

Humphrey Jennings, the Left and the experience of modernity in mid-twentieth century Britain

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Humphrey Jennings is best remembered today for the films he directed for the Crown Film Unit during the Second World War. For Lindsay Anderson, who did much to establish his posthumous reputation, *Listen to Britain* (1942), *Fires Were Started* (1943) and *Diary for Timothy* (filmed 1944-5 but released in 1946) were Jennings' finest achievements, capturing, with a poet's eye, 'the best of us' in wartime.¹ Subsequent scholars have largely followed Anderson's direction and this trio of wartime "greats" have received extensive analysis in works by Colls and Dodd, Aldgate and Richards, Stansky and Abrahams, Winston and Eley.² Whilst his wartime documentaries have achieved a secure place within the canon, post-war films such as *Family Portrait* (1950) fare less well in the critics' eyes. In his seminal article 'Only Connect', Anderson argued that *Family Portrait* lacked the passion of his wartime documentaries: 'For reality, his wartime films stand alone; and they are sufficient achievement.'³ While in 1954 Anderson conceded that neither the 'beautifully finished' *Family Portrait* nor the earlier *Dim Little Island* ought to be 'dismissed', by the early 1980s his attitude had hardened. In a postscript to his original assessment, Anderson argued: 'In the end they *can* be dismissed. In fact they must be. They demonstrate only too sadly that the traditionalist spirit was unable to adjust itself to the changed circumstances of Britain after the war. By the time Jennings made *Family Portrait* for the 1951 Festival of Britain, the 'family' could only be a sentimental fiction, inhabiting a Britain dedicated to the status quo.'⁴ In Anderson's reassessment, the Jennings of 1950 was a 'traditionalist' parading a 'fantasy of empire' and seeking refuge in the past.⁵ This scathing critique has heavily influenced subsequent scholarly interpretations of the film. For Angus Calder, who quotes Anderson approvingly, *Family*

Portrait was ‘sentimental and confused.’⁶ For Paul Addison, Jennings was guilty of peddling ‘sentimental guff’, in a film which encapsulated ‘the sublime sense of insular content reflected in various corners of the festival.’⁷ The film historian Andrew Higson concurred, arguing that *Family Portrait’s* backward looking nostalgia indicated a conservative retreat from Jennings’ liberal, heterogeneous representations of wartime experience.⁸

In this article we challenge such interpretations which posit a sharp disjuncture between Jennings’ wartime and post-war films. Indeed we argue that all Jennings’ films, from about 1937 onwards, need to be understood as but one part of a wider, polymorphous attempt to understand modern Britain. Jennings was more than a just a filmmaker. He was also a critical practitioner of surrealism, a founder of Mass Observation, a poet, a painter and a historian. This article builds upon the research of Jackson, Remy, Robbins and Webster, which has considered various aspects of Jennings’ work beyond his wartime film-making.⁹ In particular, we focus our analysis on a theme that united Jennings’ disparate cultural practices in both peace and war: the attempt to document the British experience of modernity. Whilst Jennings did not use the term modernity, he was trying to capture the profound impact on everyday life of a range of overlapping economic, social and cultural transformations since the mid-seventeenth century. These included the birth of industrial capitalism, significant technological developments and the emergence of new modes of perception which had fundamentally altered the way that people understood the world and their place within it. We therefore interpret modernity to mean this wholesale transformation in experience which Jennings sought to document historically and which he perceived to be ongoing at the time of his death in 1950.

Although this concern is evident throughout Jennings' career, this article will concentrate on the two works which represent the fullest exposition of his ideas. The first, *Pandaemonium*, was a project that Jennings began in the late 1930s and pursued during the remaining thirteen years of his life. Posthumously published, this ambitious book documented the ways in which industrialisation and modernisation were experienced in Britain between 1660 and 1886.¹⁰ Through a montage of found images, *Pandaemonium* conceived of the advent of modernity as occasioning a shift in the 'means of vision', commensurate with changes in the 'means of production'. In terms of both its form and the dialectical understanding of social and cultural change proffered, *Pandaemonium* has rightly warranted comparison to Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*.¹¹ Whilst Benjamin's work has received extensive analysis, *Pandaemonium* has attracted just two scholarly meditations since its publication.¹² Given that it provided Danny Boyle with the inspiration for his Olympic opening ceremony in 2012, the time is perhaps now ripe for a more sustained analysis of this text.¹³

The second section of the article will focus on *Family Portrait* (1950), made for the Festival of Britain. There have been more generous interpretations of the film than that provided by Anderson, most notably by those who have sought to place the film in the wider context of Jennings' oeuvre. Thomas Zaniello was the first to argue that the film represented the cinematic realisation of *Pandaemonium*.¹⁴ Jennings' biographers, first Hodgkinson and Sheratsky, latterly Kevin Jackson have argued along similar lines, and this interpretation has most recently been restated by Keith Beattie.¹⁵ However, we need to be careful not to elide these texts as they offer two quite different accounts of the British experience of modernity.

Daunton and Rieger have compared the British and European experiences of modernity from the 1870s up to c.1940. They argue that, unlike the sense of rupture which often shaped European understandings, ‘British negotiations of modernity took place in a climate of relative political, economic and social stability.’¹⁶ The continuity of the constitutional system, less antagonistic class relations and the country’s abiding strength as an imperial power meant that, ‘in comparison with Continental Western Europe, many prominent assessments of modernity between 1870 and 1940 successfully incorporated notions of gradual evolution rather than irreversible rupture.’¹⁷ Jennings’ work, however, does not quite fit this schema. While the ruptures and conflicts generated by industrialisation build in *Pandaemonium* to a potentially revolutionary climax, in *Family Portrait* such discordant notes are underplayed and overwhelmed by an emphasis on political compromise, historical continuity and the common traits of the English character. We demonstrate that while a potentially redemptive understanding of the history of modernity was embedded in *Family Portrait*’s projection of the British landscape, ambivalence around empire and a self-congratulatory account of liberal institutions and modes of governance occlude any attempt to map anything but a simulacrum of the open-ended radicalism of *Pandaemonium*.

Nevertheless, *Family Portrait* cannot be simply dismissed, as Anderson urges, as conservative and nostalgic. In the final section of the article we place Jennings’ complex and sometimes contradictory understandings of the British experience of modernity within a wider cultural and political context. In shifting between a ‘radical patriotism’ which did not accept nation and state as synonymous and a narrower, state focused ‘social patriotism’ which emphasised improving the nation through social reform Jennings’ thought was characteristic of many on the Left during the 1940s.¹⁸ Moreover, his attempts to explore how changes in ‘means of vision’ were related to changes in the

‘means of production’ – were shared by figures such as Raymond Williams, who’s very different work during the 1940s and 1950s was animated by similar concerns. By underlining the degree to which both were differently absorbed in tracing the cultural transformations which industrial capitalism wrought, we present a political reading of Jennings which has too often been misunderstood or ignored. This fuller understanding of the political context within which that work was produced enables us to consider the extent to which common a concern to understand and historicise modernity animated a range of British intellectuals from the mid 1930s to the mid 1950s. We begin however with the genesis of *Pandaemonium* in the years immediately before the Second World War.

***Pandaemonium*: ‘The real history of Britain for the last three hundred years.’**

Pandaemonium opens with an extract from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, describing the building of Pandaemonium, the capital of hell, on the orders of Mammon. Jennings explains to the reader that ‘Its building began c.1660. *It will never be finished – it has to be transformed into Jerusalem.* The building of Pandaemonium is the real history of Britain for the last three hundred years.’¹⁹ In the introduction, Jennings explains that he was not interested in writing a conventional history of this period. The focus of *Pandaemonium* was neither politics nor economics; rather he strove to ‘present the imaginative history of the Industrial Revolution’.²⁰ Jennings’ interest in this project can be traced to the late 1930s. The first Mass Observation publication, to which Jennings contributed, asked the reader to ponder the impact that scientific advances had made on ‘mental and physical behaviour’:

Take the example of the railway... We know how to *use* the railway in our daily life; but what we do not realise is the power of the railway to modify our lives when we are not using it. It has given us a different conception of space, of speed

and of power. It has rendered possible mass activities – the Cup Final, the monster rally, the seaside holiday, the hiking excursion – whose ramifying effect on our behaviour and mentality extend almost beyond imagination.²¹

From the late 1930s through to his death in 1950, Jennings was consumed by the attempt to document the imaginative and experiential transformations engendered by industrialisation (what we term the ‘experience of modernity’). Speaking a few days before his fatal accident, Jennings estimated that at least six months’ full time work was required to complete the project. In the winter of 1950/1951, Jennings’ wife Cicely persuaded fellow Mass Observation founder Charles Madge to tackle the formidable editorial task and he reduced the tea chest of material that Jennings had accumulated to one thousand pages. Over the next few decades Jennings’ friends Stuart Legg and Jacob Bronowski attempted to find a publisher. Despite interest and even the tantalising suggestion that Raymond Williams, fresh from his own work on *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, might take on editorial duties, the work remained unfinished and unpublished. Finally in 1983 Jennings’ daughter Mary-Lou and Charles Madge set about preparing *Pandaemonium* for publication. They returned to Madge’s original selection and, to make it viable for publication, selected around a quarter of the extracts and arranged them in chronological order.²² It must be acknowledged that this edition is heavily shaped by the interventions of the editors. Nevertheless, Jennings left extensive notes on his vision for *Pandaemonium*, which Madge compiled as an introduction to the book. Moreover, from the late 1930s Jennings developed his ideas for the project in his work in painting, filmmaking and writing.

By 1938 Jennings had decided upon the form that *Pandaemonium* would take and experimented with it in an article for the *London Bulletin*: ‘Do not lean out of the window!’ Intended to illuminate ‘the impact of machines on everyday life’, it consisted of a

montage of six extracts ranging from a letter by Fanny Kemble describing her amazed first encounter with a steam train to Engels' *Condition of the Working Class in England*.²³ The different perspectives offered by these texts, Jennings hoped, would show that the industrial revolution was simultaneously wonderful and awesome, cruel and destructive, and, crucially, experienced and imagined by different people in a myriad of ways. *Pandaemonium* likewise was a collage of mainly textual extracts, or 'images' (Jennings' preferred term).²⁴

This technique of montage places Jennings within a wider modernist mode of historical practice during this period, which Ben Highmore terms 'anonymous history'.²⁵ Whilst there is no evidence that either were aware of each others works, in terms of form and subject, the similarities between *Pandaemonium* and Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* are striking. Like Jennings, Benjamin sought to document the everyday experiences of modernity in order to unlock their transformative potential. For Benjamin, a central problem of the modern world was that ruptures, such as rapid urbanisation and mass-mechanised warfare, produced a glut of experiences which struggled to find expression through traditional narrative forms.²⁶ It was imperative, he believed, to develop new modes of representation through which to express these experiences collectively to enable reflection and critique.²⁷ Although Benjamin was scathing of surrealism's overwhelming focus on the unconscious and its subsequent failure to critically engage with the material world, he was excited by the potential of montage as a form through which to articulate the everyday experience of modern life.²⁸ Despite their philosophical and political differences, Jennings was drawn to montage for similar reasons. *Pandaemonium*, he argued, was best understood as a 'mass diary'.²⁹ Experience, he maintained, was inscribed upon each and every image:

They are facts (the historian's kind of facts) which have been passed through the feelings and the mind of an individual... His [sic] personality has coloured them and selected and altered and pruned and enlarged and minimised and exaggerated ... [But he] was a part of the period, even part of the event itself... So his distortions are not so much distortions as one might suppose.³⁰

Each image was subjective, but representative of a subjectivity which was the product of the period through which the writer lived. *Pandaemonium*, however, was more than just a series of isolated images: 'each is in a particular place in an unrolling film.'³¹ Conflicting viewpoints exist alongside each other presenting 'the sense of complexity – the type of pattern and so the type of inter-actions of which [history] consists.'³² This constellation of images enabled Jennings to construct a dialectical, poly-vocal account of the British experience of modernity. Liberated from narrative, Jennings like Benjamin found in montage a solution to the representational crisis posed by modernity.

Pandaemonium constructs a critique of modern industrial capitalism framed in utopian socialist terms. Jennings argued that the industrial revolution ought to be understood in terms of a series of conflicts:

1. Class conflicts – in their simplest form Luddite riots, Peterloo.
2. The conflict of animism and materialism.
3. The conflict of the expropriated individual with his environment.
4. Conflicts of ideas.
5. Conflicts of systems – religious systems, political systems, moral systems.³³

Although each conflict could be studied in isolation, Jennings instead endeavoured to consider them simultaneously through the lens of what he perceived to be the driving force of modernity - the dialectical transformation of the 'means of production' and the 'means of vision - matter (sense impressions) transformed and reborn by imagination'.³⁴

Pandaemonium locates the advent of the industrial revolution in the key shifts in perception that occurred in the seventeenth century. The first section of the book, which encompasses the period 1660-1729, presents the reader with a series of ‘observations and reports’ from early proponents of scientific method, such as Newton and Hooke. In the extracts, which describe phenomena such as astronomical events, insect anatomy, the weather, light and sound, we see the development of a rational and scientific language. After a description of a thunderstorm, Jennings notes the absence of ‘the ancient awe with which “the glance of God” had been regarded for centuries, even ages, past.’³⁵ This, he argued, represented a fundamental rupture in the mode of vision, from religious and mystical conceptions of the world, to an attitude of ‘strict realism’.³⁶ Not only was scientific method necessary for the development of technology and machines, this new mode of vision changed the relationship between man and the natural world. Nature was no longer mystical and sacred, but was to be tamed, harnessed, exploited and capitalised. Although initially this understanding was confined to animals and ‘not at first continued up to man, the animal with a soul... the distinction is dropped in practice, or blurred, when human labour begins to be organised on a ruthlessly rational basis.’³⁷ Man, like nature, became simply another resource to be exploited by capital.

This is the dominant theme of the second part of *Pandaemonium* ‘1730-1790: exploitation’. The first image in this section consists of a letter from Stephen Gray to the secretary of the Royal Society. It describes an experiment involving a boy of eight being strung from a washing line to explore the effects of electricity. The child is reduced to another piece of equipment in his laboratory.³⁸ This is powerfully juxtaposed with the next image, a harrowing description of a childhood as an apprentice in a mill: ‘My parents, through mere necessity, put me to labour before nature had made me able ... the severity was

intolerable, the marks of which I yet carry, and shall carry to the grave.’³⁹ In an aside, many years before Michel Foucault’s researches on the theme, Jennings notes: ‘The abstract horror of this image derives in part from the unspoken acknowledgement of the truth that as far as the 18th century poor were concerned 1. the factory; 2. the school; 3. the workhouse; 4. the prison, were all the same building.’⁴⁰

Jennings continues in this critical vein in part three ‘1791-1850: revolution’. By far the longest of the four parts, here we see the growing mobilisation of the working classes, with accounts of riots, radical agitation and chartist meetings alongside bleak depictions of industrialisation. Peterloo receives the most attention of any event; moreover the greatest space is given over to Samuel Bamford’s account which dwarfs bourgeois representations by Shelly and others and later historical interpretations by G. M. Trevelyan and the Hammonds.⁴¹ By the time *Pandaemonium* reaches the 1880s, Jennings’ images are increasingly drawn from the major social critics and thinkers of the age: Ruskin, Darwin, Edward Carpenter, and perhaps most tellingly, William Morris who in this period threw himself into revolutionary socialism:⁴²

In 1885 there was sold upon the streets of London a penny pamphlet or rather folder called *Chants for socialists* published by the Socialist League and written by William Morris ... As the first copy of this pamphlet was sold a great English poet had for the first time joined hands truly with the working class and come into it as an equal and a poet. The imagination of the Poet and the revolutionary march of the workers in Britain were moving together, consciously resisting the English ruling class, said Lenin/Engels.⁴³

We are transported back to a time in which socialists from the ILP, the SDF to the Socialist League mobilised religiosity in the firm belief that ‘the people’ through ‘the movement’ of socialism would transform the world.⁴⁴ This kind of ‘oppositional

Englishness' or 'radical patriotism' articulated by Morris was suspicious of the state and imagined a future in which a great 'Labour Combination' or the extension of voluntary co-operation would, in the words of Stephen Yeo 'pass the state by on the other side', and bring about the beginning of the socialistic system.⁴⁵ The final images of *Pandaemonium* heighten a sense of impending revolution, the growth of 'the power to come': Richard Jefferies dystopian 'After London'; T. H. Huxley's 'Apocalyptic Visions looking down Oxford Street at sunset'; and finally an extract from Morris' *A dream of John Ball*.⁴⁶ In concluding with Morris' ambiguous, open-ended critique of capitalism, Jennings holds out the possibility of redemption through the recovery of the revolutionary aspirations of the past, in this case through dialogue with the priest John Ball one of the leaders of the 1381 peasant rising.⁴⁷

In a recent critique Michael Saler asserts that *Pandaemonium* expresses the themes of 'continuity, tradition and nostalgia.'⁴⁸ However, there is nothing in the text to support these claims, and significantly Saler fails to evidence them. As we have shown, Jennings' account of the coming of modernity emphasises social rupture, far-reaching cultural change and holds out the utopian possibility of transformation through revolution. This interpretation is rather difficult to reconcile with Saler's other claim that Jennings failed to escape from a Whig history of the inevitable triumph of a superior, British constitutional liberalism. Indeed, *Pandaemonium* presents a multi-vocal, fragmented and unfinished constellation of meanings in which narratives of science and 'progress' are undercut by emphasis on the conflicts of ideas, systems and classes and the destructive forces unleashed by industrial capitalism. But it is the means by which Saler makes his claim which is worthy of close attention. Rather than finding evidence in *Pandaemonium* itself, Saler turns to Anderson's critique of Jennings' film *Family Portrait*: "The symbol at the end of the film is the mace of Authority, and its last image is a preposterous

procession of ancient and bewigged dignitaries.” ... Jennings could never escape from the celebratory version of English history.⁴⁹ This is why we need to be careful not to elide *Pandaemonium* and *Family Portrait*: they offer different visions of Britain’s path to modernity. While the former emphasises rupture and looks to the utopian transformation of capitalism through socialist struggle, the latter focuses more on continuity, compromise and celebrates the essential unity of land and people within a national framework. However, as we argue below, both this national framework and the means by which modern experiences were represented were congruent with Jennings’ own practice and politics, which themselves reproduced the wider concerns of British artists and film-makers between the late 1930s and the early 1950s.

***Family Portrait*: Building Jerusalem?**

Family Portrait was originally intended to be a cinematic adaptation of the yet unpublished *Pandaemonium*. The initiative for the project originated with Jennings’ producer, Ian Dalrymple, who, after the war established his own production company, Wessex Films, within J. Arthur Rank’s Independent Producer’s Ltd.⁵⁰ When, in 1946, Rank suggested that Dalrymple should make a film commemorating Britain’s contribution to the war, he replied that an account of Britain’s contribution to civilisation would make a better subject.⁵¹ When Jennings came to work for Wessex in January 1947, Dalrymple suggested that this might be an opportunity to make a filmic version of *Pandaemonium*, upon which they both ‘got very excited and thought in terms of a mammoth film.’⁵² Such imaginings were ended abruptly when the extent of Rank’s financial difficulties became evident and Independent Producer’s Ltd was shut down in 1948.⁵³ The project was offered a lifeline by John Grierson in 1949 when he suggested that it be adapted for the Festival of Britain.⁵⁴ This was not to be the epic initially envisaged rather, made on a tiny budget of less than £8,000, the final film ran to just twenty-four minutes. The economic

constraints of production curtailed Jennings' ambitions for *Family Portrait*. Whilst he still endeavoured to explore some of its key themes and ideas, the film was of an insufficient length to construct the complex and nuanced arguments of *Pandaemonium*.

The two projects cannot therefore be simply elided. Rather, *Family Portrait* is best understood in the way Jennings presents it in the opening titles: 'a film on the theme of the Festival of Britain', shaped by both Jennings' particular understanding of the Festival and the inevitable constraints imposed by such a national celebration. These constraints are perhaps most clearly seen in the film's depiction of Empire. Writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1948, Jennings accused the English of ignoring the 'ruthlessness' of their imperial past. Citing the near-extirpation of the aboriginal peoples of America and Australia, the slave trade, and the burning of Hamburg as examples that 'make blood run cold', he described the English as a 'violent, savage race'. England, he maintained, has a 'propensity for endless aggressive war... ask the Scots – or the Welsh – about their experiences. It would be inadvisable to ask the Irish.'⁵⁵ *Family Portrait* portrays the nation's imperial history rather differently. It characterises the British Empire as a civilising force: 'The idea of Parliament itself spreading from the Thames to the Indus and the Ganges'. This suggests that the soft-peddling of the history of Empire which the Festival demanded wholly blunted Jennings' personal anti-imperialism.

Anderson's accusation that *Family Portrait* presented a 'fantasy of Empire' is therefore understandable.⁵⁶ But what of the other elements of Anderson's critique? In 1954 Anderson's primary complaint was that its portrayal of British experience was unconvincing, 'nearer the "This England" of the pre-war beer advertisements and Mr Castleton Knight's coronation film than the murky and undecided realities of today.'⁵⁷ Whilst both Castleton Knight's *A Queen is Crowned* (1953) and *Family Portrait* address

questions of nationhood, they define the nation quite differently. Rather than deference to the spectacle of monarchy, Jennings' Britain is imagined through the everyday lives of ordinary people. As the narrator discusses the Festival in the first scene, we see a hand flicking through a photo album. The images contained within record the celebratory rituals of everyday life: two scenes of Blackpool beach holidays, children gathered around Father Christmas, a middle-class christening, a working-class family at the seaside. Then the extraordinary in the everyday: a photograph of three women astride the rubble of a bombed house, followed, with allusions to *Diary for Timothy*, by another photograph of a family on the beach as the commentary intones: 'To give thanks that we are still a family. To voice our hopes and fears, our faith for our children.' Later, the film acknowledges the role pageantry plays in national celebrations, but stresses that it 'isn't put on by a sinister power to impress anyone – nor just to have fun...its part of the pattern of life.' *Family Portrait* illustrates this by showing some of the class-inflected sporting and recreational events of national life: the Varsity boat race, the F. A. Cup Final and – as the music crescendos in the background – the Durham Miner's Gala. These events, the narrator maintains, were created by ourselves 'gradually but as Milton warned us "not without dust and heat."' While these words, underlying a shot of a trade union banner may have evoked class conflict, this emphasis is then undercut by images and narrative ('The banks of Runnymede – the heights of Edinburgh – the Palace of Westminster') which stressed perceived 'British' values: antiquity, constitutional evolution and political compromise. In comparison to *Pandaemonium*, Jennings' political critique is much blunted, however with regard to his imagining of the nation through the everyday lives of ordinary people, *Family Portrait* sits comfortably within his wider oeuvre from *Mass Observation* to his wartime films.

When Anderson returned in 1981 to review Jennings' post war output, his critique was far more damning. He urged that *Family Portrait* be 'dismissed' as it showed Jennings as a 'traditionalist' unable to adjust to the changed circumstances of post-war Britain, seeking refuge in the past.⁵⁸ Jennings was however highly critical of nostalgic tendencies in contemporary culture. Writing in 1948, he urged people to look forward with excitement to the future: "There is only one occasion when admiration for past deeds may be given full rein and that is in an epitaph. It is a dangerous tendency for the living."⁵⁹ *Family Portrait* reviewed the nation's history to evince a temporal dialogue between past, present and future. The first scene explained that the Festival was not simply a national celebration, but also a time for appraisal, a chance to 'to let the young and the old, the past and the future meet and discuss.' Whilst the film dwelt on the national past, this was not a nostalgic wallowing. Rather, it was structured by an awareness that this age was at an end: 'All this we inherit and celebrate, but we know that the times have changed... The Elizabethan journey ended with the Battle of Britain.' *Family Portrait* cast a critical eye over the national past, acknowledging some mistakes and identifying what ought to be salvaged, in order to imagine a better future.

As in *Pandaemonium*, Britain's recent past is the history of industrialisation. *Family Portrait* marvelled at the inventiveness of industrial and scientific pioneers. Such technological wonders, the film argued, were the result of the relation between the 'poetry and prose', a somewhat crude distillation of *Pandaemonium's* modes of vision and production. Jennings' explanation of this dialectic in *Family Portrait* is arguably his finest ever use of montage. The industrial revolution, the narrator explained, was sparked by the union of 'two sides of the family...The meeting of scientific imagination and engineering skill, a new kind of poetry and a new kind of prose. In work, in play alike we began to hear the march of the machine.' Brass music rises in the background. A heroic craftsman appears to conduct

the forging process. This is reinforced by the synchronicity of music and machine. A quick cut to the brass band, the new music of industrialisation. Here we see the potential of the unity of these two modes, but as in *Pandaemonium*, the problems associated with modernity are attributed to a disjuncture between the two forces. The celebratory account of industrialisation climaxes with a train thundering towards the camera. The tone of the film then shifts abruptly. Solemn music rises in the background whilst the narrator gravely notes: 'as the towns and populations grew the practical gifts never met the imaginative ones and one part of us lost sight of the other. Rifts in the family we are still having to repair.' We see houses cramped beneath a railway bridge, smoke lingering over terraced rows, children playing in a dirty street. In contrast to the dominance of human suffering in *Pandaemonium*, although dramatic, this scene is short and *Family Portrait* soon adopts a more positive tone.

Whilst the dark and claustrophobic city evoked the broken promises of modernity, the rural offered a redemptive vision for Jennings. This drew on a well-established oppositional discourse in British culture. From the writings of Dickens to Bill Brandt's photography of depression blighted Britain, the city was, by the mid twentieth century, firmly established as a site which symbolised wider anxieties about modernity.⁶⁰ Quite conversant qualities were invested in the rural. From William Morris to the planner-preservationist movement of the mid-twentieth century, the countryside was cast as an optimistic symbol of the possibilities for a better future.⁶¹ As Alex Potts has observed, in interwar Britain rural imagery *could* embody nostalgia for a pastoral idyll, however, it also evoked the modern: 'Neat, calm and light, [the rural] could signify ideas of order and health appropriate to a rationally, modernised society emerging from the gloom, disorder and dirt of Victorianism – both new and organically related to the past at the same time.'⁶² Recent research has shown how much of British art and design up to the Festival

was suffused with ‘topophilia’ – a love of place – albeit one which was often expressed in distinctively modern terms.⁶³

In *Family Portrait* Jennings presents the viewer with a decidedly modern rural Britain. We are shown even the most rugged landscape tamed by managed forestry and straddled by pylons. Great rivers are harnessed to produce power. Hikers scale the hills, tractors plough fields and aeroplanes fly overhead. Rather than condemn these incursions, Jennings celebrates them as symbols of a technological modernity untarnished by the associations of the city. In a crucial scene of film, signified by a musical crescendo, we see a farmer and scientist striding across the manmade landscape beneath the Longman of Wilmington. The narrator questions whether ‘you can treat John Barleycorn as you do the blades of a turbine’, challenging the mode of vision that enabled the exploitation of industrial man. He calls upon the scientist to ‘accept the richness and subtlety of nature not as errors to be corrected but as part of the truth to be understood’. Only through such compromise can technology become a means to new and better ways of living and the central crisis of modernity – the rift between the poetry and the prose – be resolved.

This particular mode of rural representation places Jennings within a wider mid-twentieth century understanding of the modern. It finds echo in the work of fellow film-makers.

Paul Rotha, in *The Face of Britain* (1935) contrasts the decay of the industrial cities of the old ‘smoke age’ with the hopes of the ‘new age’, embodied by a hydroelectric plant and lines of pylons blended seamlessly into the landscape of the Highlands.⁶⁴ For Neo

Romantic artists, landscape painting provided a way for them to, in the words of Paul Nash, ‘go modern’ and ‘be British’.⁶⁵ From Nash’s geometric rendering of ancient stone monuments in *Equivalents for Megaliths* (1935) to Eric Ravilious’ *Train Landscape* (1939), a depiction of the sculpted and man-made landscape of the Westbury Horse viewed

through the window of a third-class train carriage; mid-twentieth century British artists commandeered the rural to represent modern experience.⁶⁶ Moreover, this enabled them to forge continuities between the past and the present. They presented themselves as heirs to artists such as Blake and Constable, whose work they admired for its modernity.⁶⁷ They perceived modern qualities in ancient forms in the landscape. Nash marvelled at the design of the White Horse and thought about the Avebury ring in terms of its 'composition of lines and masses and planes, directions and volumes'.⁶⁸ In *Family Portrait*, Jennings cuts sharply between an image of a stone circle and radio antennae stretching towards the sky. Ancient and modern, they are monuments to humanity's ability to innovate, imagine and discover. In sharp contrast to the conflict and rupture that characterised *Pandaemonium*, in *Family Portrait* the experience of modernity itself is historicised within a continuous narrative of humanity's interactions with the landscape. In doing so, Jennings was far from atypical. In fact, he was but one visual artist among many who were producing distinctively British, yet distinctively modern depictions of landscape, place and nation.

Whilst *Pandaemonium* concludes on a note of portentous radicalism, envisaging a future of revolutionary struggle, *Family Portrait* stressed political compromise and the perfectibility of Britain's democratic institutions. The final shot of the film is an image of parliament, aligned by the narrator with the British values of 'tolerance, courage, faith'. In this regard the film was congruent with the values of the Festival. The 1951 Festival of Britain represented the apogee of 1940s social democracy: the last hurrah of Frayn's radical, middle class, *Guardian* reading 'herbivores'.⁶⁹ Here, as Samuel notes, for perhaps the last time the social patriotism of the war years could be aligned, relatively unproblematically with a celebration of national achievements and character:

In the run up to the 1951 Festival of Britain [heritage] was a matter not of ruins (though they had a place in it) nor yet of ‘bygones’ and ‘memorabilia’ ... but rather of what were then conceived of as the beauties of national life and character – the British genius for compromise, the British love of fair play.⁷⁰

In this climate and in the context of his untimely death, assessments of Jennings’ festival film were generous. The reviewer for *Monthly Film Bulletin* argued that: ‘*Family Portrait* is perhaps the most polished in style of all Jennings’ films. All its elements, the compositions, the montage, the effective music by John Greenwood, the relationship of word and image, are finely balanced ... it is continuously fascinating, sharp and evocative; the last film of a director without doubt among the most highly talented that Britain has ever produced.’⁷¹ Writing in *Sight and Sound* in May 1951, Gavin Lambert noted that although it lacked the emotional drive of earlier films:

The fascination of science; the love of landscape, and of the sea ... a personal sense of the continuity of history and its varied manifestations ... an affection for simple people and pleasures and for the ritual and pageantry that symbolise them – the whole rare combination of an artist of highly specialised sensibilities making contact with collective existence is in some ways at its most complete in *Family Portrait*.⁷²

Just three years later, Anderson thought that the film projected an unsatisfactory mixture of nostalgic inter-war pastoral and coronation pageantry; and it is this post-coronation context which is crucial for understanding Anderson’s critique. Despite attempts to portray the newly crowned monarch as the youthful head of a modernised commonwealth, the ceremonial was replete with symbols of imperial power, invented traditions and hereditary privilege.⁷³ Interpretations of the event were, even among avowed social democrats in the emergent sociological profession, profoundly functionalist and conservative. Thus Shils and Young argued that:

The Coronation, much like Christmas, was a time for drawing closer the bonds of the family, for re-asserting its solidarity and for re-emphasising the values of the family – generosity, loyalty, love – which are *at the same time* the fundamental values necessary for the well being of the larger society ... It was as if people recognised that the most elementary unit for entry into communion with the sacred was the family, not the individual.⁷⁴

In a context in which the Royal family and the ‘national family’ were conflated, Jennings’ less conservative *Family Portrait* was bound to suffer via elision: ‘a sentimental fiction’, Anderson called it in 1954. By the 1980s Anderson was questioning the radicalism of his cinematic hero:

I don’t know whether Jennings thought of himself as a ‘Leftist’ in the old Mass Observation days. Traditionalism, after all, does not always have to be equated with conservatism. But somehow by the end of the war, Jennings’ traditionalism had lost any touch of the radical ... The Past is no longer an inspiration: it is a refuge.⁷⁵

As we have seen, following Anderson’s lead, various historians from Calder and Addison to Higson and Saler have condemned the film for its alleged nostalgia, conservatism and patriotism. However, as the positive contemporary reviews suggest, this is to misunderstand the close alignment of liberal notions of national character and ‘social patriotism’ which Samuel suggests still held together in 1951. Indeed, these accusations of conservatism and nostalgia perhaps tell us more about the politics of the mid-1950s and the 1980s, and intellectuals’ disappointments with the post-1945 settlement than they do about those of the time in which Jennings was working on *Pandaemonium* and *Family Portrait*. In what follows we consider the formation of Jennings’ politics more broadly. We argue that he was far from a-typical and that to read his work as conservative, nostalgic, even traditionalist is to misunderstand the cultural politics of the Left-wing

British intelligentsia of the period c. 1935-1951, with whom Jennings shared some common experiences and political viewpoints.

Experience and politics: Humphrey Jennings and Raymond Williams

As Jennings' *Pandaemonium*, *Family Portrait* and his celebrated wartime documentaries demonstrate, it is possible to tell a 'national story' as a socialist. One can also be a modernist and still have a deep engagement with the past. In thinking about the 'political' Jennings we argue that he should not be seen as an isolated, extraordinary maverick who differed markedly from his contemporaries. Rather, Jennings was relatively typical of that generation of intellectuals radicalised by Spain and the Popular Front who forged their versions of socialism during the Second World War, as E. P. Thompson argued perceptively:⁷⁶

Those years of anti fascism (Jennings' brother-in-law died on Jamara Ridge) and of war were certainly ones of a "populist" radicalism: Cobbett, patriotism etc. This was very much (around 1942-4) the ambience of "the left" and in these respects Jennings cannot be regarded as atypical.⁷⁷

Indeed, one does not need to look too far to find major figures who shared this sort of politics: J. B. Priestley, G. D. H. Cole and George Orwell all articulated a melange of radical and social patriotism in the early 1940s.⁷⁸ We are not arguing that these figures held identical political views, which were exactly 'the same' as Jennings'. Rather, that they were of the generation which came to political maturity during the Popular Front period and who often looked both to past socialisms for inspiration and engaged in documentary-style investigation in order to make the case for change.

Jennings' own politicisation had its roots in the 1930s. In 1937 he travelled to Bolton to document the lives of the town's working class inhabitants for Mass Observation. He

returned two years later to shoot scenes for the GPO film *Spare Time* (1939).⁷⁹ This was a transformative experience for him, as a profile from 1944 makes clear: ‘Bolton, and the months he spent there working with Mass-Observation, living in an unemployed miner’s house, and avidly attacking the classics like Engels’ *Condition of the Working Class in England*, brought Jennings (as he himself says) from medievalism into modern times.’⁸⁰ The Guild Socialism, which he imbibed as a child from his parents and his years at the Perse school, was brought into dialogue with the politics of industrial Britain in the 1930s.⁸¹ The war, and particularly the time he spent in Wales filming *The Silent Village* (1943) deepened his politicisation. Writing to his wife Cicely, Jennings exclaimed: ‘I really never thought to live to see the honest Christian and Communist principles daily acted on as a matter of course... From these people one can really understand Cromwell’s New Model Army.’⁸² His friendship with Dai Evans, the Marxist mining agent, appears to have been particularly influential. After discussing *Pandaemonium* with him, Evans invited Jennings to give a talk on his research to miners in the Swansea valley, which went down ‘astonishingly well.’⁸³ In a letter to Allen Hutt of the *Daily Worker*, Jennings spoke of the joy he found in ‘the surge of comradeship that comes from this final meeting of intellectual and worker’.⁸⁴

The significance of William Morris to this version of redemptive socialism; this linking of intellectual and worker are central to understanding the politics of *Pandaemonium* in its historical context. We have seen above how Jennings sought to emulate Morris’s revolutionary commitment to the people. The placing of *A Dream of John Ball* as the conclusion to *Pandaemonium* is significant, reaching back, as it does, to a uchronic past, holding out the promise of a different future and illuminating a radical socialist tradition. For historical accounts of this radical tradition (Yeo’s ‘oppositional Englishness’), contemporaneous with Jennings’ own interest, one need not look too far. There are clear

overlaps between the late 1930s and the early 1950s when Left-wing historians returned to some of the subjects which had found an eager audience with subscribers to the Left Book Club before the war. Thus Fagan's 1938 account *Nine Days that Shook England* was given added depth by Hilton's researches in their co-authored *The English Rising of 1381*.⁸⁵ A. L. Morton, who had prefaced his Left Book Club edition *People's History of England* with a quotation from Morris' *A Dream of John Ball* returned to analyse Morris' work in greater depth in his *English Utopias* of 1952.⁸⁶ Under the auspices of the Historian's Group of the CPGB, important early work was done by Hilton on the class dynamics of the peasants' revolt and by Hill in historicizing the theory of lost rights surrounding the myth of the 'Norman Yoke'.⁸⁷ It was of course E. P. Thompson who most closely echoed Jennings' emphasis on the 'power to come' with his comprehensive rehabilitation of Morris' socialism in his 1955 *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*.⁸⁸ Whether or not one could satisfactorily draw a line from John Ball, via the Diggers and William Morris to socialists of the 1940s is less important here than the fact that both Jennings and Edward Thompson clearly believed that they could, indeed that a renewal of radicalism required that one *should*.⁸⁹ This kind of comparison has its limits, of course. Jennings' radicalism could be much more easily assimilated by the state and put to work as propaganda. The Marxist historian's methodology in turn was more traditional: hidebound by the norms of academic scholarship in a way that did not apply to Jennings. But again, there were other intellectuals in the 1940s who displayed a similar eclecticism in their attempts comprehend and explain the British experience of modernity. One figure who bares a sustained comparison with Jennings is Raymond Williams.

A generation younger than Jennings, Williams' working class upbringing on the Welsh borders, his wartime experiences as a tank commander and his post-war vocation in adult education combined to shape a very different personality and set of political priorities.

Both, however, were products of the English Department at Cambridge, and this grounding in the practical criticism of I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis left a mark on their methods.⁹⁰ Above all, both were obsessed with the problematic of modernity – in explaining and understanding the impact of industrial capitalism on cultural forms and means of representation. This is apparent in Williams’ earliest ruminations on the subject, which occurred, perhaps surprisingly, in the context of documentary film. This came via his friend Michael Orrom, who after the war found himself working alongside Jennings’ contemporary Paul Rotha. When the Central Office of Information asked for a film on the history and achievements of British agriculture in 1947, Orrom suggested ‘himself as director and with a treatment and subsequent script by Williams, who produced a fifty-two page typescript (rather more essay of analysis than shooting script) entitled *Effect of Machine on the Countryman’s Work, Life and Community* as the basis of a three-to-four reel film.’⁹¹ The project collapsed at an early stage when Rotha, angry at attempts to limit the scope of the film, walked out of a meeting with COI officials.⁹² However, as Dai Smith has perceptively argued, the script-writing process proved a seminal moment in the development of Williams’ thought. Here we find Williams’ argue that ‘the only way to assess human change is to assess the culture (in the broadest sense) of human communities.’⁹³ As Smith notes:

The “organic” village does not survive his relentless description of unalterable change ... [becoming] “something between a small town and a residential suburb”. All this would lead to the real burden of the unmade film and the root of his own nagging interest confronted by what he knew by upbringing, and now by research ... that the problem was either entirely caused by outside mechanical agencies or that there was no problem at all because modernity was a welcome mechanisation of both material and emotional life. It was a common theme that he subsequently never let go. This was his first and prescient statement of why he

rejected these received opinions and why, to give respect back both to lives that had been lived and were now being lived, their complexity as agents of change as well as recipients of it had to be registered.⁹⁴

In teaching and writing on adult education and literary criticism, and above all via his production of fiction (much of it unpublished) during the 1940s and 1950s, Raymond Williams sought to understand the impact which industrial society had upon culture (broadly conceived).⁹⁵ In works such as *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (1958), *The Long Revolution* (1961) and *The City and the Country* (1973), all filtered through the autobiographical experiences rendered in *Border Country* (1960), we perceive Williams grappling with the impact of industrial capitalism on the language and cultural forms of representation and communication. In the scope and ambition of this endeavour and not least in the degree to which he himself ranged across different representational forms: film, fiction, literary criticism, cultural history – Williams' oeuvre bares close comparison to Jennings'. Again, we are not arguing that their conclusions or politics, or indeed methods were the same. Rather they shared an abiding concern with the extent to which transformations in the 'means of production' impacted on everyday life, requiring a commensurate shift in the 'means of vision' which might render these characteristically individual, inchoate modern experiences amenable to collective understanding and critique. For Jennings the best way of expressing the experience of modernity was via montage – both in his films and in *Pandaemonium*. The young Williams had been critical of techniques of montage and cutting in film in favour of narrative 'flow', but this was a position he later repudiated, arguing that 'there is indeed a direct relation between the motion picture, especially in its development in cutting and montage, and the characteristic movement of an observer in the close and miscellaneous environment of the streets.'⁹⁶ What impact, if any, the opportunity to have worked on *Pandaemonium*,

fresh from his own researches on *Culture and Society* would have had on the development of Williams' thought is impossible to say.

There are, of course, limits to this comparison, but in juxtaposing these two seemingly incongruous figures, we can perceive a constellation of sometimes shared ideas about the experience of modernity. Namely a desire to represent the experiences of ordinary, everyday individuals combined with an attempt represent those experiences collectively in order to open them up to understanding and critique. In doing so they themselves ranged across a variety of forms of cultural production. And it is partly the extent of their interventions in a bewildering array of different fields which has arguably occluded a proper recognition of their shared endeavour. Certainly neither is best remembered today as they liked to see themselves. Jennings wanted to be remembered for work as an artist – in paint and in poetry (literally written verse, rather than celluloid). Williams, best known for his literary and cultural criticism wanted to be remembered primarily as a novelist.⁹⁷ In bringing the poetry of Jennings into dialogue with Williams' prose we might perceive in the sparks generated the partly hidden history of two analogous cultural/political attempts to historicize and understand the British experience of modernity during the middle years of the twentieth century.

As we have demonstrated above, the same set of political concerns and convictions about modernity can produce both *Family Portrait* and *Pandaemonium*. It is not simply a case, as Anderson argues, of Jennings abandoning a radical ethos in favour of a conservative one. Instead the two represent Jennings negotiating and exploring left wing responses to modernity within two very different genres and very different sets of constraints. Far from being an uncharacteristic departure from his left wing intellectual milieu, this exploration, in both its political and generic eclecticism marks Jennings as a

part of a mid-century socialist tradition, along with the likes of Thompson, and most significantly, we argue, Raymond Williams.⁹⁸

Conclusion

In this article we have sought to expand the scholarly gaze beyond Jennings the wartime documentarist to consider his wider oeuvre. We have suggested that one way in which we might understand this rich and varied career is to trace Jennings' attempts to document the British experience of modernity. Whilst we have largely focussed on *Pandaemonium* and *Family Portrait*, this framework might provide a fruitful way to revisit his more familiar wartime works. We have argued that although *Pandaemonium* and *Family Portrait* both attempt to document the British experience of modernity, they must not be conflated because they present two quite different accounts. *Pandaemonium* portentously broods on the power to come. The history of modernity is characterised by rupture, conflict and exploitation. It looks back via William Morris and the radical socialists of the late nineteenth century to a uchronic past to find inspiration for a revolutionary future when such conflicts are resolved after class struggle. In contrast, although *Family Portrait* alludes to the injuries of class, it imagines a resolution to these problems with the aid of technology and through the social democratic state. Although less radical than *Pandaemonium*, to understand *Family Portrait* as conservative, sentimental or nostalgic is to ignore the particular cultural and political climate in the years preceding the coronation.

We have argued that to understand these works and Jennings' career more broadly, we must place him in his wider intellectual and cultural milieu. The restoration of his left-wing politics allows us to reconsider the complex and sometimes complementary ways in which mid-twentieth century artists and intellectuals sought to historicize the mutually reinforcing ways in which changing 'modes of production' transformed 'modes of

vision'. This has suggested that if we wish to explore understandings of the experience of modernity, we might heed less to whether the account is characterised by continuity or rupture – Jennings after all shows us that two quite different versions of Britain's path to modernity can be produced over the same period of time by one individual. Rather, it might be more pertinent to pay closer attention to the specific political and cultural contexts which produced different readings of this experience. This article has stressed the need to recover a mid-twentieth perspective on modernity. Here people like Jennings and Williams sought both to historicize the birth of modern society and to explore the ways in which profound transformations in social experience were handled in cultural terms. It is modernity perceived as a distinctive social and cultural 'experience' which animated these thinkers and may help us reorient future research.⁹⁹

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Thomas L. Akehurst, Ben Highmore, Andy Wood and the five *HWJ* referees for their very helpful and perceptive comments on earlier versions of this article. We would also like to thank Ben Highmore for generously sharing his unpublished work on Jennings with us. Early versions of some of the arguments developed here were presented as papers at the University of Sussex and we'd like to thank audience members for their questions and comments.

¹ Lindsay Anderson's 'Only connect' was originally published in the April/May edition of *Sight and Sound* in 1954. All references in this article refer to this reprint: Lindsay Anderson, 'Only connect: some aspects of the work of Humphrey Jennings', *Film Quarterly*, 15: 2, Winter, 1961-62.

² See Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, 'Representing the nation: British Documentary Film, 1930-45', *Screen*, 26, 1985, pp. 21-33; Anthony Aldgate and Jerry Richards, *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema and the Second World War*, Oxford, 1986, pp. 218-245; Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War*, London, 1994, pp. 71-125; Brian Winston, *"Fires Were Started"*, London, 1999; Geoff Eley, 'Finding the people's war: film, British collective memory, and world war II', *American Historical Review*, 106: 3, 2001, pp. 818-838. There has also been recent work on his other wartime films. See for example Adrian Smith, 'Humphrey Jennings' *Heart of Britain* (1941): a reassessment', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 23: 2, 2003, pp. 133-151.

³ Anderson, 'Only Connect', p. 12.

⁴ Lindsay Anderson, 'Only connect: Postscript, October 1981', Mary-Lou Jennings (ed.), *Humphrey Jennings: Filmmaker/Painter/Poet*, London, 1982, p. 59.

⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

⁶ Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, London, 1991, pp. 262-3.

⁷ Paul Addison, *Now The War Is Over: A Social History of Britain, 1945-51*, London, 1985, p. 209.

⁸ Andrew Higson, 'Saturday Night or Sunday Morning', *Ideas and Production*, 9-10, 1989, p. 154.

⁹ See Kevin Jackson, *Humphrey Jennings*, London, 2004; Michel Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, Aldershot, 1999; Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, 'Science, poetry and utopia: Humphrey Jennings' *Pandaemonium*', *Science as Culture*, 1: 1, 1987, pp. 35-80.

¹⁰ It was finally published in 1985 as Humphrey Jennings, *Pandaemonium 1660-1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers*, Mary-Lou Jennings and Charles Madge (eds), London, 1985.

¹¹ See for example Anthony W. Hodgkinson and Rodney E. Sheratsky, *Humphrey Jennings: More than a maker of Films*, London, 1982, pp. 90-91; Michael Saler, 'Whigs and surrealists: The "subtle links" of Humphrey Jennings's *Pandaemonium*', George K. Behlmer & Fred M. Leventhal (eds), *Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia and Identity in Modern British Culture*, Stanford, 2000, pp. 123-6. A useful starting point for the voluminous literature on Benjamin is Vanessa R. Schwartz, 'Walter Benjamin for historians', *American Historical Review*, 106: 5, 2001, pp. 1721-1743.

¹² See Robins and Webster, 'Science, poetry and utopia'; Saler, 'Whigs and surrealists'. Robins and Webster reconstruct and condense their argument in Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, *Times of the Technoculture*, London, 1999, pp. 13-38.

¹³ See Frank Cottrell-Boyce, 'Opening ceremony saw our mad dreams come true', *The Observer*, 29 July 2012.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/29/frank-cottrell-boyce-olympics-opening-ceremony?CMP=twt_gu

¹⁴ Zaniello, 'Humphrey Jennings' film *Family Portrait*, p. 32.

¹⁵ Hodgkinson and Sheratsky, *Humphrey Jennings: More than a maker of Films*, p. 83; Jackson, *Humphrey Jennings*, p. 349. The best recent discussion is Beattie's, who contests Anderson's interpretation of the ways in which Britain's imperial past is invoked, see Beattie, *Humphrey Jennings*, pp. 126-129.

¹⁶ Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger, 'Introduction', Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger (eds), *Meanings of modernity: Britain from the late-Victorian era to World War II*, Oxford, 2001, p.8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ See Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1880-1924*, London, 1998, pp. 4 and 200-202; Geoffrey Field, 'Social patriotism and the working class: appearance and disappearance of a tradition', *International Labor and Working Class History*, 42, 1992, pp. 20-39.

¹⁹ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 5. Our emphasis.

²⁰ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxxv.

²¹ Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, *Mass-Observation*, London, 1937, pp. 15-16.

Jennings is credited as having provided ‘help’ and pages 13-28 read like his ideas.

²² Jackson, *Humphrey Jennings*, pp. 364-370.

²³ Humphrey Jennings, ‘Do Not Lean Out of the Window!’, *The London Bulletin*, 4-5, July 1938, pp. 14-44. Jennings’ extracts were broken up by reproductions of surrealist pictures and drawings as well as poems and essays by Madge, Legg, Mesens, Breton, Tanguy and Eluard.

²⁴ On Jennings’ understanding of and use of ‘images’ see Charles Madge, ‘A Note on Images’, Mary-Lou Jennings (ed.), *Humphrey Jennings: Filmmaker/Painter/Poet*, London, 1982, pp. 47-49.

²⁵ Highmore places Jennings alongside Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Giedion as practitioners of ‘anonymous history’, borrowing the term from Giedion’s 1948 study *Mechanization takes command: a contribution to anonymous history*. We are grateful to Ben Highmore for access to his unpublished paper ‘Machine History: Humphrey Jennings’ *Pandaemonium* and Anonymous History’.

²⁶ Benjamin used the example of the silence of men returning from the First World War, see Walter Benjamin, ‘The storyteller: reflections on the work of Nikolai Leskov’, H. Arendt (ed.) *Illuminations*, Trans. H. Zohn, London, 1992, pp. 83-4.

²⁷ Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, London, 2005, p. 11.

²⁸ Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, London, 2002, p. 62. In terms of Benjamin’s own work, see Walter Benjamin, ‘The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction’, H. Arendt (ed.) *Illuminations*; W. Benjamin, ‘Little

history of photography’, M. W. Jennings, H. Eiland and G. Smith (eds), *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, London, 1999, pp. 507-530.

²⁹ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p.17.

³⁰ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxxv

³¹ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxxv

³² Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxxvi.

³³ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxxvi. Saler argues, contrary to the evidence that Jennings is only interested in the first two, namely class conflicts and conflicts between materialism and animism. But it is clear that many of the images also illuminate conflicts over systems, ideologies and struggles over the use of the environment. See Saler, ‘Whigs and Surrealists’, p. 135.

³⁴ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxxviii.

³⁵ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 38

³⁶ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 37

³⁷ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 12.

³⁸ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 47.

³⁹ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 48.

⁴⁰ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 48. The most relevant work is Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Trans. Alan Sheridan, London, 1977.

⁴¹ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 146-155.

⁴² See William Morris, ‘How I became a socialist’, Asa Briggs (ed.), *News from Nowhere and selected writings and designs*, London, 1962, pp. 33-37.

⁴³ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, p. 352.

⁴⁴ See Stephen Yeo, ‘A new life: the religion of socialism in Britain, 1883-1896’, *History Workshop Journal*, 4, 1977, pp. 5-56.

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- ⁴⁵ Stephen Yeo, 'Socialism, the state and some oppositional Englishness', Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920*, London, 1986, pp. 308-369.
- ⁴⁶ Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 353-356.
- ⁴⁷ The best analysis is John Goode, 'William Morris and the Dream of Revolution', John Lucas (ed.), *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1971, pp. 221-280.
- ⁴⁸ Saler, 'Whigs and surrealists', p. 126 and 142.
- ⁴⁹ Saler, 'Whigs and surrealists', p. 141.
- ⁵⁰ Geoffrey Macnab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry*, London, 1993, pp. 92-93.
- ⁵¹ Ian Dalrymple, 'Personal Tribute', Dilys Powell, Basil Wright and Roger Manvell (eds), *Humphrey Jennings, 1907-1950: a Tribute*, London, 1950, p. 11.
- ⁵² Dalrymple, 'Personal Tribute', p. 11.
- ⁵³ Macnab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry*, p. 110.
- ⁵⁴ Dalrymple, 'Personal Tribute', p. 11.
- ⁵⁵ Humphrey Jennings, 'The English', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 August 1948, reproduced in Kevin Jackson (ed.) *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*, Manchester, 1993, p. 237.
- ⁵⁶ Anderson, 'Only connect: Postscript, October 1981', p. 59.
- ⁵⁷ Anderson, 'Only connect: some aspects of the work of Humphrey Jennings', p. 12.
- ⁵⁸ Anderson, 'Only connect: Postscript, October 1981', p. 59.
- ⁵⁹ Jennings, 'The English', p. 236.

⁶⁰ See Alun Howkins, ‘The Discovery of Rural England’, Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920*, London, 1986, pp. 66-67; On 1930s documentary and the industrial landscape see Denis Lineham, ‘An archaeology of dereliction: poetics and policy in the governing of depressed industrial districts in interwar England and Wales’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26: 1, 2000.

⁶¹ David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, London: 1998, p. 16.

⁶² Alex Potts, ‘Constable Country between the wars’, Raphael Samuel (ed.) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, Volume 3 National Fictions*, London, 1989, p. 175.

⁶³ See Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and its People*, London, 2012, p. 6. See also Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology and the British Landscape, 1927-1955*, Oxford, 2007, although we would contest Hauser’s characterisation of these impulses as ‘counter-modern’.

⁶⁴ See Timothy Boon, ‘The Shell of a prosperous age’: History, Landscape and the Modern in Paul Rotha’s *The Face of Britain*’ in C. Lawrence and A-K. Mayer (eds), *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in Interwar Britain*, Amsterdam, 2000.

⁶⁵ Paul Nash, “‘Going Modern’ and ‘Being British’”, *The Week-end Review*, 12 March 1932.

⁶⁶ See David Peter Corbetts, ‘The Geography of *Blast*: Landscape, Modernity and English Painting, 1914-1930’, David Peter Corbett, Yasmin Holt and Fiona Russell (eds), *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, London, 2002, pp. 115-122. David Peters Corbett, ‘The Third Factor:

Modernity and the Absent City in the Work of Paul Nash, 1919-1936,' *The Art Bulletin*, 74: 3, 1992, pp. 470-71; Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain*, p. 285.

⁶⁷ Stuart Sillars, *British Romantic Art and the Second World War*, London, 1991, pp. 14-51.

⁶⁸ Paul Nash, 'Unseen Landscapes.' *Country Life*, 21 May 1938; Paul Nash, *Paintings and Watercolours*, London, 1975 p. 86, Sam Smiles, 'Equivalents for the Megaliths: Prehistory and English Culture, 1920-50,' in Corbett, Holt and Russell (eds), *The Geographies of Englishness*.

⁶⁹ Michael Frayn, 'Festival', Michael Sissons and Philip French (eds), *Age of Austerity, 1945-1951*, London, 1963, pp. 319-320.

⁷⁰ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London, 1994, pp. 219-220.

⁷¹ Anonymous, 'Family Portrait', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 18: 205, 1951, p. 222.

⁷² Gavin Lambert, 'Jennings' Britain', *Sight and Sound*, May 1951.

⁷³ See Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 93-118; David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977', Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 140.

⁷⁴ Edward Shils and Michael Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review*, New Series, 2, 1953, p. 73. Emphasis in the original. While Shils was by no means a social democrat, Young had drafted Labour's 1945 election manifesto.

⁷⁵ Anderson, 'Only connect: Postscript, October 1981', p. 59.

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- ⁷⁶ For one version of this history see Margot Heinemann, 'The People's Front and the Intellectuals', Jim Fryth (ed.), *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, London, 1985, pp. 157-186.
- ⁷⁷ E. P. Thompson, 'Imagination power', *New Society*, 25 October 1985, p. 165.
- ⁷⁸ See Geoffrey Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945*, Oxford, 2011, pp. 308-313.
- ⁷⁹ Ian Walker, *So exotic, so homemade: Surrealism, Englishness and Documentary Photography*, Manchester, 2007, pp. 93-114.
- ⁸⁰ George Pitman, 'Men of our time no 8: Humphrey Jennings', *Our Time*, July 1944, p. 12. Pitman was the nom de plume of the communist journalist Allen Hutt.
- ⁸¹ Jackson, *Humphrey Jennings*, Chapter 1.
- ⁸² Humphrey Jennings to Ciceley Jennings, 10 September 1942, Kevin Jackson (ed.), *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*, p. 62.
- ⁸³ Humphrey Jennings to Ciceley Jennings, 29 January 1943 and 29 March 1943 Kevin Jackson (ed.), *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*, pp. 77- 80.
- ⁸⁴ Humphrey Jennings to 'Prof Pitman', no date but presumably 1944, Kevin Jackson (ed.), *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*, p. 82.
- ⁸⁵ Hymie Fagan, *Nine Days That Shook England*, London, 1938; Rodney Hilton and Hymie Fagan, *The English Rising of 1381*, London, 1950.
- ⁸⁶ A. L. Morton, *A People's History of England*, London, 1938, p. 3; A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia*, London, 1952.
- ⁸⁷ See Rodney Hilton, 'Peasant movements in England before 1381', *Economic History Review*, 11, 1949; Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', John Saville (ed.),

Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in honour of Dona Torr, London, 1954, pp. 11-66.

⁸⁸ See E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, Revised Edition, London, 1977, parts three and four.

⁸⁹ For Thompson, this recovery of Morris's 'moral realism' was necessary in his struggle to formulate a humanist alternative to the Stalinist distortions of the CPGB leadership. See Tom Steele, *The Emergence of Cultural Studies, 1945-65: Cultural Politics, Adult Education and the English Question*, London, 1997, p. 163.

⁹⁰ Jackson, *Humphrey Jennings*, Chapter 2; John McIlroy and Sallie Westwood (eds), *Border Country: Raymond Williams in Adult Education*, Leicester, 1993.

⁹¹ Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale*, Cardigan, 2008, pp. 252-3.

⁹² Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*, London, 1979, p. 71.

⁹³ Film script quoted in Smith, *Raymond Williams*, p. 253.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 254.

⁹⁵ See Smith, *Raymond Williams*, chapters 6-11.

⁹⁶ The quotation is from *The Country and the City*. See Tony Pinkney, 'Introduction', Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, London, 1989, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁷ Williams in reply to Michael Ignatieff quoted in Tony Pinkney, *Raymond Williams*, Bridgend, 1991, p. 11.

⁹⁸ We would like to thank Thomas Akehurst in particular for helping us to clarify this point.

⁹⁹ For an account of recent trends in modernity studies see Simon Gunn and James Vernon 'Introduction', Simon Gunn and James Vernon (eds), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain*, London, 2011, pp. 1-7.