

Teaching the “Non-examinable”

Estella Lewis’s Contribution to Postwar History Education in the UK

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Note on the contributor

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Abstract

Estella Lewis's handbook for teachers, *Teaching History in Secondary Schools*, published in 1960, is examined to reflect upon the teaching of history in the UK during the postwar period, a text that addresses the "problem" of teaching history to "non-academic" children attending secondary modern schools. Lewis's ideas, attitudes and values towards this question are explored fully in order to show her contesting history education aims, content and methods. Her work as a history educator, alongside other authors, is significant in the way it sheds light on the largely unexamined discourse on how history teaching in postwar secondary modern schools was conceptualized. Generally presented as deserted and unchanging, the landscape of postwar history education that appears in Lewis's text is a social practice bustling with activity.

Key words

Social practice, pedagogic discourse, community of practice, written curriculum and collective memory.

Introduction

In England, during the first seven decades of the twentieth century, the subject of teaching history in schools was taken up by a host of writers. In *A Select Bibliography of the Teaching of History in the United Kingdom*, compiled by John Fines in 1969, for the years 1944-1969, over 160 titles were selected.¹ For the preceding period, 1900-1944, 420 titles made his list.² From the beginnings of the twentieth century, when history began to establish itself as a subject in state schools, there had existed a market serving a readership interested in works on history teaching and a group of authors who were ready to supply its needs.

Fines, an advocate of history education reform, favoured texts which presented approaches that were broadly in line with his ideas. Academic theoretical works, as well as practical pedagogic guides written by educational professionals provided a critical commentary on school practice. Before the *disciplinary turn*, which from the 1970s foregrounded a source-based enquiry, history education authors advocated the transmission of a body of substantive knowledge.³ In reaction to rote learning, judged to be ineffective, their main concern was to make knowledge transmission emotionally and imaginatively engaging by developing teaching methods and resources. This included authors exploring the use of primary source materials to raise the disciplinary question, how is the past known?

Authors included university and college lecturers, county archivists, museum curators, teacher trainers and history teachers. In many cases, authors pushed at the boundaries of accepted practice when discussing visual learning, county archives, the museum and the school, local history, gender preferences in school history, bias in textbooks, subject aims, the place of contemporary history in the school curriculum and logical thinking in history. Curriculum making, teacher training development and examination reform are examined. An

¹ J. Fines, *A Select Bibliography of the Teaching of History in the United Kingdom* (Historical Association, 1969)..

² For the pre-war period, see, A. C. F. Beales (1937) *A Guide to the teaching of history in schools*, University of London Press.

³ For accounts of the 'disciplinary turn' see: Sylvester, D. (1994) Change and Continuity in History Teaching 1900-93. In H. Bourdillon (ed.) *Teaching History*. London, Routledge, pp. 9–23. Slater, J. (1989) *The Politics of History Teaching: A Humanity Dehumanised?* Institute of Education, University of London.

international dimension is evident in writing on history teaching in Europe and further afield. Fines' select bibliography provides evidence of a sustained commentary on the nature of history education. It shows it emerging mid-century as an academic field representing the cutting-edge of pre-war and postwar history education thinking.⁴

Included in Fines' list is, *Teaching History in Secondary School*, a handbook written by Estella Lewis for teachers of history working in secondary modern schools, published in 1960. Fines notes that it: "Covers aims, selection of material, class teaching, the use of books, and suggested topics for teaching (thematic and patch topics), though he did not think it important to mention that its concern was with the problem of teaching history in secondary modern schools.⁵ In a sociocultural reading, Lewis's text is far more than Fines proposed. It can be seen forming part of a social and cultural milieu in which classroom practice is an element within a web of institutions, associations, practices and power relations.⁶ Lewis's text constitutes, in this reading, a discourse on the aims, content and methods of teaching history in schools which may or may not have influenced what was taught in classrooms. It provides a gateway into a *way of thinking* about teaching history to children attending secondary modern schools. The part played by successive postwar governments and civil service officials in shaping school history practice through policy, resourcing and pedagogic guidance is widely acknowledged.⁷ The work of postwar educational professionals, such as Estella Lewis has,

⁴ The Journals cited are: *Adult Education*, *Amateur Historian*, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *British Journal of Psychology*, *Bulletin for the Society for the study of Labour History*, *Bulletin of the General Studies Association*, *Cambridge Journal*, *Didaskalos*, *Educational Review*, *Education for Teaching*, *Education Outlook*, *Further Education*, *Historical Association*, *History*, *Journal of Education*, *Museum Journal*, *Teaching History*, *TES*, *TLS*, *Towards World Understanding*, *Trends in Education*, *UNESCO*, *Universities Quarterly Review*, *Visual Education*. Articles breaking new ground include: G. R. Batho, *Archive Teaching Units: An Experiment in History Teaching*, *Visual Education*, August (1957), 2–3; G. R. Batho, *Archive Teaching Units: The Progress of an Experiment in History Teaching*, *Visual Education*, December (1958), 8–10; W. Burston, *The Basis of the History Syllabus: Is Historical Knowledge Relative?* *Educational Review*, 3(1) (1950), 22–36; K. Charlton, *Source Material and the Teaching of History*, *Educational Review*, 9(1) (1956), 57–63; M. Harrison, *The Scope of Museums in Education*, *Educational Review*, 7(1) (1954), 5–12.

⁵ J. Fines, *A Select Bibliography of the Teaching of History in the United Kingdom* (Historical Association, 1969). p. 34

⁶ Cannadine, D., Keating, J. and Sheldon, N. (2011) *The Right Kind of History: Teaching the Past in Twentieth-Century England*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷ *Ibid.*,

however, been overlooked.⁸ An aim of this paper is to draw attention to the value of texts, such as this, as sources of evidence for the history of history education.

The context of Lewis's text is a system of education which divided children according to "intelligence" as being "academic" or "non-academic". In 1944, secondary modern schools were established to deliver a "non-academic" secondary education to the majority of pupils attending secondary schools in England. In 1947 the school leaving age for these pupils was raised from 14 to 15. In 1951, it is estimated that 65 per cent of pupils attended secondary modern schools, with 29 per cent attending grammar schools, and technical schools accounting for the remaining 4 per cent. Lewis was addressing, in 1960, a history education issue that affected a majority of pupils, a large number of teachers, in a system that was undergoing major structural change. The longer-term context is an academic/non-academic history education divide that had been a feature of a system from its inception during the nineteenth century.⁹ In 1937, a majority of pupils attending elementary schools left to begin work at 14 years of age without qualifications. At the same time, two-thirds of elementary schools' teachers had received no subject training in history. Extending secondary education to all and raising the school leaving age to fifteen presented the postwar history education community with curriculum-making problems. Amongst these was the pedagogic question: what kind of history education should these pupils receive and in what way was it to be different from the history taught to pupils selected to receive a grammar school "academic" education?

Social practice and pedagogic discourse

The term "pedagogic discourse" captures the ideas, beliefs and values shared within the history education community of practice, to signify a regulatory system that creates, maintains, and legitimates pedagogical practices and forms.¹⁰ It offers a nuanced way of

⁸ For accounts acknowledging writers see: Aldrich, R. (1984) *New History: An Historical Perspective*. In A. K. Dickinson, P. J. Lee and P. J. Rogers (eds) *Learning History*. London, Heinemann, pp. 201–24. Ralph Samuel Aldrich Samuel, R. (1998) *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain: Theatres of Memory, Volume II* (ed Alison Light). London, Verso.

⁹ Challenging the divide, in 1965 the Labour government introduced a program of comprehensive reorganization.

¹⁰ R. Phillips, *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State* (Cassell, 1998). For a definition of pedagogic see B. Bernstein, *On Pedagogic Discourse*. In J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of*

viewing the development of school history, serving to mark the boundary, at any one time, between what can and what cannot be said about its aims, content and methods.¹¹ It is a social process of selecting and organizing curriculum knowledge in particular ways.¹² In her text, Lewis can be seen engaged in a social practice that contributes to a pedagogic discourse in which she is attempting to make sense of a history education divided along lines of social class and culture.¹³ Reading this recognises the dual nature of her text as *content* and *form* to highlight the choices she is making underscoring her leading ideas and priorities.¹⁴ Pedagogic discourse informs the analysis in this paper by directing it towards the way Lewis selects and orders her ideas around the issue of teaching history to “non-academic” pupils.¹⁵

Played out across a number of professional contexts, a social practice is evident in episodes in Lewis’s career as a history educator. It begins with a sixteen-year spell teaching history in a grammar school, from 1931 to 1947. From 1947 to 1960, she lectured in history at Furzedown Training College London, then linked to the University of London, Institute of Education during a time when the London Institute of Education was emerging as a centre for history education studies. She contributed to its *Handbook for History Teachers*, (1962) edited by W. H. Burston and C. W. Green, writing sections on secondary modern school history textbooks, books on prehistory, and books on costume. She participated in events organised by the London History Teachers Association. Founded in 1953, the LHTA’s sought to “to further the interests of history teachers and the teaching of history, either acting independently or acting along with other Association or Associations having the same or similar objects.¹⁶ It provided a forum for teachers to share their practice in light of their

Education (Greenwood, 1986).

¹¹ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum: Collected Essays* (Falmer Press, 1988), p. 10.

¹² B. Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction* (2nd edn) (Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 24.

¹³ Taking a “social practice” perspective was influenced by Stuart Hall’s *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (OU, Sage, 1997).

¹⁴ L. Prior, *Using Documents in Social Research* (Sage, 2003); J. Scott, *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research* (Polity Press, 1990); G. McCulloch, *Documentary Research in Education, History and the Social Sciences* (Routledge Falmer, 2004); T. May, *Social Research Issues, Methods and Process* (Open University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ P. Atkinson, *Language, Structure and Reproduction: An Introduction to the Sociology of Basil Bernstein* (Methuen, 1985), p. 147.

¹⁶ The minutes of the LHTA are in the Newsam Library and Archives, catalogue numbers DC/LMT/A1/2 (1957–60) and DC/CMT/A1/1 (1953–57).

experience and current research. In 1958 it held a panel discussion on “Teaching History to the Non-Academic Child”¹⁷

During the 1950s, she was a member of the Institute of Education Standing Sub-Committee in History.¹⁸ Minutes of its meetings record her involvement in the delivery of professional development courses. In January and March 1953, she delivered an evening course for teachers titled “The Teaching of History in Secondary Modern Schools” held at Borough Road College, on Tuesday evenings between 6.30 and 8.00 pm. For this, she delivered two sessions. The first was on the use of illustrative pictorial material. The second was titled “The Backward Child and the History Lesson”. It was offered again in November 1953, where 47 teachers attended and this was repeated in 1956, 1958, 1959 and 1960. In 1960 she delivered separate sessions on illustrative, pictorial materials and sources for local history. The foreword to her handbook, *Teaching History in Secondary Schools*, states that it was her involvement in these professional development courses that had helped to crystallize her thinking on teaching history in a secondary modern school. It shows a teacher trainer, with a grammar school teaching background, in a position of authority adopting teaching history to the “backward child” as a special concern.¹⁹ Further still, it show teaching history to the “backward child” to be an issue that cut across the postwar community of practice.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The minutes of University of London, Institute of Education Standing Sub-Committee in History are housed in the Newsam Library and Archives, catalogue number IE/PER/B/160.

¹⁹ Connections between university, schools, museums, art galleries, records offices, teacher training colleges and the Historical Association are reflected in the early career of Margaret Elizabeth Bryant, who in 1957 took the post of Senior Lecturer in Education with special reference to the teaching of history at the University of London, Institute of Education. Bryant had read history at Girton College, Cambridge (1935–1938) and trained to be a history teacher, taking the Cambridge Certificate in Education in 1939. Her first post was in the independent sector as “history mistress” at Walthamstow Hall School Girls Day and Boarding School. She then worked for the British Council (1944–1946) and was Education Officer for the Essex Records Office (1946–1948). Between 1948 and 1956, she moved into the state sector where she taught history at Dunraven secondary modern school in Streatham. At this time, she worked at the Geffrye Museum and devised an experimental course in Museum Studies for schools. In 1961, she published *The Museum and the School*, a Teaching of History pamphlet for the Historical Association. In, *The Museum and the School*, Bryant reported that the relationship between schools and museums had undergone rapid change during the 1950s. She wrote: “From the school side, teachers are more aware than ever before of the part which museums can play in purposeful and enjoyable study and experience.” For Bryant’s CV, see IOE Library reference IE/PER/B/160, and for her career: M. Bryant, My Life in the History of Education, *History of Education Society Bulletin*, 51 (Spring, 1993), pp. 33–9.

An unsuitable subject?

Lewis employs a specific language to categorize and divide pupils according to “intelligence”. Those selected at 11 to attend academic grammar schools are described by her as “above average”, “academic” and “examinable”. Whilst those who failed the intelligence test and who went on to attend secondary modern schools are described as “average”, “below average”, “backward”, “retarded”, “non-academic” and “non-examinable”. The gradations on this scale were for her “natural” categories, and she employed them unquestioningly. The concept of pupil “intelligence” in relation to teaching and learning history was at the heart of the postwar discourse. Conceived of as an authoritative body produced by university based professional academics, historical knowledge was inherently problematic because it was said to require an “adult” mind to understand its meaning. The central question for school curriculum makers was how to adapt this body of adult historical knowledge for young minds. This was more acute for pupils attending secondary modern schools because they were lower down the intelligence scale. It appeared to some that history be dropped from the secondary modern curriculum because it was beyond their understanding. In 1952, the Ministry of Education’s *Teaching History, Pamphlet No. 23*, and Burston’s *Social Studies and the History Teacher*, in 1954, supported inclusion.²⁰ As did the Newsom Report, which began its work in 1961, asserting: “we are not confronted with a psychological barrier which prevents people of below average intelligence, that is to say about half the nation, forming a responsible and reasoned opinion about public affairs. Optimism is possible. The important thing is to discover and apply the means by which it can be justified”.²¹

Sharing in this optimism, Lewis opposed the pessimists, arguing that pupils attending secondary modern schools were capable of learning history if they were taught it in an appropriate way. It was indeed possible to teach history to “non-academic” pupils on condition that subject aims and practices were first clarified and when non-specialist teachers received sufficient subject training. When these conditions were in place, she argued, history could be for them a transformative experience. This could only happen when the secondary

²⁰ In 1952, the Ministry of Education’s *Teaching History, Pamphlet No. 23*; W. H. Burston (1954) *Social Studies and the History Teacher* (

²¹ The Newsom Report, *Half Our Future* (1963), p 163.

modern school history syllabus departed from the grammar school model. It was, she wrote, “almost certainly attempting the impossible” in expecting an average class in a secondary modern school to master the average grammar school syllabus.²² First and foremost, this depended upon reformulating the correct aims of teaching history to these pupils.

A feeling for the past

The aims of history education are discussed in an opening chapter titled, “Aims and their bearing on selection”. Here, she draws on her work delivering workshops to recall her conversations with non-specialist teachers who confided that when employing textbooks and rote learning, they “can’t teach history” and that: “history is slavery for me and slavery for the children.” Teaching history was said to be a “burden”, a “failure” and “trouble” and that pupils were “bored”, their work of “poor quality” and “disappointing”.²³ Her pedagogic proposals were, in part, a reaction to the “failure” of these inadequately trained teachers to engage their pupils sufficiently, if at all. An effective secondary modern school history education, she argued, must be taught by specialist teachers inspired by clearly envisaged aims that were appropriate to the needs of the “non-examinable”.²⁴ It must also depart from older pedagogic practices of textbooks and drill.

Lewis’s central question is: how can secondary modern pupils, who are receiving an education that was predominantly vocational, benefit from an academic subject such as history? Her answer excludes the possibility of teaching for public examination, as the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) was to do in 1965. Instead, she proposes a radical modification of the grammar school history curriculum with focus upon its “non-academic” benefit of assimilation into “national culture”. Accepting that learning history would have little bearing on their working lives as manual workers within a rapidly changing postwar economy, being introduced to the nation’s heritage would, she thought, provide an enriching experience that would, enable them to live more fulfilling lives.

²² Lewis, 1960, p. 3.

²³ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

For Lewis cultural assimilation for these pupils had beneficial societal outcomes. Developing a collective memory of the nation's past would develop in secondary modern pupils a patriotic civic awareness, which she considered to be the bedrock of a stable society. Underpinning this was an attitude that viewed secondary modern school pupils en masse as the "other": their cultureless lives threatening the stability of postwar society. "We desire" she wrote, "that children who lack a rich cultural background at home should become free of a world in many ways different from their own, yet in which they can see the beginnings of their own".²⁵ Assimilation was a social and political necessity, whilst at the same time, it provided pupils with a sense of belonging, enriching their lives by widening their experience of being in the world.

Delivering her civilizing mission in secondary modern classrooms required selecting short, accessible narrative episodes from the body of historical knowledge that nurtured a sense of belonging to a common culture. "We want them", she wrote: "to enter into the heritage of their culture, a culture common to themselves and to both their ancestors and their contemporaries in different social and academic circles."²⁶ This was to be peopled by "outstanding" individuals who having made a "significant" contribution to the advancement of "our civilization" modelled ideal civic action. Meeting "the great and the good in our past" would teach "tolerance" and "sympathy".²⁷ Through teaching history, she wrote:

We hope to people their world with men and women who served ideals, sought adventure, gave mankind new knowledge, added to the sum of beauty. We may even expect that some of our pupils will develop a sense of responsibility to the community as they begin to realize their debt to other races and other times.²⁸

Encountering these narrative episodes would, she thought, refine the uncultured, personality of the secondary modern school pupil. Learning that sympathy and tolerance were noble

²⁵ Lewis, 1960, p. 3. In 1963, the Newsom Report, *Half Our Future*, took a similar view when it wrote that: "there is much unrealised talent especially among boys and girls whose potential is masked by inadequate powers of speech and the limitations of home background. Unsuitable programmes and teaching methods may aggravate their difficulties, and frustration express itself in apathy or rebelliousness. The country cannot afford this wastage, humanly or economically speaking" (p. 4).

²⁶ Lewis, 1960, p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

virtues would develop in them a capacity to feel with and for others enabling them to rise above innate base selfish instincts. For this to be effective, narrative episodes would have to contain dramatic human interest and be delivered by the teacher with conscious art. Overcoming the knowledge problem, that “real” history was an adult subject, meant that learning history for non-academic pupils would have to be an, inspiring, imaginative and above all an emotional experience.²⁹

Lewis thought that a syllabus framed by chronological narrative of the nation’s past, though appropriate for “academic” grammar school pupils preparing for public examinations, was a factor holding back the secondary modern school pupils’ learning - the reason for the failure experienced by the non-specialist teachers she had encountered when running workshops. A grammar school history education, she thought, would engender in secondary modern pupils, unable to understand it, boredom leading to disengagement. In support of her case, she cited Whitehead’s theory of “inert ideas”, that insisted upon providing pupils with sufficient time to consolidate their understanding of content because “facts only become knowledge when the mind plays around with them”.³⁰ Her reduction of content coverage, a central feature of her framework, had pedagogic consequences by releasing time for pupils to be involved in the process of learning in new ways.

Replacing the grammar school content-rich outline narrative with a series of content-light topics to be taught in depth was intended to provide the secondary modern school pupil with a different experience of learning history from the grammar school, one that was active, emotional, imaginative, creative and, above all, pleasurable. It would, she thought, open for them “wide doors of delight”.³¹ She likened this to a “gift” that teachers had in their

²⁹ Lewis, 1960, p. 20.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

³¹ Lewis, 1960, p. 6. When highlighting the importance of “pleasure”, Lewis drew upon A. L. Rowse, who wrote in *The Use of History* (1946): “Let us begin with what is to me the most obvious, and perhaps the most appealing, pleasure it gives: the way a knowledge of history enriches and fills out our appreciation of the world around us under our eyes. It gives an interest and a meaning to things which perhaps we should not have noticed before, not only villages and towns and buildings, a church, an old house, a bridge, but even the landscape itself” (p. 31). Rowse further wrote: “An uneducated man has no sense of history. He does not know whether the house he sees is Victorian or Georgian, Elizabethan or medieval; or what it means if told” (p. 191).

possession to bestow. The wide doors of delight were an entrance “into the heritage of their culture”.³² It would rescue them from a life that was:

bounded by the close streets of a town, drab perhaps, or garish; the workplaces of parents and ultimately of themselves; the holiday resort little different in quality; we should be offering a stone instead of bread if we deepened their understanding of the material surroundings while keeping closed the doors through which they might glimpse broader vistas, greater people, ancient wrong or triumphant achievement.³³

Lewis’s four-year course was a series of studies in depth that were to evoke a sense of period, what she termed “the spirit of the age”. Her aim, “is not that they retain most of the information we give them, but that they grow up historically minded, with a feeling for the past.”³⁴ Developing a feeling for the past was through a period-by-period engagement with topics that allowed time for pupils to “enter into our heritage”. Accentuating the affective, she wrote: “Only as children can enter in imagination into the ideas and events of the past does history have any value for them”.³⁵ The future for history teaching lay in training non-specialist teachers to select and teach in ways that would appeal to their pupils’ interests and ability underpinned by a renewed sense of purpose.³⁶

Looking, seeking and entering into the past

Lewis’s guidance on the use of primary source materials are in some respects innovative in their choice of learning outcomes and methods. She proposed illustrative approaches that involved the teacher reading to class short literary extracts to accompany and make vivid teacher narrative exposition. She wrote, that “the more a teacher delves into literature the more valuable his lessons will be”.³⁷ She recommended teachers compile their own collections of literary source extracts, suggesting they turn to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Raleigh, Milton, Pepys, Evelyn, Marvell, Herbert, Bunyan, Defoe, Goldsmith, Bronte, Dickens, Newbolt,

³² Lewis, 1960, p. 3.

³³ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

Masefield, Kipling, Drinkwater and Housman. As well as carefully selected extracts from the Bible, Herodotus, Tacitus, Caesar, Froissart, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Raleigh and Gardiner.³⁸ She suggested teachers select from medieval chronicles, letters, journals, newspapers, memoirs, travel writers and historical novels, written local sources such as court rolls, vestry minute books, Poor Law records and the Domesday Book. These sources were the gift that trained teachers were to bestow. Pupils listening to readings from this storehouse of "our" cultural heritage alongside visits to places of local historical interest such as castles, cathedrals, mansions, churches, museums, art galleries and record offices were part of her project to rescue pupils from their drab lives.

Extracts from literary sources such as these also served to verify the illusion that teacher narrative exposition provided an authoritative direct experience of the past. The past was "entered into" when a narrative was supported by source reading as dramatic performance. She wrote, a story gains tremendously in interest when the narrator can say, "These are the words he spoke" or "This is the letter she wrote".³⁹ For this to work it was important that the literary sources selected appealed directly to pupils' capacity and interests.

Access to "our" national cultural heritage was an experience that *all* pupils were entitled. It was a matter of social justice that secondary modern pupils be given entrée to the same culture that their grammar school counterparts enjoyed.⁴⁰ Accessing the "everyday knowledge" of the grammar school curriculum would, she thought, narrow the social gulf dividing them by building a parity of esteem.⁴¹ There were limits to bridging the gap. The sources that would appeal to a "non-academic" pupil and "academic" ones were not the

³⁸ Her bibliographies included "collections of original source materials", which recommended the series *Picture Source Book for Social History*: M. Harrison and M. A. Bryant, *The Sixteenth Century* (1954); M. Harrison and A. A. M. Wells, *The Seventeenth Century* (1953), *The Eighteenth Century* (1955), and *The Early Nineteenth Century* (1957). Molly Harrison influenced Lewis's approach to using visual sources. Hinting at an earlier period of source-work activity at the beginning of the twentieth century, Lewis remarked: "Out of print is a very useful series entitled *English History Source Books*, ed. R. B. Morgan and E. J. Balley (Blackie, 1907). I have twice found the various volumes of this series lying at the back of classroom cupboards, long disused. They might be obtained second hand" (p. 207).

³⁹ Lewis, 1960, p. 39.

⁴⁰ The phrase "parity of esteem" was used at this time to describe the relationship between grammar school and secondary modern provision as implemented by the Education Act 1944. Although, the status, curriculum and opportunities that each represented was markedly different they were to receive, according to the Education Act 1944, parity of financial provision. This was to suggest that though "different" grammar and secondary modern schools were of equal value.

⁴¹ Lewis 1960, p. 130.

same. The secondary modern school pupil would “naturally” be drawn to shorter, simpler ones concerned with episodes of human drama.

As an alternative to illustration, Lewis proposed what she termed “investigative” source-work. This was conceived of as a teacher-led oral examination of a visual or written source prior to, or instead of, narrative exposition. Proposing that which was “far less common” aligns her approach with other postwar history educators, such as, Marjorie Reeves, Molly Harrison and Margaret Bryant.⁴² Lewis referred to this approach as “looking and seeking”. This stressed the importance of training pupils to “discover”, “actively learn”, “deduce”, “look deeply” and to “question” and “discuss”. The teacher is recast as an expert guide who steers pupils to locate information about how people lived in the past. One of the most effective ways of doing this was to employ visual sources:

I believe, that when entering their social heritage and thinking in terms of the everyday life of their ancestors, children gain most by looking and seeking with guidance of a well-informed person. So, I repeat that a fair proportion of such lessons should be built round visual material. By this I mean something more than its employment merely to underline or illustrate a piece of narrative. This would surely be to miss all the opportunities for active learning which a good illustration presents. It stimulates curiosity and prompts comment and question, in fact engenders a bracing atmosphere in a classroom immediately on production.⁴³

⁴² A work that took a similar “investigative” approach was Molly Harrison and Margaret Bryant’s *Picture Source Book for Social History: Sixteenth Century*, published in 1951, in which the authors set out their case for pupils to learn about the past through a study of source material. They wrote:

“I am sure you have wondered when you have read or have been told something that happened a long time ago, How Do We Know? Nobody living now could possibly have seen it happen and if they merely heard someone else tell about it – well, we can imagine how the story would have been altered in the telling.

“No – nobody living in the 20th century can possibly know by their own personal experience how a grand lady dressed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, what furniture a merchant would have had in his home then, how people travelled about or what they ate. So how *do* we know? Can we be sure about it, or is it all just guesswork?

“This book is partly an answer to that sort of question. For it is not by an author who is going to tell you about the 16th century; the actual 16th century people are going to tell *themselves*. How? – by letting you see some of the paintings, carvings, buildings, writings and so on which they made or created when they were alive” (p. 5).

⁴³ Lewis, 1960, p. 22.

Visual learning of this kind, Lewis suggested, could replicate something of what it was like to be an historian. Like historians, pupils should study the “actual remains of the past” looking to see what they can find. This was seen as a more effective way of learning than relying on teacher exposition alone. “How absurd” she writes, “for a teacher to expend skill and energy in giving a description of a Norman castle or an Elizabethan ship, instead of encouraging his class to study a good picture of it!”⁴⁴ This looking and seeking pedagogy, as a dialogue between teacher and pupils, assigned pupils a participatory role in learning.

Being an expert guide did not require a teacher to relinquish their authority as a font of knowledge. It did require them, however, to exercise their authority in a different way. Leading discussion, eliciting responses, intervening and consolidating knowledge gains would have been an extension to the pedagogic repertoire of non-specialist teachers and specialist teachers. An “investigation” began with pupils making simple observations of a visual source. The teacher would then prompt them to look more closely deploying prior knowledge. The teacher would guide the “investigation” with open and closed questions. Looking at a picture of a sixteenth-century house she suggested the teacher ask open questions such as: “why build windows like that?” followed by: “why were they built of wood and not stone?”

A 30-minute teacher-led “investigation” of the Norman Conquest, employing four sections from the Bayeux Tapestry, began with the teacher explaining its provenance. Looking and seeking, in this case, prepared the ground for narration. Having been brought to a heightened state of focused attention pupils would listen attentively to the teacher narration. “I like to recount the events of the battle without interruption” she wrote, “since it ranks, I think, among the great traditions of English history.”⁴⁵ Her “looking and seeking with the guidance of a well-informed person” was an activity of “close observation”, “digging”, “discovering” and “getting to work”, an approach where pupils would be able to “offer their own descriptions and explanations”.⁴⁶ Her investigative pedagogy, it should be noted, never veered far from the social and cultural reproduction which underpinned her cultural aims, and which were taken for granted.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

Fostering a sense of belonging is evident in her proposals for incorporating local history. Underlying, is a concern that secondary modern school pupils pose a potential threat to the social order. "It is an observable fact," she wrote, "that where there are large groups of rootless young people, who have been physically displaced, there is often less sense of responsibility to the community, less receptiveness to the best it has to offer, than in areas where the same families have stayed for some generations." Visiting sites of local historical interest to "look and seek" would instil in these pupils a sense of belonging to and having a responsibility for the local community. An interest in street and field names, parish church and castle gifted intrinsic pleasures that local historical material culture bestow.

Widening pupils' cultural horizons included enhancing their pleasure in watching television, going to the cinema, art gallery. Developing a sense of period would enable them to "place" their cultural experiences within an overarching chronological framework. A television play, for example, could be identified as being about the Tudor period. This was an important benefit of the "gift" of cultural assimilation. Visits to castles, cathedrals, mansions and churches were source of pleasure that pupils would be able to enjoy throughout their adult lives.⁴⁷ Again and again, Lewis makes the case that history education for the secondary modern school pupil would enrich their ordinary lives.

Assimilated into a common culture, supported by an expert guide, stressed the importance of sustained looking and discussion leading to a felt, aesthetic appreciation of being in the world.⁴⁸ Her proposals stopped short of teaching pupils to question a source's reliability, make inferences, resolve conflicting testimonies, or address an open-ended historical enquiry, as the Schools Council History Project would do fifteen years later. In 1960,

⁴⁷ Lewis, 1960, p. 78.

⁴⁸ Lewis cites and evidently drew upon the work of museum educator Molly Harrison, who presented her case for source-work in *Learning Out of School*, published in 1954. Written for teachers, it provided advice on organising a museum visit and was reprinted throughout the postwar period. Harrison criticised the practice that confined pupils to gathering facts from information cards when encountering museum objects. She promoted an intimate engagement with the object through careful observation that invoked a personal and emotional response. The aims of her source-work were personal and social development rather than the discipline of history. She suggested that the museum was a place of wonderment where encountering museum objects widened pupils' experience, lifting them out from their limited drab home environments. In her view, museum visits developed pupils' whole personality. They inspired, stirred the imagination, cultivated sensitivities and sensibilities, and gave pleasure.

secondary modern pupils were to identify emotionally and imaginatively with the historical figures and actions contained in stories, pictures, literary extracts, and site visits. Historical source were “windows” unto the past, their accuracy and reliability left unquestioned. “Looking and seeking” was an activity of “close observation”, where pupils were guided to offer descriptions and explanations. All the time, the historical past was coterminous with a specific sense of the nation’s cultural heritage.

The postwar discourse

Lewis’s proposals assumed that the mental capacity of the majority of pupils attending school was confined to an emotional and imaginative engagement with historical materials. This had been used by the Norwood Report in 1943 to justify different curriculums for academic and non-academic pupils. Lewis took for granted the pedagogic divide that the intellectual range of the grammar school curriculum was different from the secondary modern. A further feature was to equate school historical knowledge with cultural heritage taking an Arnoldian view that cultureless working-class pupils posed a threat to the social order.⁴⁹ Lewis looked to history as “culture” to rescue them by assimilating them into a redemptive dominant culture. These strands are found in other history education texts published at this time.

In the handbook *Teaching History*, written for grammar school teachers, published by the Incorporated Association Assistant Masters, (IAAM) in 1950, history education serves an elite leadership cultural mission, a complement to Lewis’s redemptive “gift” of cultural assimilation.⁵⁰ Living through, what seemed to the IAAM to be, “an age of uncertainty”, it was thought appropriate that grammar school pupils be educated to play a leadership role in defending “our present way of life” against internal and external threats. Justifying their selection, those attending grammar school history lessons were to be trained to carry out this vital civic function: “Never has it been more important than today”, it wrote, “that there

⁴⁹ Arnold, Matthew. (1869). *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*.

⁵⁰ The IAAM was founded in 1891 by a small group of London schoolmasters. It was then known as the Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools. Its main objects were the promotion of professional status and standards for secondary school masters, including conditions of service, security of tenure, salaries and pensions. It also took an interest in wider educational policy including the school curriculum and examinations. In 1978, it merged with the Association of Assistant Mistresses to form the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association.

should be a large number of instructed persons who can grasp the problems of organized societies".⁵¹ Grammar school pupils were to be taught a more intellectually challenging version "our" national cultural heritage in order to become "alert and devoted people".⁵²

C. F. Strong and R. J. Unstead considered it self-evident that history education's principal purpose was to serve citizenship through an appreciation of "our" heritage that prepared pupils to take their place in civic society.⁵³ In common with Lewis they downplayed pupils' ability to exercise critical reasoning and chose instead to focus on an emotional and imaginative engagement with historical materials. According to Strong, the purpose of history education was to "turn wayward children into citizens".⁵⁴ Unstead pointed to moral improvement that strengthened the bonds of social cohesion by teaching pupils to identify with "our" heritage, a source of reverence and inspiration that would transform the uncultured child into the cultured citizen. Strong wrote that teaching history played a role in training pupils "to become adult members of a cultured society exercising taste and discrimination".⁵⁵ Unstead's ideal society was a place where honesty, courage, mercy and loyalty prevailed.

In Reid and Toyne's work a redemptive history education exposes pupils to the "great moral truths of life" correcting "bad" habits and instilling "positive" values by teaching exemplary narratives that illustrate what being a dutiful and responsible member of society entailed.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² IAAM, 1950, p. 6.

⁵³ Strong, C. F. (1950) *History in the Primary School*. University of London Press. Unstead, R. J. (1956) *Teaching History in the Junior School*. London, A & C Black.

⁵⁴ Strong, 1950, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Strong, 1950, p. 79.

⁵⁶ *The Planning of a History Syllabus for Schools* is available to download at:

www.history.org.uk/file_download.php?ts=1291892835&id=7212.

Reid and Toyne's *The Planning of a History Syllabus for Schools*, published by the Historical Association in 1944, drew on the following publications from the Board of Education: *The Hadow Report, The Education of the Adolescent* (HMSO, 1926); *Report on the Teaching of History* (HMSO, 1927); *The Hadow Report, The Primary School* (HMSO, 1931); *The Hadow Report, Infant and Nursery Schools* (HMSO, 1933); *The Spens Report, Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools* (HMSO, 1938). These references provide strong evidence of an interchange of ideas taking place between "official" and "unofficial" publications.

As a “record writ large of the influence for good or evil” history enabled pupils to overcome their innate “prejudices and passions” to grow into virtuous, dutiful and responsible citizens.⁵⁷

An interweaving of culture, morality and civics placed upon postwar history education a responsibility to conserve national culture and maintain social cohesion. The breadth of this discourse is found in the work of Kenneth Charlton and Gordon Batho.⁵⁸ Here, the mission is to develop in *all* pupils an attitude of positive scepticism towards historical knowledge. This was distinctive in the way it thought all pupils should be taught to question the truth claims of historical accounts by placing centre-stage the question “How do we know?” This was different from the IAAM’s position that insisted that most pupils were incapable of questioning the accuracy and reliability of accounts, insisting that pupils “take largely on trust” the historical knowledge delivered to them by the teacher or textbook. Batho thought the cultivation of the questioning mind that will “seek out the truth for itself” was one of history education’s principal aims, suggesting that it would make a vital contribution to civic and social life.

The IAAM’s training for pre-16 pupils in grammar schools cultivated emotional ties of community loyalty, identity and moral values. Only a small number of 16-year-old pupils were thought to possess the required intellect to critically analyse primary sources materials. The idea that *most* pupils were capable of developing a sceptical attitude toward historical knowledge, as opposed unquestioning acceptance is significant. Charlton and Batho’s approach, nonetheless fell short of describing history education as an activity of enquiry, as

⁵⁷ Board of Education, *Handbook of Suggestions* (1946), p. 403; *Handbook of Suggestions* (1927), p. 139.

⁵⁸ K. Charlton, Source Material and the Teaching of History, *Educational Review*, 9(1) (1956), 57–63. Aged 31 in 1956, Kenneth Charlton was a young lecturer in Education at the University College of North Staffs. Previously he had, between 1950 and 1954, taught history at Dalziel High School in Motherwell and Uddingston Grammar School in Glasgow. See R. Aldrich, Kenneth Charlton: 1925–2008, *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, 38(5) (2009), 601–3. G. Batho, Sources. In W. H. Burston and C. W. Green (eds) *Handbook for History Teachers* (University of London, Institute of Education, 1962), pp. 95–109. Earlier Batho had published two shorter articles on source-work: Archive Teaching Units: An Experiment in History Teaching, *Visual Education*, August (1957), 2–3; and Archive Teaching Units: The Progress of an Experiment in History Teaching, *Visual Education*, December (1958), 8–10.

the Schools Council History Project (1972-76) was later to do. Charlton and Batho wanted pupils to appreciate that knowledge had an evidential basis. They were not inclined to design units of study that invited pupils to use sources as evidence to address enquiry questions.

Discussion:

In Lewis's text, history education curriculum making is located within a community of practice where aims, content and methods are contested by education professionals. Making this point does not downplay the role played by postwar governments in shaping the teaching of history in schools. It does suggest that the making of postwar history education was more complex and involved a greater number of actors than is generally supposed. Lewis, as a human document, her personal and professional profile, her social class and educational and professional experience are factors forming her ideas, attitudes and values towards history teaching in secondary modern schools. A social and cultural history of this period would explore the profiles of other members of this community to build a picture of its social composition. The same can be said of the pedagogic discourse that Lewis's professional interests expose. This points a way to examining postwar history education as a community engaged in a social practice.

The question: can non-academic pupils benefit from an academic subject such as history, highlight wide ranging issues regarding the nature of history education and the role that it was thought to play in the secondary modern school curriculum. These include the knowledge problem that "real" history was an adult subject; the question of intelligence and expectations of what pupils are capable of knowing, understanding and doing; and the issue of a rationale for learning history other than preparing for examination. These are fundamental, enduring questions as much alive now as they were then. The aims of the present National History Curriculum for England, for example, addresses these questions drawing on Arnoldian ideas.⁵⁹

Lewis evokes a school subject in crisis. Her sense that at this time standards of teaching in secondary modern schools were poor is balanced by the efforts made, not only by her, to

⁵⁹ Department for Education, *National Curriculum in England: History Programmes of Study*, 2013

bring about improvement. Lewis's discussion on the position of the secondary modern school non-specialist teacher of history and teacher training courses shines a light on this. Her proposals defended history's autonomy as a curriculum subject and her pedagogic proposals pushed at its boundaries. This calls into question the idea that the post war history education community was complacent or inactive.

Her assumption that almost two thirds of pupils attending secondary schools were incapable of following an examination course in history because they lacked the "intelligence" to master the grammar school curriculum led her to fashion for them a different course of study. Informing this was her view these pupils were rootless and potentially delinquent. There are deeply ingrained hegemonic social attitudes in play here that make fostering a sense belonging to a dominant cultural seem like the right direction to take. This direction is viewed through the lens of the grammar school, her framework for the secondary modern school is an adaptation of it. Her course was an instrument of social integration, the goal of which was to reproduce the dominant culture and maintain social order.

Her pedagogy was intended to be different. Prioritizing short depth studies over detailed narrative outline slowed down the delivery of knowledge allowing time for a sensory encounter involving feeling, observing and responding as well as listening and remembering. Learning history for the academic and non-academic pupil were separate spheres. For the "unintelligent" it was to be an immersive experience of pictures, objects, visiting places, as well as the spoken and written word. Imbibing knowledge by listening is augmented by "looking and seeking", doing and finding. It was an affective pedagogy with enjoyment its key pedagogic principle. History learning for the academic pupil was a cognitive experience. For both it was about reproducing a fixed body of knowledge.

The conception of the knowledge to be delivered was taken from the grammar school model. It was "academic" knowledge in a highly modified form. Still recognizable as "history", it was knowledge by authority delivered by an authority figure, a celebratory national story the truth of which was to be taken on trust. Lewis's secondary modern school history curriculum knowledge was an simplified version designed to meet the supposed learning needs of its pupils. Lewis's benevolent paternalism delivered grammar school knowledge in a literary

form. G. M. Trevelyan, a leading postwar public historian, took a similar hegemonic view when suggesting “the history of events is ephemeral, and for the scholar; the poetry of events is eternal, and for the multitude”.⁶⁰ Lewis’s course, which favored cultural inheritances, narrative episodes and developing a sense of period, was one response to the question what knowledge about the past should secondary modern school pupils know and understand?

The issue of teaching history to secondary modern pupils, a matter that had preoccupied Lewis throughout the 1950s, provided her with an opportunity to recast its aims and practices. Unburdened from a need to prepare pupils for public examinations allowed her to present teachers with a reformed model of knowledge transmission, one that re-worked grammar school practices. Her work calls into question the idea that this was a “golden age” of history education. Her reform proposals suggest it would be unfair to judge it to have been a “dark age”, at least not in the area curriculum making. Working within a distinctive pedagogy she pushed against its boundaries, developing an approach that would, she hoped, provide a rewarding experience of learning for pupils.

Containing conservative and progressive elements, Lewis’s pedagogy is complex and layered. Her conception of historical knowledge as a body of cultural inheritances is profoundly conservative. As are her aims which employed history instrumentally to serve social reproduction and cultural assimilation to deliver moral redemption and an emotional sense of belonging. Other aspects looked to reform and pushed in a progressive way at the boundaries of practice. For Lewis, the challenge of teaching the non-academic pupil history demanded innovation. The teacher as expert guide, the use of visual sources to look and seek information about the past, her championing of the depth study, as well as, expressing a vocabulary of discovery learning appear progressive. Lewis’s contribution to postwar history education professional discourse looked both ways. Her defense of retaining the subject on the secondary modern curriculum contested aims and practice; and her contribution to an evolving language of history education curriculum knowledge, with “entering into” and

⁶⁰ Cited in D. Cannadine, *G. M. Trevelyan: A Life in History* (HarperCollins, 1992).

“looking and seeking” being notable examples. Pursuing conservative goals, she redrew its pedagogic boundaries.

Disclosure statement

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