Affairs. I think she had some good ideas, and a lot of people feel that she was their sort of professional mother, but I think she did as much damage as she did good, through terrifying people and driving the talent out of them rather than encouraging them.

And Baverstock (right) was just drunk, arrogant, and very stupid. I know the history of this period is written in very different terms. I think Alasdair Milne created that, and Tony Jay, and Tony Essex. There were very creative people who created it. But I think the people who have official aura of having created it all were not the people who did it. And Baverstock, if he had had a greater moment it was certainly before I was there, and he had just moved on by the time I had arrived. Then there was a terrible row at the end of the programme, and they wanted to fire about half a dozen people from the programme, but that didn't come to anything.



5. The 24 Hours Programme



Cliff Michelmore presenting 24 Hours.

About two years later I came back as head of 24 Hours, the programme it evolved into, and I ran 24 Hours for several years.

Q. What was the highlight of 24 Hours for you?

A. The Vietnam War. And the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, which had happened just before I took over the editorship of the programme. And I was in Czechoslovakia for 24 Hours, but I was not yet running 24 Hours. Between Tonight and 24 Hours, that's between 1965 and 1968, I did a lot of programmes of my own, which were really quite amusing and interesting things. I ran a programme called Europa, which was a very good magazine on European affairs, and I ran a programme called Your Witness, which survived in radio in a somewhat altered form. I did that with Ludovic Kennedy. There was another programme called At the Eleventh Hour, which was a terrible flop as a programme. But it was a new team of people, and all the people later became famous - Esther Rantzen, Miriam Margolies, Richard Neville, Roger McGough. They all started doing things there. And that was a marvellous few months. And then I went off to 24 Hours.

6. Political Balance

Q. At that time, in terms of BBC political programmes, was there any party streaming? How was the balance struck from left wing labour to right wing conservative?

A. This has always been a very difficult issue. There were major figures in current affairs who were conservatives, like Revel Guest who was very close to the Conservatives. And I can think of others. But the whole tenor was to the left, because it was the sixties, and everything was going left. A television organisation that did not give the impression of being to the left would have died, because the programmes would have been irrelevant. Everything that was happening in that era, the sixties, was leftwards.

The things that actually emerged from it, the causes if you like, are just accepted today. At the time the country was differently oriented. So think it's completely wrong to say it was a left wing conspiracy. But even the programmes produced by right wing conservatives would have that kind of questioning leftward tendency. And the younger people coming into would make almost assumptions about the world that were left wing, and would have embarrassed them all ten years later. But most of which are now totally accepted. Now, if you ask the question should marijuana be legalised, I am opposed to the legalisation of it frankly. But all the programmes at that time were assuming that it would be legalised because everyone was doing it. Now if you look at who is campaigning for it, it is Conservatives not Labour, on the whole, who are saying this should be legalised.

Over those twenty or thirty years so many things have changed, and even to raise that issue at that time was rather a radical and left wing thing. There were six or seven other issues of that kind. Within ten or fifteen years it became very difficult to see whether that was a left or a right wing thing. But in the context of the sixties it was a left wing thing. If you went to Germany, Scandinavia, even the United States, the same thing was going on, the same debates were happening. In America the idea that black people should have the right to vote was a radical left wing thing in the mid sixties, and the television companies were accused by the Vice President Agnew of being a left wing conspiracy. But you would not describe the people who run the American networks as communist sympathisers. But that's the way it was presented. In the context of the way America was, it was a radical thing to support the March on Washington to try to do something about the race condition of America.

Nowadays one can look back on the whole argument about whether the BBC was left wing with a certain perspective.

7. The Leadership of the BBC

Q. Were you there when Carlton Greene was there as Director General?

A. Yes,

Q. And did you notice a difference when Curran and Trethowan came in?

A. O yes. Curran was a man of rigidity rather than conservatism. Charles Curran was a BBC man through and through. He was a diplomat, an establishment figure. A man of choleric disposition. He could lose his temper very quickly with anybody. He was very very clever, a brilliant linguist, and he did much good for the BBC. Trethowan, on the other hand, was a right wing person, and was not sympathetic to the intellectual currents of the time, whereas Hugh Greene was, or had been, sympathetic. They gradually wore him down.

Q. If the top man was right wing or left wing could he stop a programme?

A. It wasn't like that. Everything was corporate in the BBC. You could never really say whose finger was on it. But certainly Trethowan was able to stop a left wing drift, through appointments, through things that were said, through the way meetings were conducted, through the way that programmes were criticised. Everything in the BBC was not a series of individuals, everything was corporate.

In daily magazine programmes, of course, it was at its least corporate, because to get programmes on the air that day there wasn't as much lines of responsibility. But Alasdair Milne (right) was the best BBC man, and despite all that is said one of its best Director Generals. I think he carried the mantle of Greene's BBC twenty years later, very effectively.

Q. Milne had worked in television before, which is very important.

A. Yes. And Trethowan had, but Trethowan had been a commentator, and Curran had been a wartime Bush House person. So had Hugh Greene actually, but Hugh Greene was intellectually trained in the 1930s, and Curran in the 1940s and 1950s. So Greene had a much more international, well read, point of view of the world. Obviously he had been much influenced by his brother Graham. He understood the literature, the culture, more broadly.



Q. These are all people who have reached the top BBC positions as a result, it seems to me, of their intellectual background. Did anybody come up through the ranks? Did any of them not have degrees?

A. None of them had degrees. None of them had been to university. I think it is only in very recent times that any BBC Director General had been to university. The wartime man had been to university. I don't think Hugh Greene had been to university. I am not certain about Charles Curran. I don't think Ian Trethowan had; I think he had gone up through journalism, if I remember correctly. John Birt had a rather poor degree from Oxford. And Greg Dyke was not known for his academic training. That's a very interesting thing about the BBC. Alasdair Milne of course was classic establishment education of Winchester and New College Oxford. And he is the person within whom BBC values are most deeply engrained.

Q. I ask you these questions, because I was on the other side. I joined to be an assistant camera man on BBC News. And I always thought that so many of the questions at interview were about where did you study, and things like that. And I used to think, perhaps wrongly, that lack of university education was a big handicap.

A. I think wrongly. The leadership of the BBC has never had much university education. Grace Wyndham Goldie had connections with Liverpool University, and I think she had been at Oxford, but Stuart Hood, who was Controller, was not university trained. I don't think Paul Fox or Aubrey Singer had been university trained. So if you look at all those grand figures at BBC television, they had come through something else - through journalism or film.

Q. We all thought that Paul Fox (right) getting to where he did, with his background, was an amazing achievement.

A. Yes. For a lot of people who were successful in broadcasting in the fifties and sixties their university had been the military during the war. People like Dickie Attenborough. The war was a great university.

Q. He was at Pinewood in the Army Film Unit when I was there in the RAF Film Unit. One hears that Paul Fox, who had an axe to grind and was in the paratroopers, being German born and having the language was used in interrogation. One



understands that the Germans under interrogation would prefer to have someone else do it.

A. A lot of people like that rose to great heights. One of my colleagues here, Sir Guenther Treitel, came from Germany at the same time, then went into the military then into academic life. And Karl Leyser, another fantastic medieval historian, who was here, has a similar history. Sir Paul Fox was sent to occupy his own village in Germany, to find his own parents, who had been killed, An extraordinary story.

8. ITV and Channel 4

Q. During your time at the BBC, ITV was finding its feet. When you started at the BBC, ITV had been in place for I think five or six years. It must have been getting quite good at current affairs, with Granada having come on stream. At the BBC were you losing people to ITV? Were you looking over your shoulder at what ITV was doing?

A. Not at first. By 1970 some people were leaving, and some people were coming across. You didn't get paid much more at ITV than at the BBC. The wages were just about the same. So it was just as attractive. In fact rather more attractive if you were seriously interested in being a television programme maker. It was much better to be in the BBC, and jobs in the BBC were much more sought after. But there were a few people who went to ITV. But the strength of the BBC was in its teams. It had the Tonight group, which was a very creative group from all sorts of things were sprung off - the satire programmes of the sixties, and some of the drama actually. And some of the light entertainment, with Ned Sherrin and so on. But then there was Kensington House, which came along slightly later, with Aubrey Singer being a very important figure. You tended to go into those teams and stay in them for many years. And that was really the secret of the BBC. It built up teams from scratch, shaped their whole consciousness of life with the BBC as a total commitment. People married within the BBC, they divorced in the BBC, and re-married in the BBC. The whole thing was a sort of tribal thing. There were different and rival tribes, Panorama and 24 Hours, or Panorama and Tonight, were great rival institutions, and Kensington House another great rival. And BBC Sport another great team. There was very little traffic, although there was some, between these teams.

You stayed in these teams for a very long time, and the result was a great galaxy of BBC programme making which lasted until the end of the seventies, and its waves are still visible.

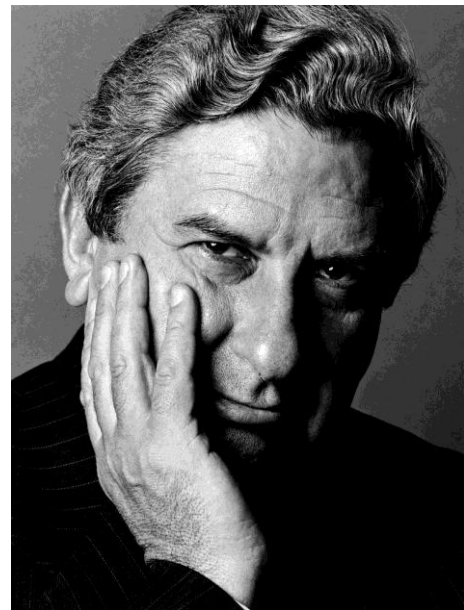
Q. Are you surprised, disappointed maybe, as to how the BBC's star of supremacy, everything to do with current affairs, or perhaps the BBC as a whole, has kind of diminished or fallen away? And is that a surprise to you?

A. Yes. And I suppose it is a bit of a surprise. It hasn't been led in the right direction, in my view, neither by governments nor by the people who have taken the helm. But you could say the same thing of all British television. Channel 4 has petered out as a force for accelerating creativity in British television. And the arrival of Channel 5 is now a great threat to the quality of British television because it is making the running at the wrong end of the spectrum of taste. Until the coming of Channel 5 the competition, the pressure, was always upwards and not downwards. Even within ITV the

companies were commercial and wanted large audiences, but they were also competing for high quality. And I think the decision to drop News at Ten symbolises something. I don't think the BBC has lost much in quality in news and current affairs, I think it is in other areas that it has. What saddens me is that Channel 4, which was fashioned ultimately by parliament to maintain a flow of endless innovation, is now no such thing. And it was rather tentatively closed down in the days of Michael Grade. I don't think he can be blamed for that, as he made the channel a continuing success, but was not importing enough innovation during his years. And the result now is that it is just another channel really.

Q. What about Film on Four?

A. Well, Yes there are some great things that go back to the origin, to the first weeks of the channel. And they are massively important nationally and internationally. But if you look at the overall output of Channel 4 it is not moving ahead all time in the way it did under Jeremy Isaacs (right). They don't make enough mistakes. They don't have enough disasters. If you don't have disasters would you won't have the next generation of successes. And the whole idea of Channel 4 was that it was going to be a channel in which you could have disasters. There would be no shareholders, and it doesn't matter how large the audience is, but they are behaving as if it does. After doing that for some years you begin to see the results. Now Film on Four is a wonderful thing, which is run very commercially and very successfully. And let's hope it survives, because without it Channel 4 looks very bleak.



9. Not Getting the Channel 4 Job

Q. This is a very personal question to you. Because at the time of the impending departure of Jeremy Isaacs, you were one of those ..

A. Oh yes, I definitely wanted the job, if that is what you were going to ask me!

Q. And in fact, when Michael Grade got it, it is alleged that Jeremy Isaacs said 'If you fuck it up I will throttle you'. Discuss!



Michael Grade. A larger than life character given to braces and cigars.

A. If you think, Michael Grade, three weeks before he suddenly appeared as a black or white or grey knight, he made a speech saying Channel 4 shouldn't exist, the whole idea was daft, and it should be handed over to ITV. A month before that he had been named as the next Managing Director of BBC Television. He knew that Birt was coming, and he wasn't getting on with Birt. I've done a very favourable review of Grade's autobiography; it's a very entertaining book from a very nice man. But you can image the surprise that someone who was the self-proclaimed enemy of the thing, suddenly coming as a white knight.

I remember Dickie Attenborough calling me to the telephone at the reception desk of the National Film Theatre during that, because he had been chairing the thing, and found that none of the candidates were acceptable to the Board, or to several people on the Board. The objecting board members included I think Carmen Callil and Paul Fox, who were not happy with any of us, including myself. Dickie said, I must tell you darling that there is a dark horse, a dark horse. I can't tell you who it is.

The dark horse eventually galloped in, and it was none other than Michael Grade. You could have knocked us down with a feather. Jeremy was absolutely furious. I try to think of comparable situations, but I can't think of one. Where they suddenly call in someone who has just been announced for another job just as good as the one being applied for, who had denounced the channel as being completely useless from its inception onwards. Who suddenly rides in as chief executive.

Michael Grade had to say something to explain his turnaround, and he gave a kind of 'that was then, this is now' kind of speech. He took the reins of office, and he made a great success of it. It's not the kind of success entirely that I would have gone after, or the other candidates would have. But all the other candidates believed in Channel 4. And it was something of a cause, because if you recall the origins of it ten years earlier, that within the duopoly of BBC and ITV creativity was being strangled, or a large part of it, and the fourth channel needed to be set aside to enable people to offer programmes directly to it and not through these great corporate bureaucracies. That is what came about, and that is what caused the great flowering that Jeremy had achieved. He himself had opposed Channel 4 when he was at Thames Television because he took the corporate view. But he later came to realise the potential of Channel 4 and led it to do far more for the independent sector than anyone had imagined.

When Channel 4 had got through parliament and was being set up, the people concerned put me on the board of it, and I remember at that time people saying, well you might get ten or fifteen percent of the programmes made by independents. By the time we got on the air eighty percent of the programmes were actually made by independents. The ITV companies in their snooty way had priced themselves out of it. The ideas were coming through the independents, and some programmes really for form's sake, were farmed out to the ITV companies, who were charging much higher prices.

Q. Do you think that in budgeting Channel 4 had a huge advantage being new and not having to fall in line with the over-crewing and ...

A. Yes, that's right. That was the whole idea, that it should be able to work with minimum overheads. One of the things that has gone wrong with Channel 4, in my view, is that it has built its own vast bureaucracy, whereas in the early years it was swift moving. We the board had decided that there was to be a turnover every few years, and that wasn't to be a company in which you made a career. It took people from other parts of television and exported them back again after a period of time, their energies renewed by this different way of working. There should never have been a great bureaucracy there. Just twelve commissioning editors, and a total staff of just 200. But I think it is way above that now. Now it

has a sales staff, because it sells its own advertising, so one would expect that. But even if you make allowances for that, it has an enormous staff. So it has lost that ability to put all its money directly into programmes and save on overheads.

Q. What amazed me at the time that you didn't get it was, and I suspect a lot of others had the same question in their mind, it seemed to me that you were the obvious person. You were involved in the actual planning and the setting up of Channel 4. Why do you think they didn't give you the job?

A. Oh, I know why. They wanted a celebrity. That's not to denigrate. Because Michael Grade's great talent is being a celebrity and having attention focused on him, and leading something visibly and amusingly and triumphantly. And I don't want in any way to detract from his qualities. But I believe in doing things a different way.

I like to think that you lead from behind, that you create conditions, and you pull people together, and you make everyone feel they are celebrities. You don't overshadow your team. That's how I have always worked, and I have run institutions since the age of 28. I have always been running something, and I like running this, but I don't do it by starting with the headlines in the newspapers. That comes later, and the headlines should reflect everything you are doing. It is a different way of doing this, and it is how I do things here [Magdalen College Oxford]. I am not shy of publicity, but I like the thing itself to be publicised and not the person who happens to be the chief executive. The BBC taught me that, apart from anything else, because until the days of Checkland and Birt no one knew the name of the Director General of the BBC. It was all these other people. The BBC was an enabling mechanism.

But nowadays things are run rather differently. The Board of Channel 4 thought that they needed someone with braces and a well known profile. Not only do I not have that, I shun that. It's not the way I think things should be run. But it is the way things are now run. If it is the Coal Board or the railways, you have to have a high profile. Most organisations are made up of ordinary people just trying to do a good job. But people now think the branding of an organisation depends of the branding of the person in charge. The clothing and taste of an individual. It's absurd,

Q. I suppose some people here [Magdalen College, Oxford], some people say you have too much to do with television and show business?

A. I suppose so, you would have to ask them! But I was rather intrigued by the way my appointment [as Master] was handled here. I don't know who else wanted the job here. Whereas at the BBC and Channel 4 the whole crew knew.

10. Censorship

Q. We know from earlier in this interview where you stand on the legalisation of cannabis. However one of the early programmes you made after joining the BBC was on censorship, in the Your Witness series. Where do you stand on censorship?

A. I am very much anti censorship. I am involved with Index magazine, and I believe very strongly in self-censorship. That is people saying to themselves, whatever medium they are using. Is this good? Does this do good? People make television programmes should ask themselves more often than they do whether what they are doing is obscene or violent or uses language that distresses people. But I don't think the law should have much to do with that.

Q. Do you therefore think that there needs to be some control to protect young minds, for example from video nasties?

A. I think classification is important, so there is a clear label suggesting suitability. Although those labels change with time. As you know with the film industry twelve year olds can watch without presumed harm occurring material which was previously thought to be suitable only for grown ups, or perhaps not to be shown at all forty or fifty years ago. So attitudes change. I personally hate obscenity. I hate violence. But that doesn't mean I want to have moral guardians standing there stopping people doing what they want to do. I think the pornography industry should be discouraged, in whatever way can be used. But I don't think that any good purpose is served by having a sort of word-by-word, scene-by-scene censorship. Everything depends on context and intention. I do believe that television should have great creative teams and those teams should have ideologies of their own, which insist on everything being of value.

I believe that film making and television programme making should be organised legally in such a way as to ensure that all programmes are thoughtfully made, are hand made, by people who are working for their audiences. One of the beauties of the British system was that until very recently, and perhaps it still survives today, that was the case. All the institutions of British broadcasting were guaranteed in different ways, and with different kinds of money, and competing with each other for audiences, but nonetheless all were trying to serve an audience, and not simply serve commercial benefit.

Within that context there are all sorts of restraints which ensure that programmes have quality. The more programmes have quality, the less it matters what words are used, or what things are depicted, because they are all there for a purpose. And if they are not suitable for children they can be

so labelled. But I can see that if you just let rip and if you have a Channel 5 that is set up to do the sort of stuff that Channel 5 does, then at some point or other some kind of censorship is required, because it sends out on terrestrial television plain and simple pornography, which offends a lot of people.

Q. Let's leave aside explicit sex and language, which are more distasteful than dangerous. It's violence that I would like to ask you about. Do you not feel that what is shown by way of violence should be controlled?

A. Until very recent times the violence in British television was declining, and it was declining because producers had been forced to participate in the discussion about violence, and the implications of violence, and the consequences could be seen in their programmes. I don't think you can just prescribe or describe the kinds of violence that are forbidden. It's impossible. You couldn't put on Shakespeare. Programmes which are made thoughtfully by people who are really concerned about the value of what they are doing for their audience, those programmes will very seldom have gratuitous violence, and it's the gratuitousness that you want to avoid.

We all know the arguments about newsreels. How long do you hold a shot if you are trying to show that a city has been bombed or people have been put in a concentration camp. At what point do you stop showing them. And there is a point beyond which the depiction becomes gratuitous. But I don't think the audience should be protected against suffering. Either other peoples' suffering or their own. That's real.

Q. When you've got a story where young people are walking about with knives are sticking them into people and so on, is it not a concern that that gets into the home in spite of classification?

A. I think it all depends on what the programme is saying and doing, I really do. I suppose there are events in the real world which can be seen to result from imitation. But if you look at all the cases of violence and murder among young people in this country, you can't really say that Brady or Hindley did any of those things because they had seen it on television. There was some other dynamic that produced it. Now people will always say, when in the dock, well I saw it on television. And it may be that they had used a weapon in a way that they had seen it used on television. But that doesn't mean to say that they committed the crime because they had seen it on television. The structural motivation in people is much more complicated than that. I think we have got through, actually, the feeling that violence is the simple result of imitation. I think people do understand that the causations are much more complicated than that.

Q. There are parental influences.

A. And unfortunately there are people who, whatever their parents, just go bad in some way, and nobody knows why. But I don't think you can say that it's because of television, or films, or books.

Q. So you feel that classification is necessary?

A. I think that classification has been very helpful. But now with the internet it's almost impossible to impose such a thing. And I think we are just going to have to get used to a very different kind of culture in which we take a different view of childhood. The notion that children should be protected against the sight of certain things is quite a recent notion. It would not have applied in Shakespeare's day, or even in the 19th century.

Q. Kids used to go to Tyburn and watch people being hanged.

A. Yes. That's right. It must have been traumatic for them, but people thought that trauma was part of life, I suppose. Most people would have seen an animal slaughtered. I would hate to see an animal slaughtered. But I realise that I live in a very squeamish generation.

11. The British Film Institute

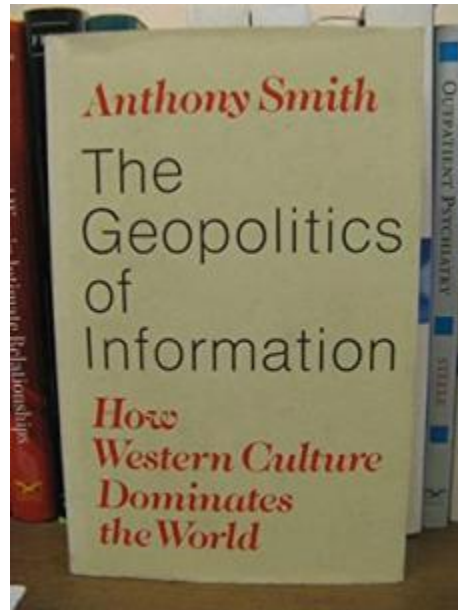
Q. I'd like to move on, and take a dramatic leap to the British Film Institute. How did you first come to be involved or even interested in the BFI?

A. I became involved long before I was interested in it. It all really happened on one day, in very much the same way as coming here [Magdalen College Oxford].

When I left the BBC after 24 Hours, I got a sort of research position at an Oxford College, St. Anthony's. And it was there that I did the work on Channel 4, and worked for the Annan Committee on the future of broadcasting, and also worked on the MacGregor Commission on the press at the same time. And I wrote books that were connected with those thought processes that were going on in both of those commissions. Then I got a commission from the United States to do a book and a film about the computerisation of the newspaper industry. That was called Goodbye Gutenberg, and there was a Horizon film, and in fact two books came out of it. All that took up a couple of years, and I was freelance, as it were, but I was working on this big project.

I had gone back to the BBC briefly to do a film on the history of the industrial revolution, but they abandoned it after six months. I was doing it with a man called Mike Wooler, a very nice man who is dead now. After it was cancelled Wooler went over to Granada, and I left and went back to freelance stuff, and this nice commission came along to do this thing about the newspaper industry.

I lived freelance for two or three years, which was marvellous. I poured out books and books and books and I loved doing that. But I was getting a bit tired of it, and was wondering what to do next, and whether to do another big project again, when I went to an ACTT conference. I went to that conference because I was doing an article for the New Statesman and there was Colin Young, head of the National Film School at that time. I had heard about this BFI job, and more or less to make conversation I asked him what's happening about the BFI job. And he took one look at me and said 'Of course, you!', and disappeared. It obviously gave him the idea. Then the next morning I got a call from Sir Basil Engholm, who was the Chairman, who said could I come and see him, and I did. The next day I had to go to Norway, to do some research and interviews, and was there for four days. When I got back they were doing the interviews, and I saw all



the people I had been arguing against about Channel 4. Jeremy Isaacs and John Freeman, all my enemies but also my friends. Who all wanted Channel 4 to be an ITV2, but many of them happened to be on the board of the BFI. I spent an hour talking to them, then they said would you like to come and do the job. So I started in May or June 1979. I had contracted to do a book for Faber and Faber which I wanted to finish, so I agreed to start five or six months later. Under great pressure of time I wrote this little book and got it out and started at the BFI in October of 1979.



Q. I hope this isn't too personal a question, but all the assignments and the jobs and positions you have held, none of them seem to me to be the kind that you would say I'm really going to earn a lot of money doing this job. Has that ever been anything in your mind?

A. Well, I'll tell you something. I realised the other day that in every job I have done I have earned less than the previous job. My current salary, adjusted for inflation, is exactly the same as I was earning in my first job at the BBC under Grace Wyndham Goldie. I would be just where I am today. And that's over 35 years. But I am not poor because I have over the years made quite a lot of money on the side. Over the horizon, Invisible. Nobody sees me doing it. Just investment. I have always had a bit of a hobby of that. So you don't have to worry about me.

I have at times been a bit cross. For example at the BFI seeing my successor, who didn't do so well with it, got double my salary. That sort of thing does make one feel just a bit irritable! But I've never earned much money and I've always worked twenty hours a day and I've always been

running my own institution since I was 28, and I couldn't bear not be in charge of something. I don't like being put upon. And I don't like being a celebrity. But I love running things and the people know who's in charge and you move along that way.

Q. What sort of state was the BFI in when you started?

A. People said it was in a terrible state, and the morale was very low. But I found it full of intellectuals determined to make it work. And one of the interesting things of the last twenty years, broadening it a bit from the BFI, was that so many new enterprises, right up to the recent dotcoms, have been run not by people who have set out to be successful in business, but who want to do something creative or politically purposeful or of social value and have at the same time run an enterprise that has thrived. And it is now common to see this go on.

Whereas when we were young it was very unusual. People didn't go into business. The whole idea of business was something that you didn't do if you had a university degree. But that is not the case now. All those left wing intellectuals we were talking about are all running companies, in some cases large companies. Everything has changed, in a very beneficial way I think.

In the BFI what one found was standard intellectuals of the left, but who were very keen on making it work financially, so it was a very enterprising body. But a rather run down one, which didn't have much public recognition, or much glamour within the film industry. But Basil Engholm was a very purposeful chap and he re-constructed it. He doesn't get as much praise as he deserved. When Dickie Attenborough (right) became chairman, of course, it got a massive public profile.



12. John Paul Getty II

John Paul Getty II (below) made enormous donations to the BFI.

Q. Was it seven million pounds?

A. Oh, far more than that. He gave the BFI £45 million altogether over the course of a decade. Some of that was given after I left, he continued doing it. And we were able to build the BFI into a very exciting institution that had a big impact on the whole culture of the country really. It encouraged Channel 4 to do important things for the cinema including what is now Film on Four. None of that would have happened without the encouragement and impetus from the BFI, and without the cross connections that there were between Channel 4 and the BFI. These were many and varied; mutual dependencies of various kinds in the early days. And the BFI has continued to thrive. It's had a bit of a difficult patch in the last few years, but I think it is now ready to go zooming ahead.



The BFI archive at Berkhamsted.

Building the museum was a great excitement, and building the new archive at the Getty Centre at Berkhamsted was a big shot in the arm; it's a wonderful thing. And the new headquarters in Stephen Street, with a decent library and all that. All of that would have been impossible without Paul

Getty's constant willingness to do quietly and unannounced what was needed.

Q. I want to ask you, what was his motivation? I know a lot of people who will say, I will co-sponsor the catering, but I want a good table. I believe that was not the case with Paul Getty; you have said he just quietly did it. There must have been a motivation?

A. He is a good person. One of the great pieces of good fortune that I have had is to know good people. And good people get more goodness out of other people. If you see that someone is trying to do something, not really for themselves, but because it is a good thing to do, you automatically go and help them. That's why I quite like this job here, because that's what the colleges are for really. Paul can see that. He's got a lot of money. He has also been terribly ill; he's terribly ill now. When I first met him he had a run of about eight years in hospital. Not absolutely all the time, but most of the time. He watched lots of films and he liked movies and had been slightly on the fringes of the movie industry in Italy. One of his children is married to one of the children of Elizabeth Taylor. She calls him up every now and then. He knows the film world quite well. He could see that I was trying to do something, and he thought it was a good thing. Whenever I needed something, he would always give. And he would give enough to do it properly, to do the whole thing as well as it should be done. That was the blessed thing about him. He has no motive but to be benevolent, from the moment he gets up in the morning to when he goes to bed. You learn a lot from that. I've learned much more from him as a person than even I have benefited from his cash!

Q. How did he come into your life?

A. There was a telephone call from his lawyer, because he saw me on television talking about film restoration. And he said he wanted to help. His lawyer asked who she should be in touch with, so I said me. Then nothing happened, and I phoned her a couple of times and she said I'll give you his telephone number, and if you call that number eventually you will find him at the end of it. And I did, but he was in hospital so it was a little while before we found a date. He was a great canceller of dates, because he wasn't well half the time. Eventually I did meet him, and he said what do you want to do. I described the different projects we had. He said, well I'll pay for that one. And he always sent a cheque that covered the cost of doing it.

I am used to raising money where someone says I'll give you ten percent, and you scratch your head and think what am I going to do. But he would say if that is what it costs I will do that. And I always made sure that whatever it was that he wanted to pay for was done and done well and he could see evidence of it. He would get a tape of the film with rights

permission from the film's owner. He got pictures of the building, although he hadn't seen many of them. He could see that his money was being used for the purposes he supported and was having the effect that he wanted it to have.

Q. I believe at some stage in your life you had the pleasure of attending a BFI board meeting and saying 'Now, I've got something to tell you fellows'?

A. Oh, every board meeting. At every board meeting there was another cheque to report. There was more and more. Let me tell you a story about what must be the most remarkable fund raising that has ever occurred in this country. The story of the building in Stephen Street. I was on the UK Commission to UNESCO, It was a November, and the London Film Festival was on. There was a bad flu about, and I was suffering from flu. It was the year that that Sheila Whittaker and Derek Malcolm were scrapping every hour about who was going to run the film festival next year. Two people I am glad I don't have anything more to do with - excellent though they are in their various ways!

It was just impossible to stop them scrapping, and it was in all the headlines in all the newspapers. The press loved it. Every time Malcolm said something, Whittaker said something and it got printed. The festival disappeared under this blather of a row between these two jealous and ill-tempered people. The British government was going to leave UNESCO, and there was the final meeting of the Commission during which we were trying to persuade the government not to pull out of UNESCO. The meeting was in the morning, and the same morning a letter came saying that the rent of the building in Charing Cross Road was going to double.

It was a time of 6% inflation, and our grant for the next year was rising by only 1%, so I really did not know what to do. There was complete despair. It was misery. Everything was disastrous. So I rushed into the Minister's office where the Commission was meeting, and I had flu, and I had to rush to get back to the south bank and the festival. It was just awful. I sat in front of an open window and started feeling very ill as this meeting went on. We were clearly getting nowhere, and the government was clearly determined to pull out of UNESCO. I started feeling very faint, and I got up and I collapsed, fortunately outside the door, in a heap on the floor. They called an ambulance, but I wouldn't get into it, because I wanted to go home, and ambulances won't take you home, they will only take you to casualty, and I wasn't going to go into casualty because I had all these dramas to deal with.

I got myself home and pulled myself together. The next day I had promised to pop in and see Paul who was in hospital. So I popped in and I told him all about this. He said we can't let you get into this state, what do you need?

So I said we need a new building. I want to get out of landlords and have our own freehold. I can't see another solution to this problem, because another few bob will just pay for another year or so. He said what will a new building cost? I said about five million. So I went back to the office and said we are going to look for a new building.

It happened that just a few hundred yards away from where we were was that building in Stephen Street. Very handy for both the university and the film world. It was near Wardour Street and Soho, and near the Senate House and Birkbeck College. Both worlds the BFI was connected with were near, and it seemed a good spot for it. It would cost £2.5m but was going to cost a couple of million to put right. We had to build viewing theatres, and moving the whole thing there was going to be expensive. We realised that we needed £6m. So I had to go back to Paul and say £5m won't do it. And one cheque came for £6m a few weeks later. It went into the bank. Interest rates were high then, It took a year to do the job and we moved. It was an extraordinary story.

Q. When you broke that news, did you walk in with the cheque?

A. No, the cheque came a few weeks later.

Q. Tell me what you said.

A. I just explained what I had done, and they looked very pleased. That was all.

Q. I know you are a modest person, but that was a personal triumph?

A. It was a great relief. When you consider that at the same time the Getty Centre at Berkhamsted was being built as a wonderful archive building. And we were beginning to look at the South Bank, and Paul eventually paid for most of that, to get the Museum of the Moving Image going. It was pretty damn good.

13. The British Film Institute Thereafter

Q. Let me ask you. What do you feel about what happened to the BFI when you left? By what happened I mean after a year or two the complete disintegration of morale of the people who were working there, the lack of confidence and therefore support from those outsiders who were BFI's friends, the loss of what the BFI stood for so much in the services that it gave.

A. I don't think that's right at all. Wilf Stevenson, my successor (right) did a lot of good things. He got the National Film Theatre sorted out, which I never did. He got BFI Publishing right, which I never did. He got Sight and Sound modernised into something that is now a much more successful journal. A really notably good film journal, with a different approach from the old Sight and Sound, which was very much backward looking. It is now dealing very much with the current cinema. He did a lot of good things at the BFI. Unfortunately, while he had been a wonderful deputy to me, totally supportive, always finding a way to do things, when he sat there as Director, something went wrong with his personality, or some other element of his personality came out. Which made him completely incapable of making people sort of come towards him, and be led by him. I don't fully understand it, because I see him now and still get on perfectly well with him - although I'm pretty angry with him over some things. He didn't let the BFI down, but he just couldn't manage the human relations of it.



But if you look at what happened in his years, they were not as considerable as what happened in my years. It would be absurd to pretend that. But he did a lot of significant things which I had failed to do. I tell you another one he did. He introduced the degree course done with Birkbeck - a very creative academic course. He knew how to do it; he had been an academic administrator in Scotland before he came to the BFI, and he knew how to set up a degree course, and how to get degrees validated. And he got this course going, which has been very good thing. He did at least four very innovative things at the BFI, and of course he benefitted from Paul Getty's continuing gifts, which went on for some years.

Unfortunately what he did, he frittered away the whole endowment which Paul had given us to support the new enterprises. In particular the museum, which we knew could not run without a subsidy, and the government had

made clear that they were never going to subsidise it. They had made that clear. Paul had provided us with an endowment which would provide us with that money. So it was fine, there was no problem. But Wilf spent it over the years. Some on good things, but a lot on running things, on staff, frittering it away.

When he had been Deputy Director he had maintained a very firm regime. He always pulled me back from spending too much. You know, you've got to keep within the budget, and you've got to make it work. By the time I was leaving the state contribution to the BFI (which was 90% when I arrived) had diminished to about 30% to 35%. It was all money we had earned, or outside money. The state element was shrinking. It couldn't shrink much further because there were certain things you couldn't raise money for from outside. Wilf just frittered the endowment away. By the time Wilf finished in that job, he should have been getting a million a year in income from that endowment, given the growth in the stock exchange in the eighties. But by the end of his time there was only a few hundred thousand of endowment left. Now a lot of it got put into the BFI Imax on the South Bank - the last few millions. I suppose that was a good thing. I was in favour of the Imax and had chosen the site for the Imax during my last months at the BFI. But it hasn't been a money spinner. At first they thought it would be a money spinner, and a substitute for the endowment. It's OK, its covering its costs, but it's not a money spinner for the BFI. And it has used up the last of the endowment.

Q. I know you take issue with what I said about what has happened. You have partly answered the question. You see I was a customer, a friend, a supporter, a user, all those things. It used to be a real pleasure to go to say the Stills Department. Wonderful young people running it. Unbelievably knowledgeable. They could say to you, whatever picture you asked about, which was made in 1937, and they would say yes we've got stills of that, or I don't think we've got anything on that. All that expertise and enthusiasm seemed to go. It was no longer this wonderful place that we are privileged to have around our industry. That's what I feel.

A. Yes, well I suppose I am afraid that the BFI did start losing the people with the knowledge. And as you point out that is the core of the Institute. I had Joan Bakewell here the other day, and she understood this. The bedrock of the thing is not the money or the collections, it's the knowledge of twenty people, some of them quite humble, who had this stupendous knowledge. A lot of those people are still there, but they became a bit demoralised, and didn't feel honoured. People don't work for money, they work for honour, and status and respect. Even in this money obsessed world, that is what they really work for. If that is lost it can easily be brought back. You just have to tell people they are valued and they will come back to it like a magnet.

Q. There are people I deal with at the BFI and they are absolutely fabulous. An example would be Bridget, who ran the Stills Department. She was so good. It was a pleasure to go into the Stills Department and lean on the counter and ask what have you got on this. I was dumbfounded when I heard that she had been made redundant. It was with great pleasure that I heard she had found a new job in the stills library of the Imperial War Museum. I was pleased to give her a reference - about the best reference I have ever given to anyone. Do you feel that all this will come back. The Museum of the Moving Image is in store now.

A. Yes that will come back very soon now. That is well under way. I do keep unofficially my eyes on that, and I talk to Chris Smith so that he knows. I don't think there is a problem there. There is a scheme for a new architectural design, which Leslie Hardcastle has been much involved in. I know he's very sorry about the Sanderson Collection going, or not being on display any more. But they are telling us that everything is coming back, they've got the site, and they've got the big outline plan, and they've probably got the money, or are close to having the money. Because the site in Stephen Street is now very valuable. And the site occupied by the National Film Theatre and the museum is also very very valuable.

Now if they insist, and that is what is going on now. They have got to insist that they are given the full value of that. You see I was taught by my parents that you have to have freehold. Never have a landlord, never pay rent. You must be immovable.

So when I started everything was rented, and I told you about Stephen Street. But we got out of the GLC in its last months that huge strip of land on a 125 year lease to the BFI. And Berkhamsted is entirely freehold. And when that is used up there is Gaydon up in the country. Full of nitrate film. But when that is gone and copied there is enormous territory for the BFI to move into for the next hundred years. So everything is absolutely owned. It's very important that they negotiate an arrangement that enables them to capitalise on that. They've got a Lottery grant, and £20m worth of real estate in the centre of London, plus whatever they can get the government to allow against the South Bank site. Put all that together and they are still a few million short of the £50m that they might need. But Lottery could do that, or they could borrow it, or Paul Getty might fund it.

Q. Tony, the archive and the restoration programme. You've just mentioned that 100 miles outside London you've got millions of feet of nitrate stock. Can you ever see a time when the archive can catch up with the work it needs to do?

A. Oh yes. I am not intimately involved year by year on how much is being copied and done, but they are on a programme which should get it all done. But I hope they will not throw all the nitrate away, as there is nothing better

than nitrate. As long as it is chemically possible to show it, it will be shown sometimes. If it is kept under cool conditions some of it should be alright for a time. The copying is well advanced.

Q. What are we copying onto?

A. Well, This is the problem. Onto acetate still.

Q. Why is that a problem?

A. Because it has been discovered that there are problems with acetate. There is the vinegar effect. They are very worried about the long term properties of acetate. It is not the same problem as nitrate, but strange things happen to acetate film after many years in the archive. These substances are only a few decades old; less than your or my lifetime. And archives have to think for centuries. So they are beginning to worry. They don't know what it is. Whether it is the tin boxes or the plastic boxes that the film is kept in, but there is some sort of reaction taking place. It only affects a few cans. But it is worrying until you have a scientific explanation. It is a worrying business.

Q. Is any of the copying done onto tape?

A. Not from nitrate. There is tape as well. But what tape do you use? Tape doesn't last a decade. You've got to have a medium which you can use, anywhere. A piece of film shot when Victoria was on the throne; you can still put it in a projector and show it. But if you put a videotape made in 1936 or 1946, or a videotape made in 1970 or 1980, you couldn't show them today except under archival conditions. Tape hasn't stabilised and maybe tape will disappear altogether soon - into some other form of digitisation.

Q. CDs?

A. But how long will a CD last? How long will a DVD last? Some archives moved all their films onto one inch or two inch videotape it would be useless. How many things do you need to transfer it to, with the volume growing all the time? It's very difficult to know what to do, except to be acutely alive to all the scientific possibilities of the moment. Acetate still seems the best medium. It certainly has a good life, but there are one or two worries. At some point there will be a digitisation which will enable the original experience to be retrieved. If you put it on tape now you can't get it onto a big screen. So the experience of cinema going is lost. So if you want to keep all the experience of the film, you've got to find a medium which will play on a large screen. And there isn't one yet. And you've got to be certain, if you are running an archive, that the medium will stay around for a century or so.

Q. I should declare my interest in the next question, because I am involved with a firm in Belgium called Barco who have a division which is purely to reproduce cinema electronically. It is close.

A. I tried the Barco for our new auditorium here [Magdalen College] and we bought another make - Sanyo - much more expensive. Barco is wonderful; it is inexpensive, it is good, but it isn't excellent.

Q. There are models and models. The one they have just provided for BAFTA.

A. We paid £8,000 for the new Sanyo in the last 12 months. And it is wonderful, but I dare say someone will come along and better that.

Q. The BAFTA one is close to £40,000. And it is huge. But it is a remarkable picture. But it's not like film. Do you not have film projectors in your auditorium?

A. Oh yes. We bought the 35mm projectors from the Barbican cinema, which is quite new. We've got spares as well.

Q. Going back to the archive, do you feel then that the stock of nitrate that you've got, which I assume is more or less complete ...

A. No, I think they are still discovering things.

Q. No, I didn't mean complete in that sense. I meant that each stack of eight cans is the whole movie.

A. You don't fully know until you have tried it. But that's why they keep several versions of each one. So that before they make the acetate copy they make sure that they are copying it from the best that is available. They will also import reels if they think if someone's got a better version of such and such a reel in another archive somewhere.

Q. It is thrilling when you read that for a film, a British film, they suddenly found 183 feet in a cellar somewhere.

A. Yes, projectionists sometimes used to cut out their favourite bits.

Q. Well, that's Cinema Paradiso. How do you keep in touch? How do you know that there isn't an archive in Los Angeles that's got plenty of money behind it, and it has something.

A. The archives stay in touch with each other. Before any major restoration takes place they find out. And also archives tend to spend their restoration money on their national films. So if we find we have a very good example of a Swedish film, we will ring up the Swedish archive and say we have just found something you might be interested in. So they can get it if they are copying that particular title. Although you store, and get viewing

copies, of as many films as possible from everywhere, you spend the restoration money really on your own national films. Napoleon is an exception to that, and there are other exceptions, but in general that is what happens.

Q. Going back to the BFI for a moment, do you feel there are divisions, departments, which perhaps no longer do what they were intended to do? Or put another way, are there departments that have not had the money to bring themselves up to date? Regional film theatres, for example, do you feel they leave something to be desired?

A. Yes, but I think they are rather being phased out and being replaced by another network. Now that the Arts Council funding has been regionalised much more, they can get resources to do that - to get better cinemas. I don't know what has happened. I know that at this university we haven't got one. We haven't got a university cinema, but we have got the Phoenix, which is part owned by the BFI. And it is very profitable. Each university town tries to do something. But a lot of those regional film theatres were in university cities, where you get a group of people interested in them. But it is quite different now, and I don't know how that network works. But I know there are still 35 regional film theatres in the new BFI yearbook. Those 35, if they are good ones, are quite a good little network. You can do a lot with 35.

Q. It seems so important that we de-London cinema.

A. Yes, just to get the revenue in to pay for the viewing prints you have to have new audiences. I think the BFI is now back to its core activities of preserving and copying and showing at the National Film Theatre. I don't think there is anything one would want to cut out. Some people would have said in the past does it need Sight and Sound? But the answer is loud and clear. It has a huge circulation, and it is a very popular magazine again.

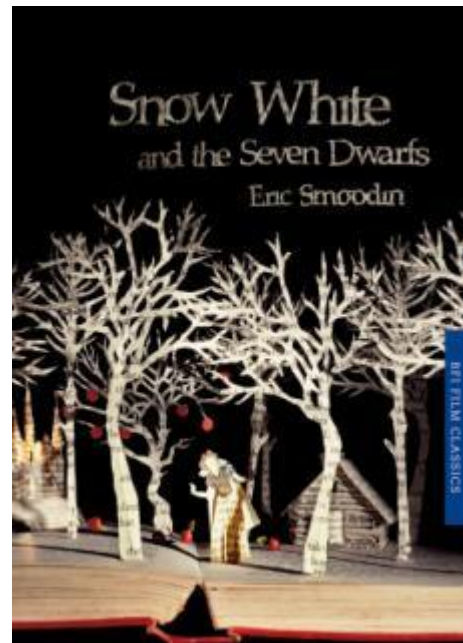
Q. Yes I am sure you are right. And I am pleased to have Sight and Sound going back thirty years. It is so marvellous. Because while on the one hand the writing is a bit too intellectual for my taste.

A. Still? Even in the new version of it?

Q. Let me tell you what is so marvellous about it. It is so brilliantly indexed. So whatever you want to look up about cinema - not just reviews of the movies - but you want to see what Nick Roeg had to say during the last five or six years, you can look through the index. I don't think there's any other magazine that does that.

A. No. But you can do a lot of search through the computer system. When I was at the BFI we had 1600 journals from all over the world, and they are still there. A lot of them were journals that had finished, that had belonged to

the silent area, to the twenties or thirties. Old Soviet one which they just kept. It's a marvellous collection. But I think the most exciting project that the BFI has around at the moment, which seems to be flourishing, is the 360 film list. It started in my day, but they seem to have taken it much more seriously now. They are trying to get 360 films - the great classics of the world - in perfect copies to show at the museum or the National Film Theatre. For each one, they are commissioning a little book about the making of that film (an example to the right). And I see Gerald Kaufman has just done one, and it's a very good series. There'll be 360 of those little books, and 360 films. One hopes they will go all over the country and raise consciousness of cinema history.



Q. They will have to go on. They can't stop at 360.

A. The idea was to have one for every day of the year. Perhaps they will do another 360. I don't think they have got much beyond a hundred at the moment. For each there is a perfect copy, perfect documentation, perfect viewing copies. Many of them are in colour, which costs an enormous amount to preserve.

Q. Are they able to bring it back if the only print they have got is faded?

A. Yes, because if it is properly preserved, you can reproduce the three colours with perfect viewing copies. You can do that with Technicolor but also with all colour. At Berkhamsted they've got all the technology to do that. The idea is to get it absolutely perfect for all those great classic films, so everyone in the country can see them in perfect copies. It is a big and visionary project!

Q. It amazes me that the BFI can get permission to work on say an American film. I think they have recently brought out *It's a Wonderful Life*. I am surprised that whoever it was, perhaps Columbia, will allow you to even do it.



A. You get the permissions to do it. And you do it in conjunction with American archives as well. Some of the copies we preserve have been lost in America. They are not always as grateful as they should be!

Q. Well I'd like to say Tony that I think we have had a unique perspective on our industry. Others had roles like yours in the BBC, but they didn't go on to run the BFI and to bring in all this money. And they didn't go on to become President of Magdalen. Thank you very much.

14. Books by Anthony Smith



(ed.) *British Broadcasting* (David & Charles, 1974), ISBN 978-0-7153-6326-3

(ed.) *The British Press Since the War* (David & Charles, 1974) ISBN 978-0-7153-6573-1

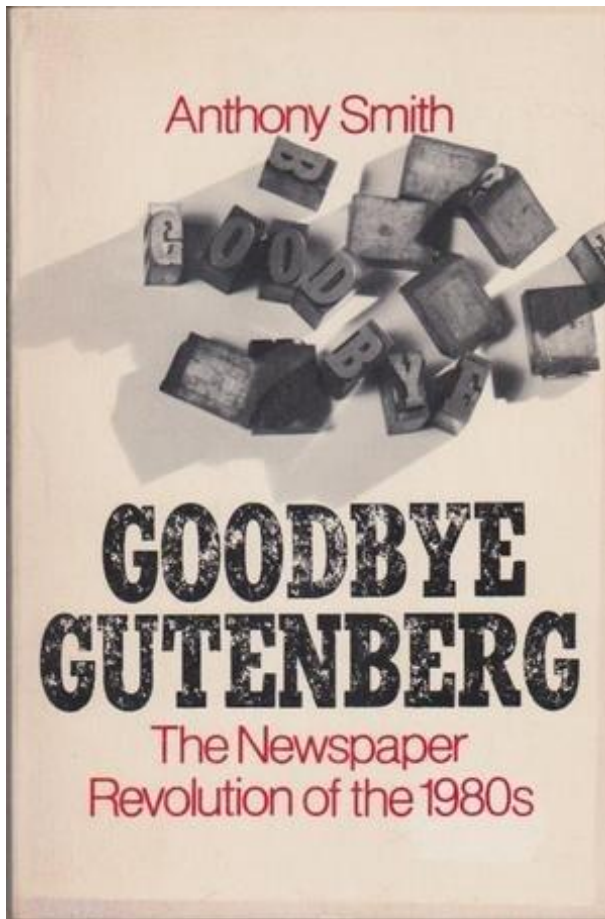
The Shadow in the Cave: a Study of the Relationship Between the Broadcaster, his Audience and the State (Quartet Books, 1976) ISBN 978-0-04-791029-6

(ed.) *Subsidies and the Press in Europe* (PEP, 1977) ISBN 978-0-85374-156-5

The Politics of Information: Problems of Policy in Modern Media (Macmillan, 1978) ISBN 978-0-333-23610-9

The Newspaper: an International History (Thames and Hudson, 1979) ISBN 978-0-500-27286-2

(ed.) *Television and Political Life: Studies in Six European Countries* (Macmillan, 1979) ISBN 978-0-333-24328-2



Goodbye Gutenberg: the Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s (Oxford University Press, 1980) ISBN 978-0-19-502709-9

The Geopolitics of Information: How Western Culture Dominates the World (Faber & Faber, 1980) ISBN 978-0-19-520208-3

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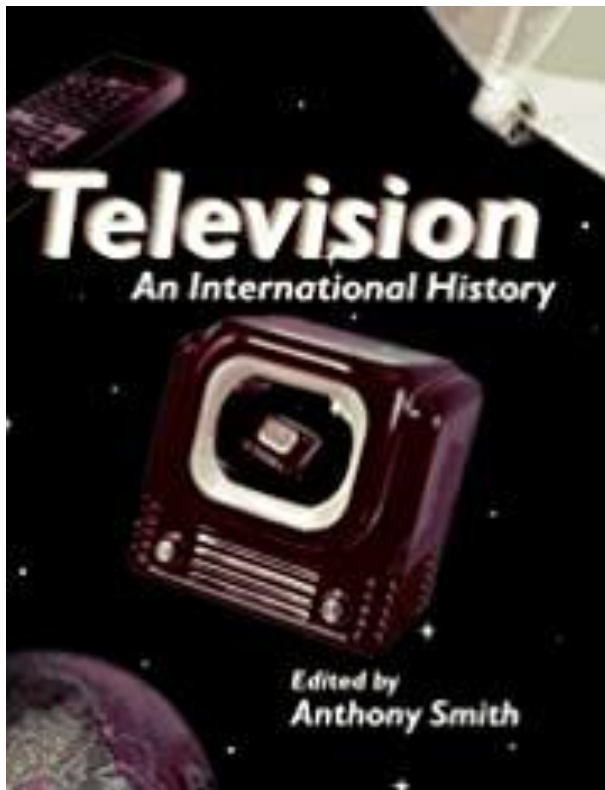
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15. Postscript

Alex Reid, the editor of Lives Retold, contributed in May 2021 the following postscript about Tony Smith.

While Head of Long Range Studies at British Telecom in the early 1970s I had the pleasure of meeting Tony Smith and working with him. He had recently left the BBC and was undertaking research and writing at St. Anthony's College Oxford. We commissioned him to produce a discussion paper on the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunications. He delivered an admirable and influential paper.

I kept in touch with him during the 1970s and 1980s, and treasure recollections of our conversations. He had a great sense of humour. I remember him explaining that he had observed an interesting behavioural rule in the world of film and show business. He reckoned that there was a strict hierarchy in that world, with the most famous actors and directors at the top, and below them several well understood layers of seniority - all the way down to humble researchers and technicians.

He had observed that at show business events there was much effusive greeting and hugging, with the duration of the socially permitted hug being the seniority of the huggers multiplied together. Thus two very junior people would hug only briefly. Senior people could hug more extravagantly. And, according to Tony, he had been at a party where the enormously talented Richard Attenborough and David Puttnam spotted each other across the room. They moved towards each other, like powerful magnets, and locked in an embrace so tight and prolonged that they had to be prized apart.

I have particular memories of a trip with Tony in the early 1970s to the annual conference of the International Broadcasting Institute which was being held in Mexico City. We sat together on the outward flight which was an experience in itself. For economy we (and other UK delegates) took a Mexican airline on a long, slow, cheap route with stopovers in both Madrid and Miami. I remember that during the stopover at Miami we looked out of the window and saw our pilot and co-pilot walking away from the plane across the tarmac towards the pilot and co-pilot who were to relieve them for the final leg. As the two crews approached each other they leaped forward and wrapped their arms around each other in warm embraces. Tony was alarmed by this display of emotion, explaining that he thought airliner pilots should be of dispassionate temperament. He clearly feared that the new, daredevil crew might attempt to loop the loop.

We eventually arrived at the airport in Mexico City in the middle of the night, exhausted after what seemed a 24 hour trip. There were several

dozen of us conference delegates. We trooped dejected and weary through the terminal carrying our suitcases, led by our Mexican greeter who was full of energy and joie de vivre. He had a big notice marked IBI on a stick, like a protest board. He led us forward pumping his notice up and down, shouting out to our embarrassment IBI! IBI! IBI!



In the corner of the arrival lounge was a Mariachi Band, playing away with panache, even at one in the morning. To complement our leader, they fell in at the end of our shuffling crocodile, playing away at full volume, and followed us out of the building. We half expected them to climb into the coach that was to take us to the conference hotel, but thankfully they remained on the pavement, their music fading away into the night as we departed. We were to encounter many more Mariachi Bands during our visit, and Tony speculated that they must be the single largest occupational group in Mexico.

Other memories of the trip included an evening reception, where we had to approach the entrance by walking under a long pergola lined with female human statues in folkloric Mexican costume. The floor of the pergola was entirely covered with flower petals carefully and individually arranged into complex patterns. It felt very wanton to destroy all this by walking on it.



A Pelota match.

And one afternoon we were taken to watch a Pelota match. A ball is slung around with great speed within a court by players equipped with large basketwork scoops. There was much shouting and cheering from the Mexican audience, but of course we had no idea of the rules or of who was winning. It was characteristic of Tony that he provided for us a fluent and fictional running commentary, inventing on the go the names of the players and the technical terms for various tactics and scoring moves.
