



The aesthetic and intellectual influences on the documentary films of Humphrey Jennings 1907-1942.

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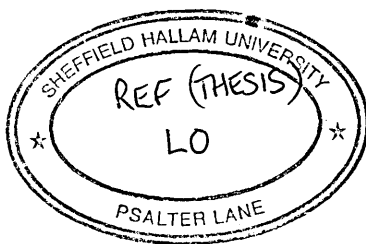
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**The Aesthetic and Intellectual Influences on the
Documentary Films of Humphrey Jennings 1907-
1942**

Philip C. Logan

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

The Aesthetic and Intellectual Influences on the Documentary Films of Humphrey Jennings 1907-1942

Discussions about the early films of Humphrey Jennings refer to his artistic and intellectual background to explain the nature and scope of his film work. Such discussions, however, tend to rely on highly selective and partial information from existing accounts. This tendency has over time created a form of orthodox opinion, an opinion which tends to regard Jennings as an artist and intellectual who, prior to full-time involvement with film, collaborated and worked on a diverse series of artistic and intellectual projects spread across a wide range of subjects and disciplines. These activities are seen as symptomatic of a mind which could not remain focussed on one particular endeavour. However Jennings' early wartime films express in quintessential form many of his ideas, and through a distinctive form of poetic expression celebrate both the civilian response to and the need for national unity under the threat of invasion.

The aim of this thesis is to revise the existing understanding of Jennings' artistic and intellectual background and challenge the prevailing interpretations of his early propaganda films between 1939 and 1942. It is hoped to reveal how his artistic and intellectual pursuits and his film work represent a sustained and coherent intellectual and artistic exercise focussed on the nature of artistic technique. This focus dates from the activities of his parents and continues through his educational experiences at school and university. Simultaneously this engagement with the arts was informed and influenced by contemporary economic, social, cultural and political events.

It is these factors which inform the nature and scope of his filmwork. In artistic, intellectual and political terms the series of films Jennings produced and directed between 1939 and 1942 represent in style and form a fundamental challenge to John Grierson's understanding of the meaning, nature and role of the documentary and propaganda film. Jennings' challenge to the Griersonian ideal of documentary film also contests the political meaning behind both pre-war documentary and wartime propaganda notions of national unity and the future post war settlement.

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The Aesthetic and Intellectual Influences on the Documentary
Films of Humphrey Jennings 1907-1942

Jennings is, in a few words, a man whose place in British culture and world cinema ought to be beyond dispute: 'our greatest documentarist' (Gilbert Adair), 'the only real poet the British cinema has so far produced' (Lindsay Anderson), and 'a true war artist, in the way that Henry Moore's drawings in the Underground and Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy transcend war and reassert the primacy of the human imagination' (David Thompson). Add to these the other accomplishments as painter, photographer, anthropologist, actor, poet, editor, scholar, critic, theorist, intellectual historian, and the sum is. .a man who has been more or less forgotten.(1)

Kevin Jackson (1983)

Jackson's tribute is as pertinent today as in 1983. The publication of *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader* in the early eighties was his attempt to rescue the popular reputation of an artist, poet, intellectual and film maker from the unjust 'obscurity' and 'neglect' into which he had fallen.(2) Nevertheless, Gilbert Adair has recently opined 'Why in heavens name. .should the poor man be destined for the chop?. .Virtually everyone in the film-critical community acknowledges his achievement, and attempts to bring his films to a wider, non-specialised public are still fairly frequent, but to no avail.'(3) For Adair, Jennings' reputation as a great documentary film maker is firmly established in 'a trio of minor but authentic (wartime) masterpieces - *Listen to Britain* (1941), *Fires Were Started* (1943) and *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) masterpieces of a quintessentially national character'.(4) But Jackson's attempt to bring a significant collection of Jennings' written

correspondence, poetry, film scripts, critical articles and selected transcripts of radio presentations to a wider public has largely failed to counteract Jennings' lack of profile. He may be, as Lindsay Anderson asserts, 'the only real poet that the British cinema has so far produced', and the film-critical community may recognise his achievements by screening selected films at festivals, on film courses and through a sporadic but appreciative flow of articles in academic journals. But one cannot but be aware that within that community the fate of Humphrey Jennings is also one of marginalisation.⁽⁵⁾

Inadvertently, Anderson's remarks may have encouraged a general appreciation and critical analysis of his films which has tended to focus upon the innovative formal and poetic dimensions of his cinematic work at the expense of the distinctive modernist sensibility which informs his cinematic technique and the radical political critique embedded within his early wartime propaganda films. Equally, as a poet and film-maker, Jennings' distinctive contribution to the genre known as British documentary has tended to be contextualised within a broader appreciation of the character and qualities of the British documentary film movement at the expense of a specific understanding of the intellectual, aesthetic and political dimensions which inform and make his films distinctive.

Investigating Humphrey Jennings

Jennings was arguing with me about the basic problem that in his view, the film director (i.e., he, himself) has to solve. "It's the whole question," he said, somewhat cryptically, "of imagination in an industrial society." (6)

Allen Hutt (1944)

In an attempt to explain the qualities which inform and make distinctive a 'Jennings film', reference is often made to what Andrew Higson identifies as 'poetic realism', a form of representation 'which makes the ordinary strange, even beautiful but, above all, which has emotional depth and integrity'. (7) Jennings' particular expressive form of 'poetic realism' is said to emanate from a diverse number of seemingly distinct artistic or intellectual influences from his past. He is characterised as a talented individual of high intellect and strong personality with wide ranging and eclectic interests. For example Jennings was a 'surrealist', a 'mass observer', a man 'of the left' or, as Adair states, an intellectual with a 'magpie sensibility'. (8) He is said to have had a quixotic mind which could not or would not stay still; he dominated discussions, moving between ideas and enterprises which attracted him. This included his studies in English and the Theatre at Cambridge University, active involvement with the artistic movement of surrealism and the investigations associated with mass observation until he became involved with film. Here he found a medium within which he expressed his poetic imagination and patriotism. It is out of this specifically intense dialectic of life and art that the masterpieces of his wartime films were forged. Once the war

was over he became disillusioned, losing the certainty and promise he had felt during that intense period of sentient experience itself reflected in the quality of his postwar films. Such an abridged biographical account does contain elements of truth, but it is a partial and superficial understanding of the man and his film work. It is an account that has become a form of accepted wisdom which does not discern between the artistic activities of the man and how those activities related to the nature of his intellectual and aesthetic agenda.

To date there has been no concerted attempt to review the relationship between Jennings' cultural and intellectual background, his modernist sensibility and the poetic style and meaning of his films. Although his aesthetic and its formal expression have been alluded to by critics there has tended to be a lack of detailed evaluation of both the nature of the intellectual influences which helped shape that aesthetic, including the form and meaning of his modernist discourse and the modes of formal representation chosen through which to articulate his distinctive poetic sensibility. Often critical accounts of his films tend to re-iterate existing knowledge in a standardized form. These assertions have become orthodox and this orthodoxy tends to permeate successive interpretations and critical evaluation of Jennings and his films. This not only limits understanding of the man himself and his mature intellectual and aesthetic agenda, but also his position within the politics and culture of the British Documentary Film movement.

Mention the term British documentary and the name most likely to come to mind is John Grierson. His shadow looms large

over the genre of the British documentary film movement. In 1990 Ian Aitken provided a particularly revealing analysis of Grierson tracing the philosophical, aesthetic and ideological influences which helped shape his ideas.⁽⁹⁾ He attempts to reveal how those influences became articulated within the form and social role he envisaged for the documentary film and the documentary film movement. More recently Aitken has acknowledged that the focus upon Grierson and Griersonian documentary practice has detracted from other important figures within the movement and he identifies both Jennings and Alberto Cavalcanti as worthy of further assessment.⁽¹⁰⁾ At present both men suffer from a similar degree of marginalisation encouraged by the lack of any substantive critical analysis and evaluation in English of their lives or film work. Both men were central to the development of an alternative to Grierson's documentary film practice. That practice, in form and content, included a different notion of the modern and proposed a more inquisitive form of documentary.

The only general text about Jennings was written by two American based academics, Anthony W. Hodgkinson and Rodney Sheratsky. Published in 1982 their book includes a superficial evaluation of broad intellectual, social, cultural and economic influences which helped shape Jennings' art, aesthetics and film work and descriptions of his films. Although valuable, *Humphrey Jennings: More than a Maker of Films* now suffers from a lack of detailed information which has subsequently emerged since its publication.⁽¹¹⁾ Also in 1982 the British Film Institute in association with Riverside Studios, published a compendium of

Jennings' work edited by his daughter Mary-Lou Jennings entitled *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker / Painter / Poet*. Produced primarily to illustrate an exhibition of his art work it contains essays by friends, admirers and academics about Jennings the man and artist.⁽¹²⁾ Three years later, the name and work of Jennings was back in the public eye with the publication of a series of texts he selected for his proposed book entitled *Pandaemonium: The coming of the machine as seen by contemporary observers*.⁽¹³⁾ Co-edited by Charles Madge and Mary-Lou Jennings, *Pandaemonium* traces what Jennings understood as the 'imaginative history of the Industrial Revolution'. This book includes commentary by Jennings which explains the rationale behind the choice of texts and a valuable insight into the intellectual and aesthetic considerations he regarded as central to poetic expression. Combined with the accompanying essays by Madge and Mary-Lou Jennings, *Pandaemonium* provides further significant intellectual and biographical details. A further eight years were to pass before *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader* was published in 1993. Edited by Kevin Jackson and with the co-operation of Mary Lou Jennings this includes, along with Jackson's introductory essay, virtually all of Jennings' private correspondence and published material known to exist, along with a selection of film treatments and scripts, radio broadcasts and poems. Since the publication of *Humphrey Jennings: More than a Maker of Films* further primary and secondary material has entered the public sphere, including the 'Humphrey Jennings Collection' lodged at the Film Archive at the British Film Institute.⁽¹⁴⁾ Simultaneously a

diverse range of articles in journals and magazines, written by friends, associates, film critics and theorists about Jennings, his films and the British documentary film movement, has also accumulated.

At present no one within the British film-critical community has attempted to utilise this information and provide a more coherent and detailed evaluation of his life and work. The aim of this thesis is to provide a more detailed investigation and critical evaluation of the intellectual life and early film career of Humphrey Jennings, and in doing so attempt a more appropriate assessment of his intellectual formation and how his ideas express themselves in the films he directed for the General Post Office (G.P.O.) and the Crown Film Unit between 1939 and 1942. By locating his ideas and artistic practice within the context of his life and work this will help explain his art, his poetry and particularly his early film projects. As an implicit point of reference, I contest the idea expressed by Adair that Jennings was an intellectual with a 'magpie sensibility'. Often implied, this charge is not new. It is a reputation which has developed because of a lack of understanding amongst his friends and associates about the aesthetic questions he was attempting to resolve through seemingly disparate artistic activities. This in turn has been compounded by the often hostile and critical reviews of his early documentary work by Grierson and supporters of the Grierson school.

Since his accidental death in 1950, that lack of understanding and those critical reviews have been reiterated by film and cultural critics which has reinforced the image of a dilettante.

In contrast it will be argued that a coherent intellectual and aesthetic agenda underpins all his artistic endeavours. Briefly, what connects those diverse modes of artistic expression - theatre, poetry, critical writing, painting (a particular enthusiasm for surrealism) mass observation, historical research, photography, colour film, radio broadcasts and documentary film - is an exploration of modern poetic techniques and their potential to express an imaginative response to the contemporary nature of the world we inhabit. This exploration took him increasingly across different media and forms of artistic expression. It forms part of his investigation into the nature of authenticity and the real. Connected to that investigation was a desire to communicate not only his and the findings of others to the general public in an accessible and democratic form but to assert that the poetic response to the modern condition was available and should be explored by everyone as part of a broader political and democratic process connecting to the idea of liberty. The realm of the poetic was not the province of the few, for example, the socially designated poet or intellectual. For Jennings that form of 'highbrow' poetry had become insular, self-referential and remote from the mass of the general public. Modern poetry, he believed, had become irrelevant to the people and in doing so put the very existence of the poet and poetry in doubt. What was needed was a reawakening of the poetic ideal of poetry as meaningful to the general population. This could only be achieved by utilising modes of communication which allowed the people to be presented with poetry that was accessible and of direct

concern to their lives.

Poetry and the Modern Condition

Jennings was heavily involved with the English modernist movement of the inter-war period. Throughout his artistic career, he engaged with the central question of how to resolve what T.S. Eliot referred to as the 'dissociation of sensibility' (the ability to think and feel simultaneously). Through re-integration an imaginative transformation could occur in human consciousness. That transformation may in turn lead to a reconfiguration of the existing social and material conditions of existence. In other words the imagination inspired by the emotional response may provide the individual with the opportunity to rethink social reality. Jennings believed that a key component to this process was poetry. In the past, prior to the existence of the modern condition, poetry had played such a role of information and enlightenment. It was now the time to make poetry and the poet relevant by engaging with the modern popular imagination. He became committed to a belief in an interrelated artistic and political strategy where art and poetry were to be re-integrated into the social and general political discourse thereby liberating them from the marginal position into which they had fallen and to act as agents in promoting a transformation in the nature of society.

Critical to the process of re-integration and re-instatement was the power of the human imagination with its ability to remake the aesthetic experience and in consequence our understanding of the material world. Like the early Romantic

poets Jennings saw the imagination as the field and key to the liberation of the conscious. Here the interaction of the spiritual, cognitive and material could be articulated through an imaginative apprehension of the aesthetic experience. This apprehension of the aesthetic required a technique of poetic expression which could evoke from the audience an emotional response. He admired artists at the forefront of artistic expression such as Beethoven, early Picasso and above all Magritte, as well as popular performers such as the Marx Brothers, Eddie Cantor and Charlie Chaplin whose techniques could, he believed, engender a transformation and a questioning of reality. It was vital to celebrate and learn from all forms of artistry where such poetry occurred. If this could be achieved, the poet and poetry could be restored to the traditional and vital visionary role in society: 'Unless we are prepared to claim special attributes for the poet - the attribute of vision - and unless we are prepared to admit the work of the artist (that is to say the function of 'imagination') as an essential part of the modern world there is no real reason for our continuing to bother with any of the arts any more, or with any imaginary activity. No reasons except money, snobbery, propaganda or escapism'(15)

Of central importance for Jennings was to locate and work with the most affective medium for poetic expression. Painting provided him with the most personal medium through which to express his modernist sensibility. However his involvement with film and photography in the mid-thirties offered a new medium which in comparison to paint may reach a larger and more diverse audience. Jennings moved from the relative isolation of Cambridge to London and joined the General Post Office (G.P.O.) Film Unit on a part-time basis in mid 1934 at a fortuitous moment in its evolution. With the arrival of Alberto Cavalcanti, the Griersonian notion of the form and function of the documentary was to be challenged. It was a debate which struck at the heart of Grierson's modernism by contesting the legitimacy of Grierson's cinematic representation in the relationship between aesthetics, politics and ethics. Jennings, the film novice, aligned himself with Cavalcanti and the distinctive qualities of his aesthetic and politics were subsumed within the ensuing debate over cinematic practice and representation, institutional politics and the broader social and cultural issues of power and social order.⁽¹⁶⁾ John Tagg's discussion of the discursive and ideological function of photography during the period of the American New Deal of the thirties is pertinent to Grierson. Like the Roosevelt Administration, Grierson understood documentary film as a medium by which to educate and promote amongst the general public a national consensus built around state led social-democratic principles. Documentary film was a practical and

symbolic exercise, material and ideological, real and unreal.

Tagg insists that it was:

a crucial historical "rendevous" of means, rhetoric and social strategy. Only in this conjecture could the documentary mode take on its particular force, command identification, and exert power, not as the evocation of a pristine truth but as a politically mobilized rhetoric of Truth, a strategy of signification, a cultural intervention aimed at resealing social unity and structures of belief at a time of far-reaching crisis and conflict.(17)

During the period between 1934 and 1938 as Fascism gained hold across Europe, Jennings' poetic and political agenda became explicitly articulated outside the documentary movement in the public sphere, in his involvement with the International Surrealist Exhibition (1936), Mass-Observation (1937), colour film and photography (1936-1938) and the presentation of a series of national radio programmes for the BBC entitled 'The Poet and the Public' (1938). Prior to returning to the G.P.O. in late 1938, and for some time after, painting was still his primary medium of personal poetic expression. Apart from collaborative work with Cavalcanti his initial documentary apprenticeship did not allow for any sustained artistic expression. Over the next four years he experimented within and outside the Unit with black and white photography and particularly colour film, investigating the properties of cinematic representation and interrogating the mutual interaction between what Michael Renov calls: 'the four fundamental tendencies or rhetorical/aesthetic functions. . . [of

film]. . . to record, reveal, or preserve; to persuade or promote; to analyze or interrogate; and to express.'⁽¹⁸⁾ Unlike his painting, initially with film Jennings was not completely free to pursue his ideas, having to operate within conditions and constraints of the organisation. Entering full-time employment with the G.P.O in late 1938 and achieving the status of director he produced what is generally considered his first distinctive documentary *Spare Time* (1939). By now the culture and politics of production was such that he was able to explicitly apply his modernist principles, poetic form and politics to his film projects. What had been primarily a personal investigation now became contextualised within a movement itself disputing notions of authenticity and truthfulness.

Spare Time begins a cycle of films based primarily upon a style of reportage which culminate in *Listen to Britain* (1942). This group of films increasingly articulate his poetic form of expression and ideals which are now exposed to the critical gaze of Grierson's interpretation and alternative form of modernist cinematic expression. The Griersonian critique included charges of failure to provide appropriately ennobled representations of working class life (*Spare Time*) and with the outbreak of war criticism intensified with indirect accusations that his style of documentary was tardy in production, aesthetically precious, politically retarded, nationally insular and nostalgic.⁽¹⁹⁾ This is an assessment which, from detailed analysis of the films cross-referenced to his intellectual and poetic agenda and the historic moment of production, I argue to be wrong.

The contingency of the moment was a critical element in all

Jennings' artistic endeavours, including the photographic and film record and the eventual completed propaganda film. This cycle of films offers evidence of Jennings the poet acting as contemporary reporter, commentator and narrator of the historical moment. The war was to be recorded and understood as the instantaneous and unpredictable phenomenon that it was. Through the appropriate application of poetic/artistic technique he attempted to translate and articulate the impact of those events upon the civilian population. From the context of his modernist sensibility and politics he was to consider for example how food shortages, the violence of the blitz and the impact of the invasion of Russia impacted upon the imagination and response of the British people. Between 1939 and 1942 within the shifting remit of the prevailing propaganda imperative, Jennings would simultaneously propagate the idea of national unity, agitate for direct civil and military aid from the United States, chart what he saw as the contingent and imaginative response of the civilian army to the war and demand that the sacrifices made to defeat Fascism and the potential unleashed amongst the people must be translated into a new post-war world based upon increased liberty for all.

The photographic image, as Tagg reminds us, is 'the material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts, by specific forces, for more or less defined purposes. It requires, therefore not an alchemy but a history.'⁽²⁰⁾ In Jennings' films we can unpack not one but a series of histories which contribute to the shape of the discourse and cinematic narration. These include: his belief in a distinctive form of modernist

metanarrative which details the development and eventual crisis of contemporary aesthetics, consciousness and poetic expression; an interpretation of the psychological and social consequences of a transformed material world under the processes of industrialisation and conflict; a recording of the contemporary moment of home front experience and response to war. To understand the significance of each film in the cycle it helps to be aware of the relationship between Jennings' intellectual and artistic expression and its effective articulation through photographic style and, specifically within the trilogy of later war films, the editing practice of Stewart McAllister.

How Jennings perceived and filmically expressed each historic moment was shaped by the immediate demands of official home front propaganda policy. The propaganda message(s) Jennings wished to articulate were closely related to his immediate situation and contextualised by broader historic events. Theory and practice and the historic moment bind together such diverse subject matter as working class leisure (*Spare Time*), international trade (*S.S. Ionian*), the reclamation of farm land (*Spring Offensive*), poetry and war (*Words for Battle*), social welfare (*Welfare of the Workers*), civilian morale and calls for international aid (*Heart of Britain* and *Listen to Britain*) which enables us to consider the films as a coherent and developing body of work. Two early wartime collaborative projects within the G.P.O. unit *The First Days* (1939) and *London Can Take It* (1940) will be excluded from close analysis because Jennings did not enjoy the same degree of

control over their production. Depending on the specific nature of the subject matter and circumstances of production and the propaganda imperative we can identify in these films different elements of Jennings' discourse concerning the modern. The films mainly focus upon contemporary events and allow Jennings the opportunity to act as both poet, reporter and propagandist, using the medium of film to express his belief in the value of the poet, poetry and the potential of working people to simultaneously liberate themselves from the threat of Fascism, enhance their quality of life and celebrate the dignity, nobility and potential of working people.

Each film Jennings directed and helped edit between 1939 and 1942 tends to fall within a distinct historic period of pre-war or wartime experience. As these historic moments emerged these films wittingly and unwittingly chronicle significant events. The response from Jennings and the (often delayed) release date of the films can be delineated as follows: first, growing tension in the build up to war during 1939, *Spare Time* and *S.S.Ionian*; second, the official declaration and the tense preparation during the 'phoney war' (September 1939 - April 1940), *Spring Offensive*; third, the drama of the siege with the Battle of Britain (April - September 1940), *Welfare of the Workers* ; the Battle of the Atlantic (October 1940 - December 1942) and specifically the blitz (September 1940 - May 1941) and the attack on the civilian population, *Heart of Britain* and *Words for Battle*; finally the 'turning of the tide' and the beginning of 'the fight back' with the end of the blitz, the German invasion of Russia (June 1941), followed by the entry of the

United States into the military conflict (early December), *Listen to Britain* February 1942.

Wartime conditions that initially contextualised production could well be superseded and it must be remembered that the gestation, development and implementation of ideas, scripts, filming and editing of one film overlap with other considerations concerning propaganda production. Similarly release dates do not always coincide with the conditions under which the films were produced. Because of organisational issues concerning the distribution of films there were often delays. Such delays inevitably saw the immediate war-time conditions under which they were developed and produced pass. This situation is particularly pertinent to films such as *Spring Offensive* and *Listen To Britain*. It is proposed to consider each film in terms of production period rather than focus on the date of release and as part of a developing cycle, this will help clarify and counter arguments by critics who tend to consider each film separately and characterise them in terms of artistic pre-occupation rather than within the immediate historic circumstance and general remit of the Government propaganda imperative.

From the beginning of 1942 and like the general progress of the war, Jennings' documentary career experienced a significant shift in direction. He produced and directed two retrospective, historically based drama-documentaries: *Fires Were Started* (1943) and *The Silent Village* (1943). The films prior to 1943 form a discrete cycle that mediate a personal impression of the meaning of war for the civilian population. With the close collaboration of a relatively unchanging production team during

this time the immediate aspects of homefront life were mediated through Jennings' imagination, artistry and direction. They provide a case study of his struggle to present his poetic imagination and political vision in action through a representation of the British people at war. They also provide a cinematic attempt to confirm the vital role and relevance of the poet to everyday life and the people and provide an articulation of those intellectual and aesthetic formations which stem back to his childhood and with which he would continue to wrestle until his untimely death in 1950.

Walberswick: Art, Politics and the Aesthetic

Born in 1907 Jennings was the child of an independent, cosmopolitan, artistically inclined middle class couple who became committed to the tenets and practices of the Arts and Craft and Guild Socialist movements. These movements can be traced back to the nineteenth century Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. There was a romantic critique of the commercial and industrial world which turned for inspiration to the past art work of Constable, Turner and Blake.⁽²¹⁾ Subsequently their ideals were shaped by the cultural critics Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and William Morris⁽²²⁾ and took hold in the Arts and Crafts/Guild Socialist beliefs of A.J. Penty, Charles Ashbee and A.R. Orage with his magazine *The New Age*.⁽²³⁾

At least until the Great War, the Arts and Crafts/Guild Socialist movement extended Ruskin's spiritual belief in the idea of 'Christian Art'.⁽²⁴⁾ True Christian and humane architecture he believed was "savage", that is imperfect, the product of the craftsman's 'healthy ennobling labour'.⁽²⁵⁾ For guild socialists such as Penty and Ashbee, the art and pleasure of craft production was under threat from the new industrial processes associated with standardized mass production and Taylorist principles of scientific management. The mechanisation of production and commercialism stripped away the psychological and social meaning of the product from both worker and consumer. Morris believed a guild socialist enterprise where labour was pleasurable, could reintegrate the aesthetic,

philosophical and ethical through small scale, skill based systems of production.⁽²⁶⁾ The artist/craftsman, unhindered by technical, commercial or bureaucratic demands could apply the techniques of their craft in a pleasurable, immediate and direct fashion. The physical nature of the medium, the imaginative process and artistic sensibility, expressed through the production techniques of the craftsman, elevated technique as technique. Craftsmen attempted to remain 'true' to the material, respecting its nature and striving for simplicity and purity in form, while concentrating upon the function of the object that they were making. As Tillyard states, 'For the socialist professional a pot could be filled with political and ethical import but barely touched with fashionableness.'⁽²⁷⁾ The artifact was simultaneously art, a functional product and a mode of aesthetic communication with the potential to generate an imaginative response from the purchaser. Craft manufacture therefore was understood as a vibrant 'means of culture' a mode of cultural, moral and ethical transmission to the population.

This knowledge, belief and practice found expression in the Jennings' family business located in the small village of Walberswick on the Suffolk coast. As supporters and practitioners Jennings' parents' interests differed; his mother focussed on pottery and fabrics while his father, an architect by profession, followed the ideals of Morris's Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.⁽²⁸⁾ In these early years, according to Allen Hutt:

it was the Peasant pottery and *The New Age* that were the most important. Mr and Mrs Jennings began

to make a business of the pottery, and took their boy with them on their extensive travels abroad in search of specimens . . . when the import of pots was succeeded by their manufacture here, the lad helped in the work and thus first took a paint brush in hand for serious purposes.(29)

Edited by A.R. Orage *New Age* provided a forum within which a rising generation of intellectuals could discuss the artistic value of Post-Impressionism and the ideas of writers and thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson.(30) By the time his parents had initiated the 'Peasant Pottery Workshop', Arts and Crafts as an economic and political movement was already in decline.(31) By 1905 their products were already unfashionable, and after the Great War the movement increasingly lost impetus with a corresponding dissipation in the political idealism of the movement.(32) However what did occur within the broader English art world was a translation of the language, aesthetic and organisational principles of the movement into the early English Modernist Art movement, particularly amongst the early English supporters of Post-Impressionism.(33)

The emergent style of English inter-war modernism found an affinity with the work of French surrealists such as the poet Apollinaire and artist Andre Breton. What connected the seemingly English provincial quasi-religious/mystic socialism of Orage and Jennings' parents to the cosmopolitan and European perspective of Apollinaire was the recognition of the aesthetic and political role of the artist and artisan throughout history. They shared an understanding that craft/artistic labour of the age could manifest and generate flashes of imaginative vitality.

Human creativity had the capacity to provide a momentary realisation of human existence through that process of creativity. That is, understood as an expression of that obscure relationship between the conscious and the unconscious mind, of insight and the impulse of that age. Therefore Ruskin's and Morris's belief in the importance of gothic architecture finds an echo in the later celebration of the gothic by the surrealist Andre Breton as an expression of 'human psychism'.⁽³⁴⁾ The artist and poet had a critical social and political role to play in examining and revealing the continuities in the nature of psychological and social existence. In doing so they provide an imaginative understanding and intellectual basis from which political and economic strategies could be informed. For Jennings such intellectual and artistic developments and associations were to find a point of reference in his future education. Attending school and University would extend the knowledge and cultural capital he acquired from his family where 'Literature was wedded to art in the household air. Shaw and Shakespeare were about; and there was an Uncle Ted who shot young Humphrey full of Browning . . . [and while at University he was] . . . brought by another friendly uncle into touch with all that was doing among the *avant-garde*.'⁽³⁵⁾

Perse Public School: 1916 - 1926

The values and ideals of Jennings' parents found resonance in their choice of Perse Public School, Cambridge. Promoted through the pages of *The New Age*, he arrived at the end of a period when the school had attracted significant attention for its

experimental and progressive teaching methods. The ethos of the school was liberal, cosmopolitan, emphasising tolerance and empathy towards others.⁽³⁶⁾ Reflected in the school's philosophy was the Arts and Crafts movement's resistance to the growing routinisation and bureaucratic control of life, here exemplified by encroaching state regulation over educational matters.⁽³⁷⁾ A significant feature of the pupil's educational experience was the pedagogic practice promoted by the headmaster A.R. Rouse and English teacher Henry Caldwell-Cook. Their respective 'Direct' and 'Play Way' teaching and learning methods were encouraged throughout the school demanding the child be at the centre of the learning process. Similar to craft production, education was understood as pleasurable, integrating ideas into practical activity to encourage spontaneity, imagination, creativity and confidence. Cook for example described Play Way as a method of teaching concerned with 'mind and imagination' operating through a 'child like' approach to encourage 'learning through pleasurable doing'.⁽³⁸⁾

Teaching included cross-curricular activity that mixed formal and informal interaction between teacher and pupil. This was complemented by a very active system of extra-curricular societies. Both Rouse and Cook shared an interest in what they regarded as the positive and uplifting values of English tradition and heritage. Like Jennings' parents Rouse believed technological innovation and mechanisation eroded and enslaved society.⁽³⁹⁾ Both men were keen to inculcate a recognition of the vitality of a pre-industrial culture under threat from modernisation. 'A man', Rouse thought, 'can achieve a true balance in his life only

when in close contact with animals and the soil'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In an attempt to counter the corrosive effects of a modern society they encouraged pupils to participate in and appreciate the common heritage found in English country traditions such as folk music, song and dance. Such activities provided the opportunity for the pupils to freely express themselves while participating in the traditional institutions of public school life such as the Scouts, Navy League Officer Training Corps, a house system, sports and corporal punishment.⁽⁴¹⁾ Therefore entwined within the public school ethos of progressive humanism was a mission to sustain a set of organic English 'civilised values' which had informed the English character, nation and British Empire.

It was Caldwell Cook who expanded and deepened Jennings' knowledge and understanding of English Literature and drama. Spike Hughes remembers the intellectual air at Perse permeated by the Classics, English poets and Shakespeare.⁽⁴²⁾ In the school theatre, 'The Mummery', Cook constructed an Elizabethan Stage and here pupils would produce and present Shakespeare. It became

a favourite haunt of Jennings. It was a place where he learned about drama, poetry, literature and design through direct doing-writing, acting, painting and building, dancing and declaiming. He was for a time a co-editor of *The Player Magazine-The Unofficial Organ of the School House Players* (these latter a creation of Cook's), did drawings, and wrote several poems and pieces for it.⁽⁴³⁾

It is probable that Cook introduced Jennings to the avant-garde techniques of acting, stage and costume design created by Lovat Fraser and Edward Gordon Craig. The plagiaristic

techniques applied by Fraser to his costumes and designs, chimed with Cook's interests and enthusiasms. Masks from Greek drama, the pageants and masques of Elizabethan theatre, seventeenth century music and costume design were combined with traditional and contemporary English folk art all appropriated to create a highly stylised and symbolic form of theatre. Craig achieved a similar aesthetic link in the theatre with a celebration of English folk art/heritage found in the work of the Arts and Crafts. Craig promoted the belief that theatre was an 'art' rather than mere mimesis of life. He regarded the set, costume designs, lighting techniques, direction of actors as an imaginative realisation of his ideas.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The aim, like that of classical Greek and Elizabethan drama, was to involve the audience emotionally thereby creating a communal response to the unfolding drama rather than arousing merely aesthetic appreciation through dramatic spectacle.

By the time Jennings went up to the University, his intellectual interests, academic knowledge and artistic ideas fuelled by family and school were already diverse. His interests in literature, drama, drawing and painting were underpinned by a series of intimately connected ideas which broadly coalesced around aesthetic and poetic considerations concerning artistic practice, appropriate techniques of poetic communication, the value of tradition, heritage and the impact of modernisation.

Cambridge: 1926 - 1934

As an undergraduate Jennings elected to study for the English Tripos while continuing with his interests in theatre, design and

art. Between 1926 and 1934 he was associated with at least nine realised theatrical productions, either acting and/or designing sets and costumes.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Almost as an extension of his days at Perse, Leonard Amey recalled how in the mid-twenties Jennings

deplored the whole mechanization of modern life and sketched the idea of a masque whose climax should be the entry of the Devil on a reaping machine . . . Masques seem to have fascinated him at this time . . . He was continually drawing costume designs for masques and theatrical productions, a good many of which came to nothing. There was, for instance, a series for Hamlet in full Elizabethan style.⁽⁴⁶⁾

This creativity reflected the dynamic intellectual and culturally experimental environment existing at this time within the university and town. His interests and studies were contextualised within a creative atmosphere which saw the interaction and cross fertilisation between science, literature, theatre, poetry and art. During the inter-war years, the university developed international recognition for its progressive teaching and innovation; often at the forefront of discoveries and developments in the arts and humanities, literature, science, economics, philosophy and archaeology. The town also developed a reputation for progressive and innovative intellectual and artistic activity which sustained a vigorous and diverse artistic and cultural climate of music, drama, intellectual journals, exhibitions of modern painting, sculpture and European silent cinema. Consequently Cambridge drew internationally acclaimed artists and intellectuals, some of

them refugees from Europe others from the English Bloomsbury group, into an academic and cultural environment already rich with indigenous talent.

Over the period of his graduate and post-graduate studies between 1926 and 1934 the English Tripos under the appellation 'Literature, Life and Thought' provided students a channel to undertake a broad range of historical and contemporary cultural analysis. Jennings belonged to a generation of students and tutors that reflected a social and intellectual shift in the nature of the intelligentsia, teaching and learning at the University. The options available attracted not only the artistically inclined but scientists and mathematics undergraduates such as William Empson, Jacob Bronowski, Basil Wright, Kathleen Raine and Charles Madge. Academic boundaries blurred as discoveries and developments in the arts, sciences and philosophy fed into an English student body that discussed the meaning and relevance of historical and contemporary cultural expression. Particularly in the realm of literature and poetry the Tripos provided an opportunity to engage with the question of a supposed dramatic and absolute decline in the meaning, value and popular relevance of poetry in society. Around this question the debate took a number of interrelated forms expressed, for example, through the writings and lectures of I.A. Richards on the nature of poetry and the audience, the influence upon artistic expression by Bloomsbury aesthetes, contemporary critical analysis of modern poetry by Laura Riding and Robert Graves and in a re-evaluation of past poets, playwrights and techniques of poetic expression in the writings of T.S. Eliot and Edmund Wilson.

Practical Criticism

In general terms the cultural assumptions and comments embedded within Richards' 'Practical Criticism' engaged with the nineteenth century critique concerning the detrimental effects of commercialism and mass society.⁽⁴⁷⁾ For Richards, rapidly changing intellectual, social and material conditions eroded the functional congruency between cultural expression, encapsulated within shared linguistic and symbolic codes, and social-material reality. With language, symbols and ritual unable to adapt quickly, a disjunction arose between meaningful expression and the social and material world which led to a loss of personal security and understanding. This condition encouraged a rise in psychological introspection and social stress which eventually undermined social order.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Regarded with suspicion by the traditional academic elite, this new approach to literature and cultural investigation drew upon the works of Freud, Jung, Fraser and Malinowski. It seemed to promise 'scientific' rigour in the analysis of the human condition encouraging the study both of traditional and modern literature and poetry from a sociological perspective and for a political purpose.⁽⁴⁹⁾ McCallum insists that 'the literary criticism Richards outlines becomes at once an empirical science and the most moral of activities: scientific, in the precise technical description of a work of art; moral, in the subsequent critical evaluation'.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The study of literature and literary criticism Richards asserted, should not be understood as an abstract form of 'highbrow' discourse. Its relevance went beyond intellectual and social elites to the general public in the new inter-war democracy: 'New millions of participants in the

control of general affairs must now attempt to form personal opinions upon matters which were once left to a few. At the same time, the complexity of these matters has immensely increased'.⁽⁵¹⁾ Literature and language therefore had a vital role to play in the social, political and moral health of society. Particularly literacy, literary and linguistic study was critical in educating and explaining to the newly enfranchised masses their social position and role in an existing social order faced by inter-war economic uncertainty and crisis. His associate Mansfield Forbes, a painter and poet who stood out from the other dons at the university, had 'a passionate commitment to freedom of thought and expression'.⁽⁵²⁾ Through his lectures he promoted the work of poets and writers such as William Blake, Leo Tolstoy, William Cobbett, William Morris, Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot who celebrated or incorporated the common people into their works. Together through the nineteen twenties their programme of lectures, publications and influence grew. The publication of Richards' *Practical Criticism* in 1929 saw their approach to literary analysis pre-eminent.⁽⁵³⁾

During the twenties and early thirties this new intellectual elite within English set the tenor of discourse, method and practice amongst English students. They not only asserted a moral relevance for the study of literature and re-evaluated the notion of the literary canon but also provided an intellectual legitimacy to regard differing forms of cultural expression and artifacts as holding social and political relevance.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Richards asserted a more inclusive and democratic model of cultural appreciation:

The surface of society, like that of the sea, may, the anthropologist admits, be in perpetual motion, but its depths, like the depths of the ocean, remain almost unmoved. Only by plunging daily into those depths can we come in contact with our fellow-men; only - in the particular case of language - by forgoing the advantages of this or that special scientific symbol system, by drinking of the same unpurified stream, can we share in the life of the community.(55)

The creation and appreciation of art did not require some form of rarified aesthetic emotion to express or comprehend its meaning. Both aesthetic appreciation and the imaginative response are the product of processes within the brain. The artist and critic share the same basic psychological attributes. What distinguishes the artist's comprehension of an aesthetic experience from the mass of untutored sensibilities of the audience was not some undefinable mystical understanding but the quality and efficacy of the individual imagination. Through disciplined and persistent training those critical faculties were capable of being nurtured in most people.(56)

Bloomsbury

Together Forbes, in association with Richards, and the Bloomsbury aesthete and Cambridge economist Maynard Keynes, had a significant influence on the atmosphere of university life and the cultural activity in the town and English modernism.(57) Robert Skidelsky asserts that during the nineteen twenties the London based Bloomsbury set including Duncan Grant, Vanessa, Clive and Julian Bell 'seemed to wield immense cultural power . .

. Its writers, painters and publicists all rose to the height of their success and influence . . . They became arbiters of taste, the conduit through which writers like Dostoyevsky, Proust and Chekhov, painters like Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso and thinkers like Freud entered British consciousness.'⁽⁵⁸⁾ Through their artistic and business activities the aesthetic principles of Arts and Crafts were decoupled from the radical economics and politics of Guild Socialism and incorporated within English inter-war modernism. In a series of character essays on the nature of economic and scientific genius Keynes identified the defining principle of genius as 'divine intuition' characterised by 'unusual powers of continuous concentrated introspection', logical capacity, a feel for the salient facts, style, many-sidedness, theoretical and practical gifts in combination.'⁽⁵⁹⁾ This notion of the individual as the salient point for human advance and aesthetic expression evidenced through the intuitive act of comprehension echoes Jennings' and his friends' celebration of scientific geniuses such as Darwin and Newton in their capacity to conceptualise in their field of investigation the wholeness of existence. For both Keynes and Jennings 'the scientist's intuitions deserved the same respect as the artist's' for they shared the same goal - a privileged form of knowledge, reached by 'direct acquaintance' with reality' leading to the 'assertion that the interpretation of reality is a creative act. . . those gifted with special insight into the nature of reality become indistinguishable in practice from the claim that reality can and should be constructed by powerful minds'.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Modernist Poetry

In 1927, Laura Riding and Robert Graves published *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, a forceful critique of contemporary poets and modern(ist) poetry.⁽⁶¹⁾ It is a detailed examination of a modern movement they understood to be in rapid if not terminal decline. To explain the decline Riding and Graves focus upon that 'breach' identified by T.S. Eliot between the poet and his/her material and what they call 'the plain reader'. This breach had occurred primarily because of the poet's reliance upon an excessively self-conscious and reflexive style of writing. Inappropriate poetic technique saw the reader 'unable to have a free and straightforward personal intimacy with a poem . . . continually haunted by the idea of the presence of the poet in the poem. Between the reader and the poem therefore is this embarrassment caused by the reader's awareness of the poet.'⁽⁶²⁾ Metaphorically exposed to the gaze of the poet modernist poetry becomes, as Jennings later put it, 'an activity people are rather ashamed of'.⁽⁶³⁾ The general reader is confronted by texts that seem complex, obscure and/or remote.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Modernist poetry Jennings argues is: 'out of touch. . . with everyday life. The modern poet certainly has his or *her* own little public, but they're not representative of the public at large. The great big public thinks of poetry, particularly modern poetry, as something highbrow'.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Poetry had become what Jennings refers to as 'mad poetry - because in the end the poet shuts all the doors and windows and sits there talking to himself'.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Riding and Graves identify the problem primarily in the condition of poetic discourse whereas Jennings went further

to consider the crisis as symptomatic of a fundamental shift in the nature of the terrain out of which aesthetic sensibility is constructed and communicated. He argues that to understand and attempt to resolve this crisis one must look beyond the community of poets to consider changes in society which impinge upon the imagination of both poet and readership, now a complex and diversified audience faced by new aesthetic experiences, forms of poetic expression and modes of communication. To communicate with the general public it was the responsibility of the poet to hone the skills of their craft in order to communicate in an effective and relevant way. For both Richards and Jennings the evidence of such a reflexive poetic consciousness at work was to be found in the work of T.S. Eliot.

The influence of Eliot and Wilson

Eliot's approach infused the spirit of the English Tripos and helped to define the nature and form of inter-war literary modernism.⁽⁶⁷⁾ He indicated how an individual poet, equipped with a significant understanding of the tradition and role of poetry in society, could mobilise elements of that tradition to create a poetic discourse that may speak directly to his audience about the contemporary human condition. What Eliot championed and Richards articulated in *Science and Poetry*, was a belief in the value and appreciation of a reclaimed and revised cultural tradition.⁽⁶⁸⁾ In his influential essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1917), to be followed by *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920) and *Dryden and the Metaphysical Poets* (1921), Eliot set about re-evaluating and

reclaiming an obscured poetic tradition which recognised the need to creatively 'plagiarise' the poetry of the past. It was a creative and pragmatic reworking of the tradition for their particular ends 'demonstrating self-consciously the operations they have performed on their sources'(69), dissolving the boundaries between specialised areas of knowledge, critical practice and appreciation. Tradition therefore was something that was alive and very much part of the present. In other words 'To be original is to reproduce or re-produce, that which is there already'.(70) Eliot's poetry emphasised the contingent and simultaneous nature of past and present and acknowledged the value of tradition in that it provided a sense of psychological meaning and social order:

to effect a satisfactory poise among competing aesthetic demands, to achieve, in Eliot's phrase, "a moment of stasis." His notion of tradition aimed at just such a critical poise, avoiding egoism on the one side and severe dehumanisation on the other, not denying the individual ego but severely restricting its claims. The self was to be positioned among other selves: consciousness was to be corrected by a tradition of consciousnesses.(71)

As Stanley Smith states: 'From its inception then, Modernism is a double-edged promise. Modernising, a total up-to-dateness, has to be combined with a training in the classics. Originality must be matched by a sense of origins'(72). Part of the imaginative craft of the poet or the literary critic is to rework or decode that shared historic language of words and images and their social and cultural meaning. 'The business of the poet'

Richards states 'is to give order and coherence, and so freedom, to a body of experience'.⁽⁷³⁾ Like Craig with his experimental theatre, Eliot encouraged a poetry which integrated popular everyday experience and language with the more esoteric and abstract. For Jennings, Eliot proved that through the imagination of the poet poetry could connect with the sensibilities of the general reader and simultaneously speak to and for the public in a language comprehensible to both.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Eliot seemed to be offering a potential resolution to a central issue raised by Richards in *Science and Poetry*:

Poetry is failing us, or we it, if after our reading we do not find ourselves changed . . . with a permanent alteration of our possibilities as responsive individuals in good or bad adjustment to an all but overwhelming concourse of stimulations⁽⁷⁵⁾

Both Richards and Jennings were enthusiastic about Eliot's utilisation of a 'plagiaristic' technique in *The Waste Land* (1922), which Michael Levenson regards as 'giv(ing) the present its meaning' by reworking 'fragments of consciousness. .which. .melt into one another to form emergent wholes'.⁽⁷⁶⁾ The technique of imaginative collage provided Jennings with an indication of how to resolve the problem of communicating in narrative form the poetic and simultaneous nature of past and present through what Levenson refers to as 'contextual development'. It was a form of poetic discourse that Jennings would attempt in cinematic terms with *Spare Time* (1939) and later refine with *Listen to Britain* (1942):

The poem moves forward only as it moves sideways, to new analogies, new parallels, new possibilities for comparison. The completion of the quest becomes less central dramatic emphasis than the recognition of other quest motifs in other cultural settings. The poem develops not by resolving conflicts but by enlarging contexts, by establishing relations between contexts, by situating motifs within an increasingly elaborate set of cultural parallels - by widening.(77)

The publication of Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle* (1931) subtitled *A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* drew together many of these artistic and poetic considerations. Wilson traces artistic and philosophical connections between the works of Elizabethan poets, the late nineteenth century romantic movement, French Symbolism and modernist writers such as Joyce, Yeats and Eliot to reveal the meaning behind the supposedly random and arbitrary nature of life. He argues that it was the role of the poet/artist to identify and expose the associative and meaningful aspects of the relationship between the material and spiritual worlds. An effective and re-occurring technique from the Elizabethans to the present was to recognise and celebrate the bizarre, the carnival, the chance relationship or co-incidence. The symbolic representation of ideas operating as a special language to express the personality and feelings is Wilson argues an English tradition that could be charted back through the work of Eliot to the Elizabethans. Wilson points out that the theatre of the Elizabethans had developed a radical use of language which itself was very much part of an English tradition. It was through the Elizabethan theatre Jennings believed, that poets and playwrights were last able to articulate

their analysis of human behaviour to the general public.(78)

Painting and *Experiment* magazine

Between late 1929 and May 1934 Jennings' post-graduate research into Elizabethan theatre and poetry allowed him to continue with his theatrical activities, the avant-garde student magazine *Experiment* (1928-1931) and the associated art gallery which he helped run in the town. This activity brought him into contact with younger undergraduates and later proteges of Grierson such as Gerald Noxon and Basil Wright who provided access to 'Art' cinema. Noxon remembers:

The fact that I met Humphrey (1928) so soon after coming up to Cambridge was due to two somewhat unusual circumstances. First, in company with Francis Baker-Smith and Stuart Legg, I started the Cambridge Film Guild which was, as I recall, the second film society to be formed in Britain, Humphrey immediately attracted by films having a kind of artistic merit which was new to him, was among the first members. Second, I was the publisher of an undergraduate little magazine called *Experiment* in which Humphrey took a lively interest and to which he later rather reluctantly contributed some of his rare written communications. Our programme of contemporary French, German and Russian films were a revelation to him since such films were not generally available at all in Britain at that time. At first we were concerned only (with) silents, but gradually sound films from France and Germany began to trickle in. It was a great event, I remember, when we imported Pabst's DREIGROSCHENOPER in collaboration with the London Film Society. Humphrey was much impressed by Pabst's direction, by the acting, by Kurt Weill's score, and particularly by the decor . . . Throughout his

Cambridge days, however, Humphrey's interest in films, though lively, remained appreciative, critical and theoretical.(79)

The spirit of the magazine, art gallery and Film Society were to be as the first edition of 'Experiment' proclaimed eclectic, forthright and progressive.(80) According to Julian Trevelyan, the magazine's ethos came from Ogden's *Basic English*, the writings of T.S. Eliot and particularly Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning*. A loose collection of students were drawn from across academic disciplines and the quality and diversity of articles and the stature of contributors made it a focal point of intellectual interest. Reflected in its pages was the pervasive interest in the application of scientific principles to the study of all aspects of the natural and social world. Jennings contributed at least 5 articles which indicate the eclectic nature of the magazine's subject matter and the direction of his artistic expression. Commenting on contemporary theatre, architecture and modern art he attempted to express his understanding of that confluence of ideas he and his friends were debating. With a premonition of the later poetic rationale and investigative approach championed by Jennings and Charles Madge for Mass Observation, articles and comment appeared on both esoteric and popular culture including boxing matches, jazz rhythms, Russian film techniques mixed with the publication of undergraduate poetry and 'stream of consciousness' material.(81)

The period of the early thirties became one of intense artistic concentration for Jennings. In 1927 he had written: 'As to my progress in art, I am as usual torn among painting, literature, and the theatre. I love each infinitely in turn and I

feel that I get on well in each - but where it will all end - in which, I don't know.'(82) By 1934 his enthusiasm had turned towards drawing and painting.(83) Regardless of a growing reputation in the theatre which provided an opportunity to produce costume designs for a film about the English Civil War, he felt 'I should hate doing films really. .simply I want to draw'.(84) At the same time he wished to maintain his artistic practice outside the Art establishment. He asserts, 'I hate "Art" but want to draw and that is a business of a lifetime, not the leisure hours'.(85) From 1931 he could follow contemporary developments in painting amongst the European avant-garde by reading French art magazines such as *Cahiers d'art*, *transition /Transition* and *Minotaur* along with visits to Paris where he came into contact with a contemporary European art community. He gained an advanced understanding of the meaning and value of French modernist painting becoming a relatively well versed and articulate critic, in particular of the French Surrealist fascination with the objet trouvé, at a time when the English appreciation and application of European ideas and techniques were slow and uneven.(86)

For Jennings the Surrealist movement seemed to be exploring new modes of artistic expression to make the kind of pertinent psychological and social comment last seen in English seventeenth century theatre.(87) At this time he wrote 'I feel utterly different about painting, more concentrated and excited and more myself. .as I used to feel about scenery'.(88) His enthusiasm for the continental avant-garde focussed upon technique as a tool of reflexive aesthetic practice. Like poetry,

the aim of the painter was to express through their work both an intuitive and imaginative response to the contemporary human condition. He became absorbed in an exploration of the relationship between artistic expression and the ironic, self-reflexive problem of painterly technique as technique. Immersed in the relationship between the psychological and material aspects of painting he became pre-occupied with the literal problem of applying paint to the canvas. Every brushstroke he felt must be understood as part of a meaningful, deliberate imaginative act involving both conscious and instinctive sensibility. Consequently his artistic output was both erratic and primarily for himself.(89)

In late 1930/early 1931 his attention was captivated by two separate yet coincidental exhibitions in Paris. The nature of this co-incidence was of deep significance for it not only chimed with his personal aesthetic but provided an example of how art like poetry could be both revolutionary and revelatory. In a co-authored article with Gerald Noxon for *Experiment* entitled 'Rock-Painting and La Jeune Peinture'(1931), Jennings argued that artistic technique had created an aesthetic affinity in the 'vitality' and 'directional feeling' of ancient tribal paintings of South Africa and the post-cubist art of the surrealists.(90) The multi-faceted and mythic quality of post-cubism engendered an emotional response from the viewer, something that the South African rock paintings achieved through the unconscious process of overlaid drawings. At the same time this emotional response opened up the opportunity to engender a 'newness' and a 'promise' to see the world with a clarity which was previously obscured.

The 'naivety' of tribal paintings and the 'vitality' of post-cubism had managed to escape what he terms the 'perversities and propensities' of the dominant interpretation of aesthetic taste. The same issue of the magazine carries a co-authored article with James Reeves addressing similar considerations. Entitled 'A Reconsideration of Herrick', like Eliot, Jennings and Reeves aimed to salvage Herrick from existing critical taste and explain how his plagiaristic poetic technique used chosen mythic elements in order to mutate both the subject matter and reader's sensibility to provide what he calls a 'directional feeling'.⁽⁹¹⁾

The plagiarism of Herrick and Eliot, the post-cubism of Miro, Bores, Cassio and Masson and the unwitting superimposition of wall paintings by African tribesmen are seen to create for Jennings, images which mutate to form '(their) own proper and particular mythology. .both technique and myth are at present using our associations for their power'.⁽⁹²⁾ His project was to explore and identify both the historic and contemporary artistic strategies where the artist achieved that aesthetic ideal of integrating subject and sensations in order to create perceptual transformations that articulate a new 'directional feeling' that included 'a slow regaining of the heroic sense. By heroic we [Jennings and Noxon] mean the co-ordination of a great number of emotions than painting has for some time managed to use; a grasp of problems as complete as that which Rubens had of the muddle of the sixteenth century painting':⁽⁹³⁾

as in Rubens, the use of technique as technique, to create mutations in the subject, and the subject thereby to be in its proper place, as the basis of a metamorphosis by paint and not by literary

substitution: producing a world of heroic mutations parallel to the heroic proportions of African painting.(94)

The degeneration of Cubism and subsequent rise of post-Cubist art, his interest in tribal paintings, research and production of an original version of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis', the intense self-reflexive practice in his painting and the revisionism of Herrick's poetry represent differing aspects of the same investigation: the investigation into the process of artistic and poetic technique in order to recover original imaginative intent. This investigation into the aesthetic was similar to his parents' original Arts and Crafts beliefs in their attempt to imbue the artifact with spiritual meaning through technique to achieve a metamorphosis of the subject matter and engender an emotional and imaginative response.

The Politics of the Aesthetic

Like the early moderns this new generation saw themselves at the forefront of debate concerning the inextricable and mysterious relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds.(95) With the revelations of Rutherford and Hubble in the fields of quantum mechanics, physics and astronomy; the analysis by Richards in literary criticism; the debates of G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein in philosophy, the sciences at Cambridge were affirming the artificial nature of the borders between the material and perceived reality, provoking fundamental philosophical questions about life and existence. The paradigm of Newtonian physics, with its reliance

on and certainty in causal relationships, was being superceded by quantum theory and Heisenberg's probability function, which raised questions of indeterminance and opened up the possibility of a multiplicity of outcomes.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Combined with the insights of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis and behavioural psychology modern poets and artists were now debating the nature of meaning, authenticity, interpretation of the real and the nature of truth. Terms such as 'detachment', 'contemporariness' and 'weltanschauung' formed part of the 'Experiment Group's' discussions concerning the nature of insight, the imaginative and creative process and critically how human labour could turn those imaginings into material representation.

Jennings' friends Kathleen Raine, Jacob Bronowski and William Empson, while studying mathematics and science, wrote poetry that carried the language and revelations of science into literature. According to James Merralls 'they read Newton, Faraday, Darwin for their poetic content, that is their intellectual vigour, as much as for their science' and were fascinated by the work of visionary writers such as Blake, eastern philosophers, religion and the occult.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Like his parents before him Jennings was considering the social and the potential political meaning and spiritual significance which could be endowed within the cultural artifact. As a form of human expression the artifact could not be regarded passively but required interrogation; not only in terms of the past - what were they trying to do? why do it that way? but also to recognise, as Bronowski explains in *The Visionary Eye*, the multi-faceted form of the artifact as 'representing a powerful

force in human evolution.'(98).

In philosophical and ethical terms the work of William Blake, Arts and Crafts, post-cubism and surrealism share what E.P. Thompson calls a 'stubborn scepticism in the face of established culture'.(99) The 'informal' and radical intellectual tradition of asserting human freedom and liberty articulated by Blake became a major signifier for Jennings and his friends.(100) For Jennings, Blake, an ardent republican who straddled the worlds of the intellectual/artist and the artisan, epitomised a poet who achieved a transhistorical perspective. He was an engraver who applied his craft through a novel form of technique to express his poetic imagination and visionary ideals of a transformed society. His hostility to what he called the 'polite learning of the Schools' is a theme which runs through Jennings' political and aesthetic philosophy. Where Jennings complained of the 'Art' and 'theatrical' establishment, Blake had seen the need to encourage uninhibited artistic and popular expression against established authority.(101) Thompson regards Blake's poem *London*, which Jennings greatly admired and would imitate in his wartime poem *I See London*, as his most lucid and accessible. Through the formal and expressive use of language Blake anticipates the modernist technique of multiple and simultaneous representation. He constructs a unitary, multi-faceted sensory representation of London's popular life and culture. Thompson believes that the poem represents 'Blake's own city, as an *image* of the state of English Society and as an *image* of the human condition'. It provides a powerful critique of what Blake saw as intellectual, moral corruption and ruling class repression.(102)

Jennings and his friends found themselves in a similar situation to Blake, caught in a period of social and economic upheaval where material and intellectual worlds were in turmoil. His friend Charles Madge, like many other students of the 1930's, wished to break free of the inter-war condition and oppose the emergence of Fascism by turning to what seemed the only viable alternative, the Communist Party and the scientific socialism of marxism. However Jennings was not convinced by Marx's theory of materialism and the notion of class struggle.⁽¹⁰³⁾ But he did share the belief that ordinary working people, regardless of social class, were the true heroes of modern society. Blake had lived and worked amongst his readers and experienced the life of the common man. In the poetry of Walt Whitman Jennings found a modern equivalent: a poet who recognised beneath the veneer of mass society the vitality and spirit of the people.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ As Jennings would argue in a later radio programme, if the poet and poetry was to remain relevant to society the contemporary poet and poetry must speak to these people in their own language.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

The Development of the 'Artist Agent'

Towards the end of his residence in Cambridge Jennings wrote to Julian Trevelyan 'The University is ahem going Marxist . . . and England is busy persuading itself for the seven millionth time that it is beginning to face reality. We are rather snugly situated here, and managing to let existing slide off our duck's back. But of course there is always the rent to pay . . . The Auden's and Day Lewis's [sic] and so on are a positive menace'.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ But a combination of personal problems and a lack of money undermined that snug existence. He needed to find paid employment and from mid-1934 onwards Jennings managed to sustain a rather precarious career in non-commercial film production in London.

What gave Jennings the opportunity for initial work in film advertising and then a six month contract at the General Post Office (G.P.O) Film Unit were old Cambridge connections and his skills in theatre and scenic design.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Over the next four years he was also to be involved with a series of what appear superficially distinct but, in poetic terms, closely related activities. In the non-commercial film sector he experimented first with black and white and then colour film and debated the aesthetics and cultural politics underpinning the documentary film movement. Meanwhile outside non-commercial film production along with old student friends he continued to pursue those artistic and poetic considerations discussed when part of the 'Experiment' group. It is during this period that his aesthetic,

cultural and political considerations become revised and radicalised compared to his time at Cambridge. Through his experiences his approach to art and poetry were to become more contemporary and politically aware. At the same time, expression of this activity widened from the comparatively personal, esoteric and semi-private discourse of his friends and academia into an increasingly popular mode of expression set within an increasingly political and tense public domain.

The economic and social deprivations of the inter-war period were becoming compounded by the spread of Fascism in Europe and to some extent in Britain. The confrontation between Communism and Fascism in Europe became manifest in the left-wing cause-celebre of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The British Foreign policy of appeasement and domestic inaction saw Jennings like many left-thinking artists confronted with the need to make some gesture of opposition to Fascism and the politics of the National Government.

Activities outside Non-Commercial Film

Moving to London not only opened up for Jennings opportunities for employment but the chance to renew old and make new friendships. His circle of friends were supplemented by a group of literary and documentary film makers. He became closely connected with a group of young literati Valentine Cunningham calls 'the new-new boys. .immediate inheritors of the Auden Generation' including Charles Madge (23), David Gascoyne (18) and Dylan Thomas (20) who 'blending Auden with surrealism' found their voice either in the pages of Geoffrey

Grigson's *New Verse* or later in Roger Roughton's surrealistic *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. (108) Like *The New Age* and *Experiment* they emphasised 'newness' and originality. They were symptomatic of a variegated culture and ideological topography amongst the social and intellectual cliques which comprised the literary, documentary and arts scene of London and the suburbs.(109) Riding and Graves go as far as to describe the young intelligentsia of this time as a 'lost generation' permeated with cynicism, scepticism, depression, disillusion and seriousness.'(110) Attacks on authority were often undertaken through a mental landscape saturated with the imagery of conflict. The December edition of *New Verse* (1935) carried an article by Jennings which described him as 'not sentimental about society or the theatre'.(111) In June 1936 *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* reported he had 'survived the Theatre and English Literature at Cambridge'.(112) Jennings' 'critical toughness' found expression in the article 'The Theatre Today' where he complains of the complacency and philistine nature of bourgeois 'middle-brow' opinion, the perversity of the 'rackets' and indulgence of the ego found in the theatre, in poetry and the art establishment.(113)

From the appearance in 1934 of a collection of poems entitled *Little town in France* and the article 'The Theatre Today' Jennings' output of published criticism becomes relatively prolific.(114) Over the next four years he would engage, either simultaneously or in quick succession, with a variety of private and public activities outside his employment. Behind each of these enterprises lay a coherent intellectual agenda building

upon his previous studies and experiences in Cambridge. This included work with and an investigation into the qualities of photography and film, collating texts for a proposed book entitled *Pandaemonium*, painting, collaborating with other artists, poets and supporters of surrealism, writing critical articles, poetry and day reports, becoming a major influence upon the inception of mass observation and presenting a series of radio talks and discussions for the B.B.C. National Programme on the poet and poetry in contemporary society.

The relatively private theoretical and academic considerations of Cambridge therefore became part of a series of public ventures that brought Jennings into direct engagement with contemporary events. Like many intellectuals he kept his distance from the theoretical strictures of marxism and direct involvement with the Communist Party. But at the same time, English politics lacked any coherent focus for a coalition of Liberal and Left forces similar to the French 'Front Populaire' of the mid-thirties. Loose artistic associations professing a political position often dissipated through factionalism and internecine attacks upon colleagues.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Involvement was often spurred by the need to express outrage at the assault on artistic and political freedom by European Fascism or perhaps more prosaically the need for income or useful contacts.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ This is possibly exemplified to some extent by Jennings' involvement in the overlapping artistic areas of the expanding documentary film movement, the English variant on continental surrealism and the development of mass observation.

Surrealism

From late 1935 until the outbreak of war in 1939 Jennings was closely associated with the public inauguration and promotion of surrealism in England. His involvement in mounting the International Surrealist Exhibition (1936) brought him into contact with many artists associated with the European movement particularly Andre Breton, the poet Paul Eluard and exhibitor E.L.T. Mesens. Although Surrealism was influential he did not regard himself as a surrealist. 'He was never of them, but, as he says, they had at any rate the notion that somehow or other painting and life were related'.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ What surrealism did provide was a focal point for a debate, not to defend surrealism as an artistic movement, but over the politics of the aesthetic and the role of art in politics.

In aesthetic terms the attraction for Jennings was to explore how they used technique to interrogate notions of reality, oppose established artistic convention and offer the potential to escape from the preconceived through new forms of imaginative representation.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ The contingency of poetic expression meant that the poetic experience of modernity and modern life was instantaneous. It was the role of art and poetry to express this ever changing newness. The modern artists must free themselves from existing beliefs and self conscious artifice in order to live for the moment. In the December edition of *New Verse* (1935), Jennings attacked the recent work of Eliot and Auden as suffering from 'oversystematised positions' which resulted not in poetry but 'splendid manufacture . . . every writer in the world puts his horrid self into his hateful works: the problem now is

how to present more of the world, by itself.'(119) For Jennings the foremost poet of modern painting in the inter-war period was Magritte. 'In Magritte's paintings beauty and terror meet. His painting is . . . essentially *modern* in the sense required by Baudelaire.'(120) For Magritte the process of painting was a 'lamentable expedient'. 'The function of painting' he stated 'is to make poetry visible, and not to reduce the world to its numerous materialistic aspects':(121)

Magritte never allows himself to be seduced by the immediate pleasures of imitation. Precisely his passionate interest in the concrete world has made him remember that a painting itself is only an *image*. Poetry, according to Aristotle, implies a 'bringing together'. But the elements in a picture by Magritte are not *forced* together. Their 'bringing together' *occurs* in a passive sense in the painter's imagination. Hence their simultaneous irrationality - since nothing is chosen 'on purpose' - and their evident truth - since their 'bringing together' is in fact an 'event' beyond choice. It is of the likeness and discrepancies between the image and reality that these events are composed, and it is in the relentless logic of these likenesses and discrepancies that Magritte sees the central human situation: *La Condition Humaine*.(122)

Charles Madge interpreted Jennings' use of the term 'image' as close to the psychological concept of 'gestalt', something Suzi Gablik regards as central to the aesthetic of Magritte. 'Insight is a form of gestalt, involving the sudden active perception of new relationships. It is structured by the union of a mental and a visual perception which underlies the best of Magritte's imagery'.(123) The beauty and terror in his paintings lie within

the absurd nature of the visual juxtapositions which disregard conventional laws of physics and time. The organisation of imagery Gablik believes was merely a technique through which to 'create analogies in the mind . . . A sudden fusion of ideas [that] will insinuate into the unconscious many principles and parallels [which become] a perfect vehicle for our projections.'(124) It is here perhaps Jennings found the link with the democratic humanism of Baudelaire in:

the gray or black suit . . . the standard modern man's outfit: it expresses "not only political beauty, which is an expression of universal equality, but also poetic beauty, an expression of the public soul." The emerging standard outfit is "the necessary garb of our suffering age, which wears the symbol of perpetual mourning on its thin black shoulders".(125)

Such images find their parallels in Jennings' war films, the routine of the trilbied commuter setting off to work with gas mask under his arm in *Listen to Britain* (1942), the tin hats and uniforms of the rescue services or air-raid survivors in *Heart of Britain* (1941), the random perversity associated with the often fatal devastation inflicted by the bombs. Here Jennings expressed the heroism of the people which emerged in their struggle to survive and defeat the enemy.

The English surrealist group had through sympathetic literary journals a conduit through which to express their opposition to the spread of Fascism in Europe. In response to Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in November 1935 Madge and Jennings published in *Life and Letters Today* an eighteenth century

account of Italian imperialism in Ethiopia called *Space of Former Heaven*. In the same month David Gascoigne published *A Short Survey of Surrealism* and with Roland Penrose began work staging a surrealist exhibitions in Paris and England. By the end of 1935 the English Organising Committee for the International Surrealist Exhibition met at the home of Herbert Read. Jennings' existing knowledge and fluency in the French language and modern art made him a candidate for the committee.

Unfortunately for Jennings, British artists exhibiting in June 1936 under the surrealist banner failed to comprehend the radical aesthetic and political potential of surrealism, treating the exhibition more as an outrageous social event. His lasting impression was a 'nauseating memory of the mixed atmosphere of cultural hysteria and amateur-theatricality' A potentially revolutionary artistic technique was turned into a carnival of the absurd with more potential for the ad-man than politics.⁽¹²⁶⁾

In July Franco's right wing coup in Spain heralded the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and news arrived in September of the murder of the left wing writer Garcia Lorca. The October editorial of *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* announced 'Fascism murders Art', demanding intellectuals choose between fascism or anti-fascism and urging them to send help. A year later, symbolically, the Spanish conflict came to the streets of London when the British Union of Fascists attempted to march through the Jewish quarter of East London. In November 1937 the Spanish Republicans began their defence of Madrid; *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* carried a 'Declaration on Spain', issued by the Surrealist Group in England and signed by Jennings among others.

It asserted that international Fascism, backed by capitalist big business, would liquidate all those who opposed it, demanding 'Arms for the people of Spain'.⁽¹²⁷⁾

Surrealism and Mass Observation

While involved with Surrealist activities and the inception of Mass Observation in 1937 Charles Madge encouraged Jennings to seriously read the works of Charles Darwin. The significance of which, according to Allen Hutt, was to match his visit to Lancashire in mid 1937: 'Jennings lays great stress on its importance for his own development; the point being, I think, that it was his first mature comprehension of the scientific approach and method.'⁽¹²⁸⁾ Darwin possibly provided an intellectual connection for Jennings similar to Freud's psychoanalysis. For both men the contingent nature of the environment and human consciousness was engaged in incessant dialectic: 'Darwin and Freud had produced scientific and quasi-scientific redescrptions of nature as continual flux. There was no longer such a thing as a relatively fixed and consistent person - a person with a recognizable identity - confronting a potentially predictable world, but rather two turbulences enmeshed with each other.'⁽¹²⁹⁾ Survival is a continual struggle, a process of creative destruction of birth and death, desire and loss:

Both writers describe our bodily lives - and for both a life is synonymous with a body - as astonishingly adaptive and resilient, but also excessively vulnerable, prone to many deaths, and shadowed by the reality of death . . . they are preoccupied by

remains, by evidence of and from the past (they) distrust prophecy; they insist that the present never catches up with the past, and that the past tells us nothing reliable about the future. .the past influences everything and dictates nothing. .The future is not caused by the past, it is merely informed by it.(130)

Like anthropology, they indicated how the surface of what we understand as reality was in fact the product of deeper more powerful forces to which we are mostly unaware. They 'shared a facility for bringing unforeseen meaning to the seemingly trivial. In doing so, both sought in the past a key to the present' and expressed their findings by appropriating accessible and common forms of language to communicate effectively their ideas to the general public.(131)

Embracing Baudelaire's dictum 'the modern artist should set up his house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of motion, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite', (132) Jennings with his Cambridge and now documentary film associates, Stuart Legg, Arthur Elton, Basil Wright along with Madge, David Gascoigne, Jack Holmes and others, were discussing the possibilities of exploring the popular or mass unconscious and the necessary strategies to identify those manifestations in personal and social life which may provide access to the deeper unconscious dimensions of society. It was to be a series of events during 1936 that were to provide the trigger to mobilise them and their associates into the practical application of their ideas.

The general development of the Mass-Observation movement is well documented but its rather rapid initial development does lack clarity. The co-incidental destruction of The Crystal Palace

in November - a symbol of Victorian industrial, cultural and imperial power - and the crisis of the British monarchy with the intention of Edward VIII to abdicate in December were of great significance to the group. The destruction of The Crystal Palace was felt to be symbolic of the eruption of an impending 'world-conflagration'.⁽¹³³⁾ Meanwhile working at the *Daily Mirror* Madge felt he was able to glimpse the potentially deeper historical significance of the abdication crisis: 'This experience was for me one major precipitant of the idea that history and social self-knowledge could be served by organised collective observation.'⁽¹³⁴⁾ On December 12th *The New Statesman and Nation* carried a letter commenting 'on the tremendous amount of correspondence received by newspapers about the King and Mrs. Simpson 'from obscure and eminent people alike' which seemed to suggest a "primitive" public reaction to the abdication crisis'. This reaction, the letter continued, provided the 'material for that anthropological study of our own civilisation of which we stand in such desperate need.'⁽¹³⁵⁾ Jennings, Legg, Madge, Gascoigne and others 'discussed the possibility of enlisting volunteers for the observation both of social events like the Abdication and also of "everyday life", as lived by themselves and those around them.'⁽¹³⁶⁾ By the 2nd January Madge had revealed the existence and intentions of the group in *The New Statesman and Nation* calling upon interested parties to contact them. Madge was careful not fully to embrace the aims and methods of social anthropology but to emphasise the modernist sensibility and revelatory value of the surrealist notion of the coincidence.⁽¹³⁷⁾

The Loss of the Poetic

For Jennings Mass Observation was to be primarily 'a sounding of the English collective unconscious', a technique for recording the 'subliminal stirrings of the collective mind of the nation, through the images thrown up in such things as advertisements, popular songs, themes in the press and the objects with which people surround themselves.'⁽¹³⁸⁾ Rather than sociological or anthropological, Mass Observation was conceived as a technique to chart the poetic quality in existence.⁽¹³⁹⁾ Central to their approach was the discipline of science. As Raine commented 'The Cambridge word 'detachment' we no longer used: now we were 'observers'.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ The artist was to commune (at distance) with the people to search, detect, identify and record evidence of the hidden spiritual ecology embedded within social practice and the artifact. To detect:

the expression of the unconscious collective life of England, literally, in the writings on the walls, telling of the hidden thoughts and dreams of the inarticulate masses . . . Mass-Observation, concerned with man, was essentially urban. We hoped to discern on the surfaces of dingy walls, on advertisement hoardings, or written upon the worn stones of pavements, or in the play of light and shadow cast by some street-lamp upon puddles at the corner of a shabby street, traces of the beautiful, degraded, dishonoured, suffering, sorrowful, but still the *deus absconditus*. It was a search for the lost lineaments of the most high in the most low.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

P. C. Ray is probably correct when he states that surrealism and mass observation represent the singular and collective

dimensions of the same imaginative investigation. Rather than distinct intellectual exercises Jennings would engage in both imaginative approaches simultaneously:

to be quite accurate, Mass-Observation is a kind of surrealism in reverse. Whereas the surrealist sees in his object and images - found or made - an objectification of inner states or desires, Mass-Observation assumes that the objects and images of our world are the concretization of inner states and seeks to recover those inner states by using the objects and images as signposts. Surrealism . . . wants to project the imagination onto the objective world in order to transform it; Mass-Observation tries to recover the imagination that produced the vulgar objects and images of the everyday world . . . Jennings seems, then, to be turning surrealism upside down: he finds in the real, concrete object an image of the collective imagination.(142)

Coincidentally printed next to Madge's letter was the only poem Tom Harrisson had published in his life. Harrisson had led a colourful existence as a self taught anthropologist and was then residing in Bolton. Out of financial need he was employed in a cotton mill while applying his anthropological and ethnographic skills to the customs of the local people. He wrote to Madge and a meeting was arranged approximately two weeks later.(143) On arrival he encountered 'Long discussions. .about surrealism, Blake, the Industrial Revolution, Freud, the relationship between art and science, "mass wish-situations", and the phenomenon of coincidence, which Jennings saw as the key to human behaviour' and revealed that he had a complementary quasi-anthropological study underway in Bolton with a team of full-time observers.(144)

Harrison was immersed in the interactive study of social behaviour, gathering evidence by ethnographic means. He was not interested in the comparatively precious poetic ideal of Jennings. What interested Harrison was for Jennings the 'banal', surface trivia of life, merely the signs through which the poet must discern the 'anterior mental causes'. However the founding letter of Mass-Observation, significantly entitled 'Anthropology at Home', was published in *The New Statesman and Nation* on January 30th. Signed by Harrison, Jennings and Madge it illustrates an uncomfortable compromise. Under Harrison's influence, and to the objection of Jennings, the letter included a list of socio-cultural activities that would demand attention from the observers:(145)

The following are a few examples of problems that will arise:

Behaviour of people at war memorials.

Shouts and gestures of motorists

The aspidistra cult.

Anthropology of football pools.

Bathroom behaviour.

Beards, armpits, eyebrows.

Anti-semitism.

Distribution, diffusion and significance of the dirty joke.

Funerals and undertakers.

Female taboos about eating.

The private lives of midwives.

In these examples the anthropological angle is obvious and the description is primarily of physical behaviour. Other enquiries involve mental phenomena which are unconscious or repressed, so that they can only be traced through mass-fantasy and symbolism as developed and exploited, for example, in the daily press. . . .The observers will

also provide the points from which can be plotted weather-maps of public feeling in a crisis.

Emphasising popular sociology and anthropology the statement subordinates the esoteric and poetic interests of Jennings. Harrisson's populist style worked, the national press picked up the letter and ran articles about their ambitions. The number of volunteers escalated to over five hundred.

The ability of Harrisson to effectively compromise the direction of Mass Observation may be in part explained by considering the article written by Madge, 'Magic and Materialism', which appeared a month later in *Left Review* (Feb.1937). Mass-Observation he states is the result 'of several meetings of a group of young Left Wing writers and scientists' whose programme is the outcome of 'many suggestions':

The group has taken as title and slogan the words MASS-OBSERVATION. As a Marxist, I have drawn Marxist implications from the work it sets out to do, but it is left to any individual member of the group to draw his own implications. My statement is therefore a personal one, with which some members of the group may agree, but which is not binding for all.(146)

This loose association was held together according to Madge by two general principles: 'the necessity . . . of true revolutionary materialism' and 'the application of materialism to superstition.'(147) The article provides an assertion by each on the significance of the mass-observation exercise:

The word "Superstition" is used in this connection in three main senses. First, in the usual sense of an

irrational residue appearing in a rational society. Secondly, to include such phenomena as the collective image, the coincidence and all manifestations of art not fully socially responsible. Thirdly, to include the habits and behaviour typical of social groups and classes. This three-fold division will be made clearer by taking examples from the three pieces of observation now being carried out. The first is a questionnaire, the opening questions being:

What are your superstitions, in order of importance?

Do you pay attention to coincidences?

What is your class?

The second is a rather more subtle and ambitious test, on 'Observation of Images.' 'The observer is to ask himself at the end of each day what image has been dominant in it. This image should, if possible, be one which has forced itself on him and which has confirmed its importance by recurrence of some kind. The image may occur in a series of varying forms or may take the form of a coincidence. For example, the same name or object may forcibly strike the observer's notice, from within or without, several times on the same day.' Such a test is going to throw light on such questions as: Is there an image typical of a certain day, of a certain area, of a certain class, etc.? The reactions of individuals when plotted on a map may turn out to form a mass-picture, just as many separate barometer-readings go to make a weather-map. Thirdly, 'each observer is to describe all instances that he notices in his daily occupations of (1) the behaviour of superiors to subordinates, and (2) of subordinates to superiors'. The description of behaviour corresponds roughly with the practice or science of anthropology . . . The explanation of the state of things in which we live has often to be sought in the condition of rude and early tribes; and without a knowledge of this to guide us, we may miss the meaning even of familiar thoughts and

practices. It is because these thoughts and practices are *familiar* that we may miss their meaning. Sixty years of anthropology are now waiting for their application to the immediate scene.(148)

The theoretical and methodological aim of investigation was far from coherent. Jennings' investigation of the poetic and Harrisson's anthropology were in opposition while the marxist poet Madge, combining the poetic and anthropological, oscillated between the two.(149) Lacking clear and rigorous principles the general direction of the movement fell under the sway of those with the time, commitment and strongest personality. As single young men Madge and Harrisson worked full-time on the project while Jennings juggled paid work, his other interests and family commitments. Over the next year the focus became firmly located around social anthropology.

Until Jennings withdrew from direct participation in its activities, Mass-Observation had two relatively distinct theoretical and geographical strands. Apparently operating as a unified organisation there was the popular strand orchestrated by Harrisson 'roughing it' in Bolton. Here volunteers engaged in the rather brash populist social-anthropology for which Mass-Observation is now particularly remembered. Meanwhile in London, Jennings and Madge organised the 'National Panel' of volunteers and collated the filed 'day reports' that stemmed from the experimental activities of poetic 'Day Surveys' undertaken by them and their Oxbridge friends. During December and early January, before the arrival of Harrisson in Blackheath, the group had formulated and initiated a small scale observation project

based around Jennings' ideas of image and coincidence. These formed the basis of the first published Mass Observation reports in 1937. The rationale and an initial experiment with the 'Day Survey' technique is referred to in a collaborative article by Madge and Jennings in the February/March (1937) edition of *New Verse* : 'In taking up the role of observer each person becomes like Courbet with his easel, Cuvier with his cadaver, and Humboldt with his continent. The process of observing raises him from subjectivity to objectivity. What goes unnoticed through familiarity is raised into consciousness again.'⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ The group instigated an 'experiment' on February 12th involving thirty people and this it seems was the very first 'Mass-Observation' project:

They had never met each other, they lived in widely scattered parts of the country and they differed greatly from each other in their surroundings, their work and their views about life. What they had agreed to do was set down plainly all that happened to them on that day.⁽¹⁵¹⁾

Madge clarifies the aim of this initial experiment in May by describing how twelve Oxford undergraduates were asked to produce a collective poem derived from recalling what they regarded as 'significant events':

Every report is a landscape with figures: the sharp focus is on the figures, and the landscape retires into varying degrees of subjectivity. In order to get focused into the hinterland, the background of social fantasy, we have been experimenting on what for lack of a better name has been termed the "dominant image of the day."⁽¹⁵²⁾

This probably represents the implementation of the 'subtle and ambitious test' outlined by Madge in 'Magic and Materialism' based upon Jennings' 'Observation of Images'. An attempt to identify 'the collective image, the coincidence and all manifestations of art not fully socially responsible . . . when plotted on a map [these images] may turn out to form a mass-picture, just as many separate barometer-readings go to make a weather-map'(153); the same theme is reiterated in the founding letter to the *New Statesman and Nation* : 'The observers will also provide the points from which can be plotted weather-maps of public feeling in a crisis'. The initial experiment was extended to include the 12th of each month with a major project for the Coronation Day of George VI on May 12th.

The poetic aim of Mass-Observation is presented by Jennings and Madge in the joint article 'THEY SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES: MASS OBSERVATION AND SOCIAL NARRATIVE' published in *Life and Letters Today* (Autumn 1937) which had developed out of that 'subtle and ambitious test':

The reports which are written for Mass Observation come largely from people whose lives are spent in a world whose behaviour, language, and viewpoint are far removed from academic science and literature. Sociologists and realistic novelists - including proletarian novelists - find it difficult if not impossible to describe the texture of this world. After reading hundreds of Mass Observation reports, we find that they tend to cover just those aspects of life which the others miss. Why is this? Because, we suggest, in these reports people are speaking in a language natural to them - their spelling, punctuation, etc., are their OWN - in spite of a uniform State education. This is hardly a "well of

English undefiled" since into it continually flow more or less muddy streams from press, radio, advertising, film and "literature". But in actual social usage, all the jungle of words grow up together in Darwinian conflict until they establish their own ecology and functions. Contrast this functional value with the use of words by sensitive, stylist writers. Each phrase is paralysed by fear of cliché. Yet each phrase must have a class or family resemblance to one of the known accents of literature. In reaction against this paralysis, there is a general wish among writers to be UNLIKE the intellectual, LIKE the masses. Much "proletarian fiction" is a product of this wish. But it is not enough for such fiction to be ABOUT proletarians, if they in their turn become a romantic fiction, nor even for it to be BY proletarians, if it is used by them as a means of escaping out of the proletariat. Mass Observation is among other things giving working-class and middle class people a chance to speak for themselves, about themselves. How little they are affected by the paralysis of language, even in their first attempts, may be judged from the extracts from Mass Observation reports which follow.(154)

The notion of the poet and poetry was to be redefined. To demystify and free poetry (art) from the insular elitism of the bourgeois 'art' world, as Chaney and Pickering assert, it was to be 'a poetry which is not, as at present, restricted to a handful of esoteric performers. The immediate effect of Mass Observation is to devalue considerably the status of the "poet" [by giving recognition and voice to the mass society]. It makes the term "poet" apply, not to his performance, but to his profession like "footballer"'.(155) By adopting this technique Jennings was attempting to break free of the clichéd notion of 'poet' and return poetry to its original function as a form of

relevant and popular expression, a form of reportage. By treating the utterances of the people as worthy of consideration the people define what is important rather than those with power.

The first important report by Mass-Observation, *May the Twelfth: Mass-Observation Day Surveys 1937*, published six-months after the Coronation marks the last time Jennings was fully implicated with Mass-Observation publications. The Coronation provided the 'unifying element' of the text with the aim to 'present, classify and analyse the immediate world'. Jennings collated and organised the data choosing to present the material and accompanying texts in 'collage' form; a technique Madge noted akin to his other art work and 'comparable to the "cutting" of a documentary film'.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ According to Madge, Harrison was 'in no way involved in the Coronation day survey' as the subject derived out of Madge's reporting of the abdication for the *Daily Mirror*.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ This is not surprising, Harrison probably regarded the 'Day Survey' technique as merely an initial training exercise for volunteers. Even though by the end of 1937 the initial 500 plus volunteers had been asked to keep 'a detailed account of everything they did from waking until sleeping on the twelfth of each month throughout the year' Madge and Harrison wrote 'The original purpose of the Day Surveys was to collect a mass of data without any selective principle, as a *preliminary* to detailed studies of carefully chosen topics'.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Jennings' understanding of Mass-Observation was being expunged from the project. By the end of 1937 he had broadly severed his practical and poetic connection. His departure is symbolised by the fact that his volunteer 'Day Reports' were soon

dropped.' After January 1938, Mass-Observation's interest shifted to the recording of activities on special days such as Easter Day and August Bank Holiday, and then to more specific topics'.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Harrison remarked that 'Madge's 'Mass Poetry' had been. .a horrible perversion: Madge and myself now work on a common programme and are no longer concerned with literature - he got rid of that in the Coronation Book.'⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Together in 1938 Madge and Harrison published a booklet entitled *Mass-Observation* which Madge admits 'contained a lot of Harrison'. Jennings' contribution was to design the front cover.⁽¹⁶¹⁾

Bolton

Before moving to London Jennings had spent most of his life around East Anglia and Kent and in the cosmopolitan environment of London interspersed with visits to rural France and Paris. Allen Hutt remarked that he was in some senses more French than English '[knowing for instance] parts of Brittany like the back of his hand without being conscious that anything existed in England at all north of Peterborough'.⁽¹⁶²⁾ His work with Mass-Observation however gave him both the reason and opportunity to visit the euphemistically named 'Worktown' (Bolton) in the industrial north:

At 5 a.m. one summer day in the middle nineteen thirties, a young man, with a Leica slung over his shoulder, stepped out of the station at Bolton and took his first look at that typical Lancashire manufacturing town. He saw more than Bolton; the vision of mill-stacks and operatives' dwelling-boxes introduced him to an England he had not known before - the land of industry, of the factory

and of the working class. That was perhaps the most important turning-point in the life of Humphrey Jennings.(163)

In Lancashire he encountered a distillation of the physical and social environment of the industrial revolution. It was a region with a distinctive history, culture and lifestyle shaped by the vagaries of industrialism, urbanism and technological change. This first encounter was to have a profound impact upon his political consciousness and to recast his aesthetic sensibility. He read the classic critiques of emergent industrial capitalism in the very region which provided raw material for those texts: 'Bolton, and the months he spent there working with Mass Observation, living in an unemployed spinner'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.'(164) Hutt saw this experience as initiating 'a deep understanding and warm sympathy' a 'feeling for people, for the ordinary people, for the plain, blunt working men and women of our country.'(165) Julian Trevelyan described the change as: 'an extension of his Surrealist vision of Industrial England; the cotton workers of Bolton were the descendants of Stephenson and Watt, the dwellers in Blake's dark satanic mills reborn into a world of greyhound racing and Marks and Spencer.'(166)

The Leica he carried with him was symptomatic of the latest art movement of the period, 'photo-reportage'. Probably aware of the surrealist experimentation with photography through the work of Man Ray, Raoul Ubac and Brassai, he realised that to understand film-making he had to understand the qualities and

nature of photography and the photographic image.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ In the words of Keith Brandon Williams photography created the possibility of an 'I-witness generation'.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ It was a technique of mechanical recording which provided the opportunity for middle-class, as Mellor calls them, 'artist-agents', to undertake 'the pilgrimage into the industrial interior' to document the mysterious landscapes of working class life through the discreet photographic image. The photographic record became 'a feature of the ascendant Documentary style in British art from 1935-39'.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Jennings began to use photographic and filmic analogies in his texts; for example he depicted the selected images for *Pandemonium* as part of 'an unrolling film' and *May the Twelfth* was constructed around 'a cinematic kaleidoscope of events on George VI's Coronation Day: 'Close-ups and long shot, detail and ensemble, were all provided '⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ and he wrote with interest about the associative nature of the unconscious, photography and the photographic image.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ He was aware that in poetic and broad political terms the vogue for representing the working class through literature or photographic realism did not go far enough. From the beginning 'Mass-Observation . . . assumed that its untrained Observers would be *subjective* cameras, each with their own distortion. They tell us not what society is like but what it looks like to them.'⁽¹⁷²⁾ The true democratic nature of photography lay in the fact that it provided a mechanical medium accessible to everyone and, as a mechanical technique of representation, required little artifice on behalf of the operator to create their own representations.⁽¹⁷³⁾ For Jennings photography had the potential to become *the* system of

democratic representation. Photography (and by association film) had the potential to undermine and demystify elitist notions of poetic expression by allowing the people to express themselves. The agent's choice of image represented opportunities to glean evidence of the aesthetic connections between the psychological and the social and appeal to the emotional side of being.(174)

By early 1938 E.L.T. Mesens had settled in London and, with financial support from Roland Penrose and help from Jennings, opened the 'London Gallery' in Cork Street. The opening provided an opportunity to exhibit work by Magritte. Jennings supplied a short review in the first edition of the in-house paper *London Bulletin* which celebrated the 'unforced' nature of his art.(175)

An exhibition in July, consisting of 'nineteenth century drawings and engravings of machines . . . with complementary Cubist, Dadaist and Surrealist paintings', was probably inspired by Jennings. The exhibition was accompanied by two articles written for the *Bulletin* in June and July.(176) In 'Iron Horse' (June) he considers a developing anthropomorphic relationship between human beings and technology which had occurred since the seventeenth century. With the human imagination assailed by a relentless reworking of material and social reality which was encouraged by scientific investigation, technological innovation and industrial change, artists and poets applied the language, metaphor and symbols of the natural and spiritual world to the 'newness' of the present to describe the nature and behaviour of machines, hence 'Iron Horse'.(177)

For Jennings the steam railway had become the 'pre-eminent. .automatic machine' symbolic of the evolution of scientific

investigation, technological innovation and industrialisation which was transforming the natural world. To accompany the exhibition the *Bulletin* included his article 'Do Not Lean Out Of The Window!' which consisted of nineteenth century 'found texts' that anthropomorphise the steam engine and consider the diverse impact of industrialism and technological innovation on human knowledge, aesthetics and nature.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Here Darwin's biological transmutation and environmentalism along with Freudian psychoanalysis met their social and economic parallel in the descriptions of William Cobbett and Cobden and the social theory of Engels and Marx.

These two articles were symptomatic of a much larger project he had in mind for a proposed book, consisting of diverse historical evidence of eye-witness accounts, which traced the impact of the machine and industrialisation upon the human imagination from 1660-1886. He called this book *Pandaemonium*. Similar in form to some immense eclectic diary the sweeping narrative would unfold in the words of observers and participants. It was to be an imaginative form of mass observation, a compendium of historical incidents and 'day reports' tracing events and incidents that he felt touched on the fundamental dialectic of the material, the spiritual and imaginative created through science, technology and industrialism:

Pandaemonium is the Palace of All the Devils. 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. That history has never been written. The present writer has spent many

years collecting materials for it. From this mass of material the present book is a selection. A foretaste of the full story.(179)

Jennings charts through the pages of *Pandaemonium* not only the rise of modern society and the imaginative shift in comprehension but also the changing nature of poetic language and form, from the realm of recognised poetry into the historic records of other literary domains including novels, dairies and personal accounts.(180) Between December 1937 and June 1938 Jennings scripted and chaired a series of talks and discussions for the B.B.C. which concluded a month prior to his return to the G.P.O. Film Unit in August. Two initial broadcasts, 'Plagiarism and Poetry' (8 Dec.1937) and 'The Disappearance of Ghosts' (11 Feb.1938) act like a preface to the following related ten broadcasts under the generic title 'The Poet and The Public'. The first two programmes consider continuities and changes in the nature of poetic expression and raise in preliminary terms, issues discussed more fully in the later programmes. These consist of a closely orchestrated series of talks and discussions which draw on historical and contemporary poetry and writing and contributions from contemporary poets and members of the listening public. A major theme of these broadcasts was the decline in the relevance of the contemporary poet and poetry to everyday life. It is in these programmes that Jennings brings together his previous research, analysis and argument to offer a resolution to the problem articulated most explicitly by Eliot, Riding and Graves. If the contemporary poet and poetry was to survive as relevant and meaningful it must re-invent itself for the moment, be accessible to the general audience, re-

appropriate its original visionary function as well as act as the bringer of news to ordinary people. Critically Jennings felt the poet had two aims, first 'to remind the community not to be so proud' and second 'remind us that there are still mysteries. .and these mysteries reside in the humblest of every day things'. The poet has to start with the thing that's produced this pride - a steamship or a train - and relate that to the unexplored mysteries'.(181)

Documentary and Colour Film

John Grierson and the Documentary Film Discourse

When Jennings was employed by Grierson at the G.P.O. Film Unit in mid-1934 he was joining an organisation which the 'founder' of British documentary had deliberately imbued with a distinctive discourse. It was a documentary vision and style informed by particular social and political ideals. Ian Aitken identifies the basis for this vision and style as deriving from Grierson's educational background and the influence of late nineteenth century Scottish Idealist philosophy and American scientific naturalism.(182) Effective communication in modern mass urban-industrial society he believed must utilise forms of language that the public found familiar and conventional. 'This belief', Aitken states, 'was, in turn, derived from his belief that the lower-class and middle-class public 'thought' in different ways, and from his belief that the masses could not play any significant role in the process of government.'(183) He rejected Marxist and Guild Socialist critiques of society as leading to

'anarchy and dangerous egalitarianism' and aligned himself with the 'diverse movements of social democratic reformism' of the nineteen thirties.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ For Grierson documentary film should address social and political issues surrounding modernisation by focussing upon the reforming mechanisms of social democracy. Acute social problems could be alleviated through the paternal, enabling guidance of a strong state on behalf of the nation. Grierson shared the view of the more politically radical Paul Rotha that documentary was primarily a didactic form of propaganda, 'a weapon that can model the minds of the multitudes' promoting social awareness, education, political reform and citizenship.⁽¹⁸⁵⁾

It was these values and beliefs which informed Grierson's documentary aesthetic, an aesthetic described by Aitken as 'instrumentalist and prescriptive, rather than strictly realist.'⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ It is an aesthetic that creates a form of uncritical cinematic realism which Bill Nichols refers to as the "'classic" mode of documentary';⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ a particular form of exposition and argument expressed through a supposedly objective or sober style of journalism. For Grierson documentary must adhere to the sober application of an approved formal style that is a 'significant form' to fulfil its critical function and play an 'essential mediating and socialising role'.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ The supposed objective and didactic certainties of the documentary narrative, which espoused social integration, consensus and reformism, disguised the manufactured nature of social truth and social reality. Grierson was demanding a form of cinematic orthodoxy imbued with a distinctive political ideology for the modern

world, articulated in a direct and relatively simple form capable of upholding an intelligible vision to a mass audience.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ This is well represented in Evelyn Spice's *A Job in a Million* (1937) which depicts the meritocratic progress of a working class boy to the position of telegram messenger within the Post Office. This short 'docu-drama' contains many of the ideological principles: a strong emphasis upon consensus, meritocratic ideals and an integrated society. They are illustrated in an individual's commitment to education and training (thereby avoiding the misery and alienation of unemployment) which is rewarded with secure and valued work in a state organisation at the forefront of a modern, highly complex communications sector. Rather than a representative of his class the boy is regarded as an individual who, through personal will and effort, achieves his goal. He is transformed from a potential victim of unemployment, defined as personal failure rather than the consequence of structural shifts in the capitalist economic cycle, into a dignified human being with an assigned but valued role within the socio-economic system. The Post Office is represented as a vital enabling institution providing further education, health welfare, self and social esteem. The story is effectively humanised as we follow the young school leaver's struggles to achieve the appropriate level of education, skills and commitment. Simultaneously we observe and recognise how the Post Office is of value to broader society. It offers worthy employment and sustains a national communication system which, in economic and social terms, integrates the British nation.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Documentary, Grierson felt ,should be a 'source of

imaginative release and everyday inspiration' that could 'engage and resolve the dreams and ambitions of the public'(191)

The Grierson Documentary Style: Epic Cinema

Compared to the poetic experiments encouraged by Alberto Cavalcanti in films such as *Night Mail* (1936) for Grierson the sober reportage style of such films as *Workers and Jobs* (1935) and *Housing Problems* (1935) 'showed the common man, not in the romance of his calling, but in the more intimate drama of citizenship . . . There is a precious difference. *Housing Problems* is not so well made nor so brilliant in technical excitements, but something speaks within it that touches the conscience. These other films 'uplift'. *Housing Problems* 'transforms' and will not let you forget.'(192) Grierson encouraged what Aitken calls a theory of epic cinema. 'Grierson's epic cinema would avoid formalism, over-sophistication, and psychologism, and would emphasize unsophisticated themes and external social and concrete realities . . . represent[ing] the inter-relation of the individual and the social.'(193) The style would articulate a masculinist and anti-intellectual ethos: '[Grierson] defined the ethical values he held to be the most important as 'strength, simplicity, energy, directness, hardness, decency, courage, duty and upstanding power.'(194) The camera acting like a 'window' on the world, would through a 'creative interpretation of actuality' express the appropriate ideological sentiments.

Conspicuous deviation from the formal characteristics of epic cinema could undermine the social purpose of the documentary by detracting from the desired naturalism and

'illusion of reality.'(195) Supposedly inordinate experimentation in form and style were he felt a sign of romanticism, 'the sign of disease . . . a disease of individual dreams and chaotic longings because first and foremost it is a disease of the body politic.'(196) Continual vigilance was demanded to avoid anything which could be regarded as perverse or self indulgent licence transgressing the boundaries of his specified prescriptive and instrumental 'significant form'. Authenticity, the real and social truth were to be symbolised through a clear representation of a rigorously controlled masculinity articulated through two direct and 'familiar archetypes: the people as heroes of labour or as victims of circumstance. .these archetypes [suggests Dai Vaughan] constituted what might be called the major and minor keys of classical British documentary, all other possible modalities being allowed to fall into disuse.'(197) By, on the one hand, representing male paid employment as productive and heroic and celebrating physical work and the male body,(198) and on the other, illustrating the low paid, unemployed or poor as powerless 'victims of circumstance', it was possible to represent the reality of working class life within the parameters of a temporarily dysfunctional capitalist system alleviated by an enabling state. By ensuring that documentary film 'reflected negative, as well as positive aspects of contemporary life (and) as long as positive representation should always dominate negative representation' the educative and reformist agenda could be effectively pursued.(199)

Epic cinema ensured that each image of working people was securely tied within the documentary narrative and by

association into modern reformed capitalist relations of production. Working people were neither conceived as having their own agenda nor allowed to speak for themselves. In Grierson's cinematic world working people became ciphers either spoken about or allowed to speak only on terms defined by his social democratic ideology. This 'informing logic' Nichols asserts provides 'a representation, case, or argument about the historical world' complete with an implied problem-solving rhetoric.(200) Through the camera eye, itself focussed through the ideological prism of Griersonianism, the audience would be educated and informed about the intrinsic value of a modern evolving socio-economic order and their place within that order.

Working class experience and conditions of existence were simultaneously contained and positioned within the text as an image of the authentic and real. Central to the creation of truthfulness is the audience's complicity with the belief that the indexical nature of the image itself expresses an authentic moment in history. This complicit belief in the historical indexicality of the image enables a powerful impression of authenticity to be created. Hence Grierson's belief that 'the documentary movement's greatest achievement was its success in representing the intrinsic value of working-class life and experience'.(201) In other words a celebration of that life and experience within the context of assigned but vital roles for dignified working class and middle class labour, with the implicit value to be discovered in the social and technical division of labour which in turn signifies broader economic and social integration. A national economy and nation, overseen by an

enlightened and reforming state.

In the Griersonian representation of authentic social truth we are actually offered an ideologically shaped truthfulness, the viewer is led towards a particular prophetic representation of the modern world. But Grierson, Cavalcanti and Jennings were all aware that this impression of the authentic and real is no more than that; a subjective representation of the author's perception and the desire to make it a reality.(202)

An Alternative Documentary Discourse

In 1934 the documentary movement Grierson had assiduously created and supervised since 1929 began to change.(203) With the arrival of Jennings, but particularly Alberto Cavalcanti in mid-1934, there quickly developed a debate over the meaning and role of documentary film in society. This debate brought into question the modernist epic cinema Grierson had cultivated. Jennings joined the Unit in July 1934, approximately nine months after the transfer from the Empire Marketing Board in the previous September to the General Post Office (G.P.O). This included upgraded premises in Soho Square and the Unit's first sound recording facilities at Blackheath, South-East London.(204) Grierson now required someone to teach his proteges the skills necessary to bring documentary into the sound era. For this role he hired the 37 year old Alberto Cavalcanti:

a Brazilian who had gone to France in the early twenties to study architecture. Whilst in Paris he became involved with a group of French avant-garde film makers, including Jean Renoir, Rene Clair, and Jean Vigo, and made two experimental films: *Rien*

que les heures (1926-7) and *En rade* (1927), both of which achieved critical acclaim. The main concern of the French avant-garde during the twenties was to explore the possibilities of film form and reject conventional 'filmed theatre'. Cavalcanti was influenced by this approach, and, in 1934, came to London, where he was put in contact with Grierson by Jimmy Rogers, who had been his cameraman on both *Rien que les heures* and *En rade*.(205)

With the death of Bill Shenton, a freelance camera-man, whose role had included training Grierson's recruits, Cavalcanti proved to be a more valuable acquisition than Grierson expected. A fortuitous meeting with Jennings and support from Stuart Legg led to his employment in the new G.P.O. Unit.(206) Jennings began his training at the Blackheath studios becoming familiar with all aspects of film production.(207) During his first six months he helped produce three short historically based information films, *Post Haste* (1934), *The Story of the Wheel* (1934) and *Locomotives* (1935) and was either placed with or gravitated towards the team working with Cavalcanti on the first attempt at a sound film, *Pett and Pott* (1934).(208) Acting as assistant directors were Stuart Legg and Basil Wright while John Taylor was responsible for photography. Jennings the novice did what he could do best, he designed sets.(209)

Regarding *Pett and Pott* as a 'sound lesson', Cavalcanti applied images to a pre-recorded soundtrack.(210) However his decision to make the film a studio-based comedy with surreal overtones drew negative responses from Wright and Legg.(211) Most pointedly Taylor felt that the film was 'the beginning of the division . . . because he didn't understand what documentary was supposed to be doing . . . Documentary was supposed to be for the

service of the people. It wasn't supposed to be in the entertainment industry - as far as I'm concerned, anyway'.⁽²¹²⁾ Although publicly praising the film, probably as the first G.P.O. sound venture, Grierson attempted to ensure 'that nobody ever saw it.'⁽²¹³⁾ Cavalcanti continued to ask his young team to consider technique, imagination, representation and communication, issues which Jennings was simultaneously exploring outside his paid employment. Jennings was now part of a group characterised as an 'enthusiastic, hard-working and disciplined team of film-makers' studying 'narrative construction, camerawork and montage' who continued to extend this initial experiment.⁽²¹⁴⁾ He continued with Cavalcanti, now using his acting and theatrical skills in *The Glorious Sixth of June* (1934) (again a studio-based presentation with comic elements this time including a fictional narrative and characters) followed by a small acting role in *BBC, Voice of Britain* (1935) and possibly shooting one sequence for *Coalface* (1935), a thoroughly poetic conception utilising poetry, sound and song to celebrate the role of coalmining and miners both as heroic individuals and as a vital social and economic class.⁽²¹⁵⁾ *Coalface* provided the experimental basis for *Night Mail* (1936) the first half of which generally concurs with Griersonian discourse by focusing on the procedures for transmitting the Royal Mail from London to Edinburgh. Like *Coalface* it is the experimental and romantic second passage of the film where the Griersonian discourse is challenged through a sophisticated interplay of sound, image and spoken poetry. For Grierson this, like the earlier attempts, drew attention to the

craftsmanship of cinema. By highlighting the interplay between aural and visual poetry, the rhythmic properties of the editing, verges if not lapses into romantic excess, seemingly undermining the clarity of the message he would have wished to communicate. Hence Grierson's qualified praise for the formal properties of *Night Mail* with its 'technical excitements', 'romanticism' and 'uplift' rather than for him a transformation of consciousness.

Cavalcanti's attempts to incorporate aspects of the commercial cinema, such as fictitious narratives, character, contrived humour, technical playfulness as well as an emphasis of class over individualism, suggests an alternative and contrasting form of modernist documentary and social realism to that associated with the didactic and sober journalism of Grierson.⁽²¹⁶⁾ In fact Cavalcanti had brought with him an alternative notion of documentary discourse and practice.⁽²¹⁷⁾ He resisted Grierson's demand to contain the text's meaning within the notions and ideological parameters of epic cinema. His documentary discourse like Jennings' poetic understanding was far more contingent, relative, romantic and imaginative, representing reality as much a creation of the human mind as some external phenomena waiting to be discovered. From this perspective the prophetic certainty urged by the Griersonian social-democratic discourse is undermined to be replaced by the equivocal.

For Jennings Cavalcanti's cinema was highly attractive, as he accentuated and encouraged the audience to evaluate the text through their interpretive powers. Similar to surrealism,

Cavalcanti applies a sophisticated technique which embodies a philosophically pragmatic interpretation of the modern, expressed through a similarly pragmatic cinematic vocabulary, incorporating questions of subjectivity, conventionality and appearance. The future therefore is not closed but more open and idealist. There is as Rorty would say:

a willingness to refer all questions of ultimate justification to the future, to the substance of things hoped for. If there is anything distinctive about pragmatism it is that it substitutes the notion of a better human future for the notions of 'reality', 'reason' and 'nature'. One may say of pragmatism what Novalis said of Romanticism, that it is 'the apotheosis of the future'.⁽²¹⁸⁾

Cavalcanti built a particularly strong and supportive partnership with the bluff un-intellectual Harry Watt who held his teaching and 'realist' style in the highest regard.⁽²¹⁹⁾

Technicians such as the cameramen Fred Gamage, Chick Fowle and Jonah Jones, the sound recordist Ken Cameron and editors like Stewart McAllister were all beneficiaries of his expertise.⁽²²⁰⁾ Fowle experimented with film exposure times and filters 'to capture prevailing light tone . . . mood of nature, or . . . dramatic atmosphere of the scene portrayed', Cameron was to make an 'imaginative rather than the strictly literal use of the soundtrack: . . . to obtain not perfect sound, in the studio sense, but perfect realistic sound' while McAllister mastered editing techniques, 'the fundamental art of picture-making.'⁽²²¹⁾ It was this small group who would combine their expertise to support Jennings' sensibility and help create the distinctive poetic style

of his early propaganda films. It was a partnership based upon friendship, collaboration and respect which Jennings recognised as absolutely critical.(222)

Cavalcanti's cinematic style implicitly rejected Grierson's belief that documentary could not successfully compete with commercial feature film and should avoid using popular modes of representation. Grierson believed it must be directed at a non-commercial audience and develop channels of non-commercial distribution, through for example schools, clubs and societies to reach its target audience.(223) Cavalcanti, however, had other ideas:

I thought films are the same, either fictional or otherwise, and I thought that films ought to go into cinemas. Grierson little by little started creating the theory that they should be put in a different, what he called non-theatrical circuit, and I thought that it was silly calling those films documentary. I said, if films are good, they should be shown anywhere. There is no reason why they should be destined only for the parsons and for the church halls, etc.(224)

Echoing Jennings' attitude towards modern poetry, documentary should use the techniques of popular film to avoid becoming insular, marginalised and 'highbrow'. However this debate within the Unit was overtaken by a general expansion and restructuring of the documentary movement with Grierson, Wright, Anstey and Legg departing from the G.P.O. for various organisations in the commercial sector leaving Cavalcanti and Watt nominally in control at the G.P.O.(225) The division became institutionalised across the movement when Grierson's ability to demand

philosophical, ideological and practical adherence to his notion of significant form was seriously eroded.(226)

Experiments in Colour Film 1935-1938

Jennings could not rely on gaining a permanent post with the Unit, and it seems doubtful whether he would have accepted if it had been offered.(227) It is possible that the connection with the Unit provided him with the opportunity to meet the avant-garde artist Len Lye and develop an interest in colour film. Lye's experiments were particularly close to the investigations of Jennings. Cavalcanti was quick to appreciate the artistic qualities in both men who formed a long standing and artistically close relationship:(228)

I got along very well with certain of the boys, which were brilliant boys . . . the two important boys were Humphrey Jennings and Len Lye. Those were my favourite boys . . . It's funny that they both should have been painters to start with. I have seen very few of Jennings's paintings, but I know that as soon as he touched films, he had a very acute sense. Len Lye was not exactly the same character, but he was very inspiring, a very adventurous kind of mind.(229)

Between 1935 and 1938 both were involved with surrealism and investigating the formal properties and potential poetic quality of colour film.(230) In the mid-thirties, the colour film industry was debating the technical, aesthetic and economic ramifications arising from new colour processes for the commercial film industry. A central figure in the debate was Major Adrian Bernard Klein (later to change his name to Cornwell

Clyne). Clyne believed that because directors and technicians did not understand the qualities of colour too many films showed inept application of colour tone and opportunities were being squandered. In words echoing Jennings he believed 'through its emotional intensity' colour was capable of making 'a permanent contribution to imaginative life' offering cinema a new dimension to story telling.(231) If the aesthetic potential of colour was to be realised, he asserted, the industry must turn to trained artists like Jennings; 'Painters are the most satisfactory people of all to whom to show colour film. They are always appreciative and never critical of the illusion failure' but, he lamented, it is a 'great pity that so few men or women of developed taste and artistic culture are engaged upon the design of films.'(232)

Between 1935 and mid 1938 Jennings held both an advisory and directoral role in the non-theatrical colour film industry and rapidly gained recognition as an authority.(233) The aesthetic implications of colour raised again those questions he was asking of poetry and painting; namely the morality of technique, that is the 'technique of the medium *together with its implications*'.(234) The 'moral artists' Jennings believed must 'integrate sensations' and progress towards solving 'the problem of how the film director, as artist and human, can have a life of artistic growth - then we may begin talking about the films and art !'(235) In June 1936 he wrote about the implications for commercial cinema in 'Colour won't stand dignity'. Supporting Clyne's critique that poor use of colour 'magnifies errors in photographic technique compared to monochrome'(236) he

condemns the 'mentality' and 'approach' of the film maker which causes inappropriate use of colour and misapplied technique resulting in extreme artistic contrivance; 'because *Colour* and *Ideas* are fundamentally opposed; the black and white film has always lived on ideas; but colour depends upon *sensations*' . . . colour is a sensation.'(237) He became convinced, that because of aesthetic considerations, a revolution in the fundamental nature of film production would occur. Two years later, interviewed for *The Cine-Technician*, he re-iterates the drawbacks of self-conscious technique and artifice he made earlier stating that 'anything faked - faked sets or faked situations - shriek in colour'. He now saw the potential of the technology to encourage neo-realist storylines:

Colour . . . has a horrible way of showing up the texture of faces and sets, so that the studio tricks of special make-up, plaster sets and painted artificial backgrounds are emphasised in all colour systems. I see no reason why realistic feature pictures should not to a great extent be shot on location with natural backgrounds. Hollywood is tending more and more to take semi-documentary themes as backgrounds for their stories . . . This tendency should be greatly encouraged by colour (with results) far more realistic than if the set is built in a studio, with a painted background. Colour . . . will divide very sharply stories which are frankly hokum from stories that are supposed to bear some relation to contemporary life. If it is to be hokum, let it be hokum - and colour will play its part. If intended to be realistic, colour can now produce a new realism that is at the service of the story department. If colour can bring a greater realism, not only to the appearances, but to the fundamentals of films it will have performed a notable service.(238)

Colour film stock opened up to the medium of film opportunities similar to those provided by painting or poetry: a form of photographic realism which allows for an imaginative response to the aesthetic experience of sensation. In the hands of the artist, there was developing the potential to combine the qualities of the black and white 'idea-picture' with the moral realism of colour. Simultaneously Lye was exploring in technical terms similar questions using film 'as a direct vehicle for colour sensations.'(239) From 1935 onwards Lye and his associate, the sound technician Jack Ellit, experimented with colour and sound in *Colour Box* (1935) and *Kaleidoscope* (1935). Ellit wished to break with the tradition of 'tight laced musical values' using electro-acoustic and other 'new and imaginative sound forms'.(240) This trio were hired by Charles Dand to collaborate on the stylistically modern Gasparcolor film *Birth of the Robot* (1936).(241) Up to 1938 prior to returning to the G.P.O. Jennings experimented with the quality and adaptability of the Dufay film stock, directing *English Harvest* (1939), working on a project about the last commercial sailing vessels, possibly called *Top Sail Schooners* (1939), and an interior fashion studio film *Design for Spring* (1939). It is possible that he may also have begun an abstract colour film similar to those of Len Lye described as 'an attempt . . . to break entirely new ground in rhythm and colour'.(242) By this time he was so taken by the properties of Dufaycolour that according to Marius Goring, he wanted to make all his future films using this process.(243).

The Coalescence in Themes and Practice

By the time of Jennings' return to the G.P.O. Unit in late 1938 a European war seemed increasingly inevitable and by now the intellectual tributaries informing his explorations, and expressed in his various artistic activities, had merged. His enquiries into the aesthetic and the poet's response to social and material reality were firmly embedded within a trans-historical understanding of the process of modernity and modernisation. The apparent political indifference of 1934 with his concentration on drawing and art had been supplemented by a broader contemporary poetic agenda with distinct aims and political sympathies. It is possible to identify some of the major characteristics of that discourse which would manifest themselves in his future film work.

A Relative and Pragmatic Philosophy.

Jennings said that 'one of the principal functions of the poet (is) to remind the community of two things. One is not to be so proud . . . I mean by pride the way in which the industrialization of the world has (so to speak) hardened our hearts . . . the second of the poet's functions I want to note is that he can still remind us that there are still mysteries - we haven't discovered everything - and that these mysteries reside in the humblest everyday things.'⁽²⁴⁴⁾ Scepticism underlies Jennings' assertions about the authentic and the real, a philosophical and questioning attitude which refutes assertions of epistemological and ontological certainty. He was an enemy of both intellectual arrogance and

the dull complacency that may flow from it.

Like Darwin and Freud, he attempted to investigate the hidden depths behind physical phenomena, burrowing beneath the manifestations of physical and social life to identify the abstract dynamics and insubstantial motivations of individual and social action and social change. To assert that human life (that existence - that is, to be in the world) had achieved a balance (an optimal form of relative existence) was a delusion. For Jennings there were no philosophical, aesthetic, linguistic or political absolutes. Reality, and life in all its forms both imaginative and material, was a relative and restless phenomenon, continually mutating and forever changing. Modes of expression and communication too must formally change. The artist and poet must be intensely self-reflexive searching continually for new forms of expression which could effectively communicate the pregnant qualities in the moment.

Time and Memory.

According to the historian Eric Hobsbawm, 'The fundamental assumption behind the various movements of the avant-garde in the arts which dominate the past century was that relations between art and society had changed fundamentally, that old ways of looking at the world were inadequate and new ways must be found.'⁽²⁴⁵⁾ This assumption lies at the heart of the Jennings' project; to re-imagine contemporary reality through a redefinition of the politics of representation. A new world order demanded new modes of awareness; the concept of time and how we comprehend what it is and its relevance to us required

reconstruction. Jennings understood that during the pre-industrial or pre-modern world the spiritual dimensions of communal, social and personal identity and memory were embedded within lived practice and expressed through natural time. Natural time was contingent, relative and simultaneous, associated with the slow turn of the seasons, the recurrent rituals and practice of rural life. Past and present co-existed in the same moment. From this perspective 'People should be viewed as in time rather than time being thought of as some discrete element or presence. Time [Macnaghten and Urry assert] involves the 'permeation' of the supposedly separate moments of past, present and future: each flows into the other.'⁽²⁴⁶⁾ The arrival of the industrial revolution and urbanisation had established a new psychology and new forms of social time. Time became divorced from nature, the self and sensory experience. Along with a growing ego-centric rationalism individual and social practice became regulated by manufactured forces symbolised by the clock.

Whereas the geography of traditional life had provided a coherent narrative of the self, the modern world, with its emphasis on the new, immediate and future, regarded the past as another time. Nature must be subordinate to the human will thereby severing the animated pulse of lived memory and natural time from the practice of the everyday. The past, divorced from the present by the relentless nature of social time, industrialisation and urbanisation, meant artifacts, rituals and landscapes become drained of contemporary vitality. Although still important to identity they now become sites of memory,

part of history, tradition and heritage. The traditional relationship between our ancestors and the present was in danger of being lost. Jennings believed that we must recapture that notion of natural time and thereby reconstruct our true selves. This required in the twentieth century another imaginative reconfiguration of time. We must now make a separation in our minds between the superficial and expedient social time (inherited from the Enlightenment and the practices of the industrial revolution) and the more profound reality of natural or real time. We must reconnect our sensibilities to the multi-dimensional nature of our selves and our existence.

Landscape.

One powerful avenue through which memory, imagination and the evolution of the real become embedded within consciousness is through the sensate experience of living within landscapes. The geographical and social landscapes of Jennings' films come in many forms. In visual and aural terms he presents us with a topography of coastal, rural, urban, metropolitan and industrial landscapes along with the activities of the inhabitants. Accompanying the visual are soundscapes which, like visual imagery, interact as collective fragments and together provide a kaleidoscope of lived experience. Landscapes for Jennings manifest the interaction of the human imagination with nature. They become a storehouse of memory and human activity, an image in which 'Visual objects exist in both space and time; they have a location relative to other objects, and they have duration relative to other objects as well.'⁽²⁴⁷⁾ Nature becomes tamed as

countryside, itself a sedimentation of human practice from the beginning of civilisation. Human ingenuity and dynamism becomes embodied through the lived dimensions of space, place and time in the artifacts, physical and social topography and geography of life. The vignettes he provides, often seemingly peaceful and immutable may be themselves the product of a sudden release of new energies and modes of response to the experience of violent change or transformation.

Imagination.

The transformation of landscapes reflect the historical development in the physical, psychic and social environment. The continual struggle between the forces of human development create new conditions, insights and revelations which may signal a superior form of knowledge and meaning. The idea of permanence dissolves as time, landscape and reality become re-imagined. The intensity of such re-imagination may cause a feeling of time and existence being out of joint. The invasion of the senses creates strange or surreal experiences and it is at such moments of crisis when the imagination may undergo a transformation. It is in such moments of self-reflection that the imagination is itself apprehended by the imagination. We may comprehend reality anew and create a new form of consciousness.

Metamorphosis.

Transformation holds within it a terrifying beauty. We may wish to embrace change but simultaneously fear the future that

may unfold. We need the anchor of the past in order to live in an uncertain present and it is through a qualified interpretation of the past that we gain some form of surety to face an unknown future. The past is integral to the present and for Jennings that present is the product of a mutative moment, a form of reality which at any time may transmogrify into something else. The present and future are not pre-determined but the product of contingency and promise. It is a Darwinian universe where human beings as sensate creatures interact with their surroundings, creating poetic expressions of this evolving relationship either, as Jennings puts it, to protect themselves or show themselves off. The imagination takes material constitution in poetry, music and the artifacts of culture thereby expressing human qualities and the spirit of the daily struggle for existence. Artifacts embody and express the fleeting moment of their creation with poetry catching the multiple and complex fusion of past and present in real time.

Realism.

The opportunity for the division between the spiritual and material worlds to be resolved lay in the struggle to be free from preconceived notions of reality. For Jennings pre-industrial society had intuitively understood the condition of the real and natural time. To ascertain the real required a combination of aesthetic and imaginative responses, the material and the imaginative are therefore inextricably entwined. At any point in time realism is dependent upon consciousness, notions of reality and language to interpret sense data and express meaning.

Subversion of reality may occur through the disturbance of existing conditions by unnatural or violent forces. Consequently disturbing images of reality may lead to a reconfiguration of the material world and concepts of time. Pre-existing notions of the self and society may also undergo change as routine experience and relations associated with reality are disrupted.

A Democratic Text

To facilitate a transformation of popular consciousness, Jennings believed that the poet must utilise a technique of expression which allows the poet to act merely as a conduit through which the people can represent themselves to themselves. The technique would attempt to circumvent the concerns of the author and authorial statement and highlight the vernacular of the public arena. It is the poet who may assist in the transformation of popular consciousness by communicating and encouraging in the audience an emotional response and reconceptualisation of the human condition.

The Poet Expressing the Moment

The language of the poet and poetry must once more be made relevant to the people by re-affirming its visionary function and role as a bringer of news. As war drew ever closer Jennings returned to the G.P.O Unit to direct in his own right. This position of authority was to provide him the opportunity and historical moment to apply his distinctive understanding of the meaning of democratic poetic expression in cinematic form. His early cycle of films (1939 -1942), with their reportage style often utilising

his artistic principles of plagiarism and collage, present a cinematic expression of his distinctive modernist conception of the moment as contingent, relative and pragmatic. These films are like social maps or landscapes encoded to produce, as Macnaghten and Urry would say, 'a culturally specific visual [and aural] strategy'.(248) Each film encourages a form of representation which:

reduc[es] the complex multi-sensual experience to visually encoded features and then organise[s] and synthesise[s] these into a meaningful whole. They both capture aspects of nature and society through visual abstraction and representation; both express distance and objectivity from what is being sensed; and both organise and articulate control or mastery over what is being viewed and thus usher in new ways in which visibility is complicitous in the operation of power.(249)

With increasing technical dexterity these black and white propaganda films integrate politics, ethics and human emotions to narrate the popular experience of the moment while celebrating the creativity and potential power of the ordinary people. Such cinematic conceptions with their often simultaneous expression of the historical and contemporary, the linear and concurrent progressively breach the codes and significant form demanded by Grierson to offer three distinct messages to the audience. The primary vehicle of expression is the broad propaganda remit demanded by the Ministry of Information at the time. But Jennings weaves within that remit wartime events attuned to the very moment of film production. Through those events he attempts to reveal the poet and poetry

as once more relevant to the people. But that relevance carries more than patriotic or nationalist sentiment. Increasingly, embedded within the narrative of each film is a celebration of the imaginative response of the people to their condition and an inference that out of the trial of war a new post-war society must emerge. A society that through experience would become infused with the imaginative ability to think and feel simultaneously and must in moral and ethical terms reflect a truly democratic world.

July 1938 - September 1939: The Imminence of War

In late July or early August, Jennings returned to the G.P.O Unit and was given the task of directing two educational shorts.⁽²⁵⁰⁾ However it would be a mistake to regard his next two assignments, *Spare Time* (1939) and *S.S. Ionian* (1939), as typical commissions for the G.P.O. during the late thirties. Impetus for production came initially from the Foreign Office through the Joint Committee of the British Council and the Travel and Industrial Development Association. As war became imminent the Foreign Office knew the economic and military power of the United States would be critical in sustaining Britain's defence against German aggression. Both films were envisaged as part of a broader indirect propaganda campaign to persuade the United States of the need to provide economic and political support for Britain if war were declared.

The threat of war and the influence America may have was obliquely referred to by Jennings in his short instructional film *Speaking From America* (1939)⁽²⁵¹⁾, but isolationist opinion in the United States was determined to keep their country neutral in any impending European conflict.⁽²⁵²⁾ Prior to the German invasion of Poland the broadly pro-British American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden attempted to influence American opinion by building a more positive image and rapport between the U.S. and Britain.⁽²⁵³⁾ One strategy to counter isolationist propaganda was to influence informed opinion amongst the American upper class through

positive and sympathetic images of Britain. A suitable opportunity arose with the opening of the New York World Fair on the 30th April 1939. The British pavilion provided an ideal venue of exhibitions, concerts, newsreels and documentaries intended to promote British life, culture, democracy and humanitarian values.⁽²⁵⁴⁾ The documentary films the British Council required would project 'the pageantry of English life' and where possible stress those elements that Britain shared with America.⁽²⁵⁵⁾ The Council approached the G.P.O with a commission to produce two complementary documentaries, eventually called *British Made* and *Spare Time* which focussed on different aspects of British working life.⁽²⁵⁶⁾ *Spare Time* gave Jennings the opportunity to explore his fascination with the poetry of popular expression and a chance to consider through the subject matter of the film the impact of industrialisation upon the popular imagination. Not only does the film fulfil the Foreign Office demand for propaganda which expresses an affinity with the American people, it also deviates from the orthodoxy of the Grierson documentary style and offers an alternative vision of the industrial working class.

November 1938 - April 1939: *Spare Time*

Spare Time is very, very important - a very important document.(257)

Alberto Cavalcanti (1975)

At the heart of *Spare Time* lies Jennings' fascination with the imaginative response of the individual and community to everyday existence in industrial society. He illustrates how people utilise tradition, their creativity and imagination to express themselves in that precious period of relative freedom between paid work and sleep. We are presented with a series of distinctive regional cultural activities predominantly associated with traditional masculine working class respectability such as gardening, keeping greyhounds, choir practice, the division of labour in the home, pub games, football, theatre and music. Simultaneously, the film also acknowledges the influence of American popular culture upon the lives of the younger generation with cowboy comics, dance bands, basketball and the Victoria Carnival Jazz band. Jennings presents a working class culture that is protean, rich and diverse, capable of maintaining traditional activities while accommodating the modern, symbolised by American cultural influence.

Jennings associates these workers with their American counterparts by locating work and leisure within the specific historical context of industrial manufacture and peaceful international trade. This is achieved in the introduction of the film by images of the industrial revolution, such as terraced housing, factory chimneys, a statue of William Cobden, which all signify the ideological and material power of the capitalist free

market and trade, particularly the equation promoted by Cobden and his British and American supporters between economic prosperity, peace and goodwill among like-minded nations. After these images *Spare Time* divides into three distinct sections, introduced and concluded by very brief and highly functional preambles and a coda. The commentary provides the rationale of the film: 'This is a film about the way people spend their time. People in three British industries. Steel, cotton and coal. Between work and sleep there comes a time we call our own. What do we do with it?' Each section begins with a succinct descriptive comment. The first describes Sheffield: 'Steel, the three shift system means that the steelworker's spare time may come in the morning or afternoon'; followed by Lancashire: 'The mills open at eight and close at five. Saturday afternoons and Sundays off' and lastly Ponypriidd in South Wales with the perfunctory, 'Finally coal.' The aim is to provide contextual information within which these activities are presented. Work time, represented by predominantly male workers coming off shift at the beginning of the film and returning to work at the conclusion, is underpinned by the coda 'As things are, spare time is time when we have a chance to do what we like. A chance to be most ourselves'.

Notably in the steel sequence spare time activities such as band practice, pigeons and greyhounds are edited or spatially located within the landscape of chimneys and factories. This form of visual metaphor is not repeated in the two subsequent sequences, apart from an initial establishing shot of cotton mills in Lancashire and a similar shot of an industrial valley

with housing and pit heads (concluding with pit winding gear silhouetted against the evening sky) at the close of the Welsh sequence. What each sequence does share is the technique of contextualising the images of spare time activity through the use of visual or sound reference to distinctive and robust forms of communal music associated with the three traditional industrial regions - the brass band with Sheffield steel, the Victoria Jazz (Kazoo) Band and Lancashire cotton, choir practice and South Wales coalmining.

Jennings' enthusiasm for the pragmatic and contingent nature of recording events and editing material is not conducive to the Griersonian documentary techniques. In fact the opposite, Jennings utilises a collage principle where each discrete regional section consists of various cultural images and signifiers, both public and private, linked through regionally based music on the soundtrack. He attempts to provide a representation which, with minimal comment, gives the audience evidence of creative working class activity. Implicitly we must look to a meaning beyond the images within sequences that lack the orthodox coding of the Grierson style. Nowell-Smith recognises this when he states that *Spare Time* 'refuses to ennoble. It is a film about the servitude and grandeur of working class leisure under capitalism. But what is grand and what is servile is left to be inferred.'⁽²⁵⁸⁾ The audience must interpret not passively consume ideologically inflected representations which Dai Vaughan's criticism implies:

All the elements are there - the pigeons, the football, the whippets, the mill-girl rehearsing her lines - but are represented, one or two shots each, in a

tabulatory, almost perfunctory way. There is nothing of the ebullience, quirkiness and toughness which Cavalcanti obviously saw in working-class culture. (The only moment of 'warmth' occurs in the choir practice, where the pianist removes her scarf, is helped off with her coat and sits down, all the while uninterruptedly playing the piano.(259)

Jennings' representation is far more humane and emotional than Vaughan allows. He was determined to avoid the trap of romanticism into which many middle class writers and documentary film makers, had previously fallen.(260) Rather *Spare Time* is an attempt to present in cinematic terms the poetic dimension of the cultural vernacular through a form of documentary where the film-maker acts, as Claire Johnston states, 'as vehicle and as testifying witness (a pure presence - 'I was here').(261) As Jennings made clear the film would not be 'in any sense unfaithful to the truth, it will attempt to show the natural gaiety of working people, and the varied expression which it finds.'(262) Like Magritte, Jennings attempts to provide an 'unforced' representation of social reality where authorial intent is minimised and in literal and metaphorical terms the people speak and represent themselves on the screen to the people.

Spare Time is best understood as a cinematic reworking of the poetic dimension ejected by Harrison from Mass Observation. Woven through the collage of activities is the evidence of poetic expression emerging in the time when 'we have a chance to do what we like. A chance to be most ourselves.' Recording the manifestation of the human imagination and spirit he includes a traditional welsh puppet theatre and local Welsh language paper contextualised by the sound of miners at choir

practice singing Handel's 'Largo' and the brightly lit shops of mass consumerism. At the same time he considers the mysterious nature of the mass and how the poetic erupts in the whistles and roar of the Lancashire football crowd. A child chalking a picture of a boat on the pavement is juxtaposed in coincidental fashion against a man wrapping a wooden boat in a parcel (a surprise gift for that child?). We glimpse a newspaper with the surreal headline that plays upon folklore, 'Her Scent was Bats Delight' and a boy engrossed in an American cowboy comic while he waits for his meal. Perhaps as a satirical political statement of Government appeasement he associates the Kazoo Band's tinny rendition of 'Rule Britannia' with the caged lions of Manchester's Belle Vue Zoo. In comparison the working people show through spare time activity their humanity and strength of character in negotiating their lives 'as things are'. That is as life is imaginatively conceived and executed.

The Manchester Victorian Carnival Jazz Band

the feeling . . . was that Humphrey seemed to show, in our opinion, a patronising, sometimes almost sneering attitude towards the efforts of the lower income groups to entertain themselves.(263)

Basil Wright

The article 'Humphrey Jennings Surrealist Observer' by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith provides a perceptive introduction to Jennings the poet and his films.(264) *Spare Time* he states 'was a project that [Jennings] hijacked and turned into something very different from the anodyne proposal that had been knocking around the Unit offices at the time of his arrival.'(265) He

asserts that there was no direct association between the organisation and objectives of Harrison's Mass-Observation and the production of the film.(266) A draft memorandum and accompanying notes by Cavalcanti and others, probably pre-dating Jennings' return to the unit, provide a tentative survey of possible directors and subject matter for the prospective film: 'The general purpose. .is to show that workers of all grades have a secondary life, over and above their working life, in which colliers may become musicians, musicians may become engineers, engineers may become dog-fanciers and so on' and seems well suited within the context of the film remit.(267) This may also help explain the anonymous judgement inserted over one of the activities in the list:

A strange phenomenon of North East England is the popularity of kazoo bands for children. The children dress up in uniforms and competitions are arranged' The draft, however, had an additional sentence, crossed out in ink and not present in the final version of the memorandum: 'This recreation is rather pathetic.'(268)

On release, *Spare Time* was incorrectly described in *The Times* as 'an example of cinematic Mass Observation'. Of the Kazoo Band sequence the paper states that 'nothing could be queerer or of greater anthropological interest.'(269) Jennings' decision to include the activity provided an opportunity for Grierson and his supporters (and recently Brian Winston) to interpret the sequence as symptomatic of a generally patronising attitude by Jennings toward the working class.(270)

Such charges of snobbery and elitism actually disguise

Grierson's underlying criticism that *Spare Time* in general, and the Kazoo Band sequence in particular, transgress the codes of epic cinema. The Sheffield and Welsh sequences include elements of 'significant form' and social archetype which may be interpreted within Griersonian parameters. The brass band and male voice choir are virtually indivisible from the world of male paid labour and the associated social and economic relations of work and society. It is feasible to construct from these sequences an optimistic Griersonian reading of the value of working class leisure and domestic life. One can appreciate the artistry of the all-male brass band and choir. Other forms of associated activity such as gardening, pub games and cooking are contextualised by the harmonic beauty of vocal and brass music, themselves associated with the images of factories or pit winding gear. In this sense there is an alignment between Jennings' expression of individual, social imagination and reality with that demanded by Grierson's epic cinema. Out of a bleak industrial environment comes beautiful music both poetic in form and nature, honourable and ennobling, the product of an honourable and noble class.

If steel and coal can be associated with the heroic archetype of dignified male labour the association breaks down in the Lancashire sequence. Compared with the other representations of music-making, the Kazoo band, whose music underpins the central passage of the triptych, is not constrained by the heterosexual bourgeois sensibility underpinning the heroic/victim archetypes.⁽²⁷¹⁾ The band first appears immediately after an establishing shot of an industrial

landscape complemented by the introductory statement on working hours. The initial camera position frames the band through a high angled long shot panning slowly right to left keeping the marching troupe in frame. A combination of subject matter, the distant image of the band in full regalia marching across bare open ground against a backdrop of a high wall and backs of terraced housing, accompanied by the tinny buzz of the kazoos, heightens the inquisitiveness of the audience. Probably chosen to contextualise how band activity is a combination of marching and music the initial long shot has the effect of providing the audience with a point of view of the action which is both detached and omniscient. The 'spectacular' nature of the shot seduces the spectator who becomes 'fascinated by the image itself, as image . . . [A] curiosity . . . in the conditions of a particular place at a particular time . . . a humanist fascination with a particular social condition, which is in the end a fascination with a generalized 'human condition'".(272) The long shot, reinforced through subsequent medium and close-up shots of individuals and their faces, show the participants to be mainly children and adolescents and further more predominantly young females attired in the same hapless uniforms which comprise the band under the direction of an elderly man close to if not retired.

Like the preceding sequence the image and sound of the Kazoo band functions to connect the disparate Lancashire leisure activities. It is a communal music activity performed by a group of self-conscious, relatively immature men and women. Self-consciously, and not that convincingly, the band runs through the

promenade with a lead marcher engaged in a curious 'dance' at their head. The sequence culminates in a stilted rendition of 'Rule Britannia' complete with artless tableaux lifted shoulder high in the wind. Compared to the beauty of the brass instrumentation and the subsequent harmonisation of the Welsh choir the musical intonation emitted from the technically unsophisticated kazoos and side drums is crude, sharp and discordant. In terms of the Grierson aesthetic the tenor of the sequence is bleak; where does one find the uplift or the social and moral realism demanded? There seems to be little about the relationship between this urban-industrial landscape and the social condition of the musicians that can be interpreted positively. It is a landscape and music that seems barren which signifies, in literal and metaphorical terms, economic and cultural depression.

It is the absence of positive signifiers that gives the landscape, participants and music a melancholic air of marginalised dejection. Here, unlike the steel and coalmining sequences, no direct association can be drawn between the heroic labour, life and leisure of the respectable working class. The male body as a signifier of class virility through which to celebrate social and economic worth is absent. A combination of gender, age, the novelty of the uniforms and leisure conspire to deny for Grierson and his supporters a positive interpretation. The lack of suitable signifiers of class affiliation and context is compounded by a supposed technical failure in the 'I-witness' style of photography and editing. Nowell-Smith recognises that Jennings was attempting something different from the orthodox

approach: 'lighting (is) limited to the basic necessity of enabling shooting to take place in conditions which a still photographer could cope with but not (at the time) the cinema.':

In fact, all the shots have the look of still photography about them . . . only in rare moments is it sufficient to produce the present-ness and anticipated future of cinematic narration. More than anything else it is the uncinematic snapshot quality of the images that marks *Spare Time* as a different sort of documentary from the documentary model. (273)

In Chick Fowle, Jennings had at least one technician who could attempt to achieve the distinctive visual tone he required to capture the prevailing mood and drama. Ian Dalrymple, who later took control of the Unit during the war, succinctly states what Jennings' approach was to filming: 'the documentary movement sought to present things in such a way that the spectator might himself discern the truth, or deduce it from the visual evidence in front of him.'(274) It is a position well removed from the Grierson ideal and form of documentary expression.

Jennings' documentary style often stresses the individual image(s) over the sequence thereby providing an intense form of depiction. Throughout the film we are presented with almost painterly impressionistic images of chimneys, housing and industry which often dwarf the inhabitants. Space and place, landscape and environment contextualise and locate spare time activity. Out of the consequences of industrialism comes a creative form of popular expression with its own strangeness

and beauty. In this case the drabness and routine of the ordinary is transcended by the imagination and creative power of the human spirit. For Jennings filming a prize winning local kazoo band within this impressionistic landscape accentuated the nobility and poetic nature of the activity in its own right.

Aspects of the Jennings' Documentary

The strongest argument for technical or artistic failure in *Spare Time* comes with an analysis of the editing. Comparison may be drawn with later documentaries such as *Listen to Britain* (1942) edited in partnership with Stewart McAllister. Nowell-Smith states 'Through McAllister, Jennings discovered editing; and through editing cinema'(275) and this may well be true. It was a partnership that effectively began with *Heart of Britain* (1941) and it is clear that the inspiration of McAllister and his cinematic sensibility, verve and technical brilliance would elevate Jennings' films to far greater heights of achievement.(276) Dai Vaughan implies a similar critique to explain why *Spare Time* seemingly fails to achieve the appropriate conventions of documentary:

part of the reason may . . . have lain in Jennings's relative inexperience - an ability to make the shots do quite what he wanted. A similar suspicion may be voiced about the editing. For while the three sequences are mainly constructed around their musical performances ('music characteristic of these three areas'), in each case those elements which could not be thus integrated are simply tacked on after the music has finished: in Sheffield, the football match and people buying postal orders for the pools; in Manchester, the amateur dramatics

and a ballroom; and in Pontypridd - more meaningfully - the return to work.(277)

As mentioned earlier for Jennings the formal properties of *Spare Time* required a technique that minimises intervention by the author to allow the subjects visual and aural space to present themselves. The conventions of Grierson's sober journalism privileging sequence over the individual image implies a discourse and narrative which fixes the subject in a space, place and time appropriate to the intentions of the author. In letting the subject speak for itself Jennings must also provide a coherent form of presentation. This required editing that denied the closure demanded by Grierson yet ensured a form of non-intrusive exposition. Whereas Grierson's narrative is linear and progressive *Spare Time* assumes natural time to be relative, coincidental and simultaneous. To achieve this in cinematic terms Jennings applies a form of tableaux and collage.

Loosely bound by a temporal time sequence of morning and evening Jennings constructs a series of collages representing associated regional leisure activities. The visual and aural components of each sequence take on a discrete existence drained of the formal momentum of the 'informing logic' demanded by Grierson. Each sequence stands in its own right creating a multifaceted, overlapping representation of human creativity during the hours of spare time. Sequences are divided from each other by editing and commentary. The Lancashire and Welsh sequences are introduced by fade-outs from the previous sequence followed by the appropriate regional industrial landscape and brief explanation. What we are offered in the film

is a technique of juxtaposition that mimics the style and contextual development associated with Eliot's modernist poem *The Wasteland* (278) by accentuating the intimate relationship between tradition and contemporary activity in time and space. Something which is understood by Kenneth J. Robson:

The cornerstone of Jennings's aesthetic is his belief in a "legacy of feeling" that can be detected in the subliminal stirrings of the collective unconscious of a people. The artist, acting as a careful observer . . . records these stirrings, not only as they are transmitted through literature, art, music and architecture, but also through the more mundane means of advertisements, news broadcasts, and everyday social customs. Two important assumptions underlie Jennings's belief. The first is that these subliminal stirrings are manifest in a principle of recurrence or multiplicity, and even, in a sense, simultaneity . . . The second assumption for Jennings is that the legacy is expressed in the unity of apparent oppositions.(279)

In *Spare Time*, visual references at both the individual and communal level intimate at the 'legacy of feeling' within each regional context. Another critical element is the use of sound. Jennings regards sound as important as the visual image. As an aesthetic experience *Spare Time* is a film of sights and sounds. It is possible to listen to the soundtrack and watch the images separately as both provide through their distinct qualities, visual and aural landscapes. After recording the visual and aural evidence comes the editing. Here through a process of using technique as technique he constructs and combines the collages of sound and image to intimate a 'multiplicity . . . simultaneity

(and) unity of apparent oppositions'. Vaughan assumes that the music of the brass band, kazoo band and choir form points of reference around which the visual representations of leisure for each region are co-ordinated. What he regards as editorial failure, when visual elements in each sequence seemed to be 'tacked on' after the music has finished, is in fact a failure to recognise, particularly in terms of the soundscape, a deeper poetic unity which Jennings expresses through analogy, parallel and comparison. For Jennings all aspects of life have a musical quality. Music, as a form of expression in sound, is not confined to the conventional ideas of music-making by traditional instruments or the human voice. Music is another form of poetry, a form of human emotion and expression which can put us in contact with the spiritual side of our nature. At the same time the rhythms of modern life have their own music which is expressed through everyday sounds. The final notes of the brass band overlap with the images of the football crowd. The emotional expression of the brass instruments is immediately taken up by another form of popular music and emotional expression signified by the whistles and turbulent chorus of the spectators. The musicality of the massed human voice remains on the soundtrack as individuals of that mass buy their postal orders for the football pools. We return to the spectators for one last roar of excitement before the screen darkens to end the sequence. Similarly after the Kazoo band Jennings cuts to a rehearsal of amateur dramatics which focusses on the musicality of the human voice. Here the art of proclaiming is explored through vocal expression, pitch and timing, immediately followed

by a ballroom dance band playing an updated version of the traditional tune 'The Bells of St Mary's' as once again the screen darkens. The final sequence in Pontypridd begins with another type of music, the 'would be' musical instrument like the kazoo, the work siren and clank of the shunting of rail trucks. This is the 'music' of work and industrialisation which is immediately followed by the raucous, mechanised music of the fair ground. As the choir practice fades on the soundtrack we return to the siren and clank of industrial machinery as miners prepare to descend into the pit. The sounds of industry and work replace the creativity and expression of spare time.

Spare Time does not attempt the orthodox representation demanded by Grierson with its attendant notions of authenticity, the real and their associated ideological and political message. Jennings counters this 'totalising' vision by drawing upon a more radical form of modernism and tradition of political dissent. Jennings offers, through an alternative discourse and code of aesthetics, an alternative interpretation of working class life and reality. Where Grierson tells us, the people, what we should be Jennings offers a more pragmatic and uncertain future, asking the audience to reflect upon what they are and what they might become. Unfortunately, given the moment of production, with Grierson and his followers still influential in the movement, combined with a comparative lack of documentary film technique, it was probably relatively easy to make charges of snobbery and amateurism seem applicable. If the film 'fails' it is perhaps because *Spare Time* was Jennings' first attempt to offer such an alternative representation of working people through an

alternative approach to documentary. It is in this sense that when Dai Vaughan states that the film indicates Jennings' 'inability to make shots do quite what he wanted [and] a similar suspicion may be voiced about the editing'(280) he is partly correct but perhaps for the wrong reasons. The following description by Nowell-Smith helps explain why Grierson and Wright were drawn to the conclusion that Jennings' attitude towards the working class was at times verging on 'cold disgust':(281)

Clumsily, and perhaps not always with full consciousness, *Spare Time* violates the codes [of orthodox documentary narrative construction]. The commentary is laconic - six sentences, totalling one hundred words in all. A brass band, a kazoo band and a Welsh choir, introduce on screen but continuing as sound-over, provide almost the entire soundtrack, offering a perfunctory association with the images. The *mise en scene* is rudimentary, almost minimalist, with lighting limited to the basic necessity of enabling shooting to take place in the conditions which a still photographer could cope with but not (at the time) the cinema. In fact, all the shots have the look of still photography about them. More than anything else it is the uncinematic snapshot quality of the images that marks *Spare Time* as a different sort of document from the documentary model. Neither the picture, nor (until the very end) the commentary, offers any guidance. Then, at the close of the film, as a miners' cage descends into the pit, the commentary voice (Laurie Lee) says, 'As things are, spare time is a time when we have a chance to do what we like, a chance to be most ourselves.' As things are. Jennings never made another film like *Spare Time*. All his subsequent films are more cinematic.(282)

Nowell-Smith correctly asserts that 'What separates [his other] films from *Spare Time* is the coming of the war on one hand, and Jennings' partnership with Stewart McAllister on the other.'⁽²⁸³⁾ The historic moment of total war had a fundamental impact upon Jennings' consciousness and circumstances. However the aesthetic sensibility and technique of *Spare Time* did not, as Nowell-Smith implies and Dai Vaughan asserts, disappear but found complex technical elaboration in the later *Listen to Britain* (1942).⁽²⁸⁴⁾ Although produced just under two and half years apart in different circumstances and conditions *Spare Time* and *Listen to Britain* have much in common. In addition, when *Spare Time* is located within the context of the other five films he directed during this period, it is possible to trace how a particular modernist style of documentary representation emerged, developed and matured which directly contests the Griersonian agenda.

Falling between *Spare Time* and the outbreak of war *S.S.Ionian* has received little detailed attention, and then both the subject matter and its interpretation have been regarded as disappointing. Eric Rhode feels that it is 'liable to arouse despair rather than hope' while Hillier regards the film as 'very ordinary'. Hodgkinson and Sheratsky describe it as 'jingoistic' concluding 'One might indeed suspect that Jennings, although credited with the direction, was not present during the voyage and merely edited material shot and delivered by an anonymous cameraman . . . Jennings abroad did not have the poetic power of Jennings at home.'(285)

Compared to *Spare Time*, *S.S.Ionian* may at first glance seem uninspiring. But to condemn it as a failure of Jennings' poetic style is short-sighted. Like *Spare Time* the film was commissioned in early 1939 by the British Council and the Travel and Industrial Development Association probably to fulfil a similar propaganda remit. To appreciate its value it is necessary to recognise both the broad and specific context of production and the audience for whom it was intended. The film focuses on the role of one merchant ship which symbolises the British merchant navy. Around its voyage Jennings considers amongst other things the benefits drawn from free trade and the protective role of the Royal Navy in maintaining the integrity of the shipping lanes. Simultaneously the narrative promotes a positive image of the relationship between Britain and her colonies in the Near East during a period of growing international tension.

In the same month as the opening of the World's Fair, Britain experienced the unprecedented introduction of peacetime military conscription. After the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Germany on March 15th the British Government abandoned the policy of appeasement and pledged military support for Poland. The first screening of *Spare Time* on May 19th coincided with the victory parade of Franco's forces through Madrid and by the time of the official premiere in June, Hitler had signed the 'Pact of Steel' with Fascist Italy.⁽²⁸⁶⁾ By the 30th June Jennings was aboard the merchant ship 'S.S. Ionian' heading towards the Mediterranean. He spent the first half of July filming aboard ship as it carried supplies and raw materials from London to Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria (Egypt), Haifa (Palestine) and Cyprus before returning to Alexandria and then London. Returning in late July and editing through August Jennings would have found a suppressed but nervous fatalism underlying preparations for war. Events had rapidly overtaken the initial conditions under which the film had been commissioned.⁽²⁸⁷⁾

On the 1st of September Germany invaded Poland and by the 3rd Britain was formally at war with Germany. It was during this developing crisis that Jennings was probably writing the commentary for the film. Events meant that he must now address two different audiences with the same message: provide reassurance to the British civilian population, when one in three people felt that Britain should take any option rather than go to war, and encourage support from the United States.⁽²⁸⁸⁾ Jennings needed to strike a careful balance between a reassuring image of British fortitude and military strength while avoiding a

belligerent or strident nationalist tone which might inflame anti-colonial sentiment in the United States and contribute to alienating our potential ally.

The British at War

The general style of Jennings' early cycle of propaganda films tend to be contemplative in nature and laconic in style. Apart from *Spare Time* and *S.S. Ionian* the films draw their power not from self-conscious and strident exhortation but from the creative use of striking imagery and soundscapes combined with the rhythmic energy generated during the editing process. The films between 1939-1942 rarely focus upon the enemy but consider the impact of war upon the character of the British people. War is recognised as a physical and external threat to existence but crucially this is extended from the physical into an internal struggle of the human spirit. The meaning of war becomes internalized within a process of affirming psychological, social and spiritual strength.

Apart from one direct reference in *Words for Battle* (1941), Jennings never visually depicts the enemy. The external threat and the consequence of German military force become abstracted into a conflict of manichean proportions expressed in sounds (the drone of bombers and explosions), visually in vapour trails or the absent-present, represented by physical destruction or the stoicism of refugees and heroic operations of defence units. The British people are depicted as the offended party, drawn into a military conflict not of their own making. But even though unwilling, when roused and with justice on their side, they will

draw upon deep resources to defend themselves and eventually defeat the enemy. Like all good propaganda, therefore, his films tend to address the qualities of the human (British) character rather than the shortcomings of the enemy. What Hodgkinson and Sheratsky identify as a 'jingoistic tone' to the film with its 'frequent reference to the Royal Navy ("the greatest navy in the world"), its armaments and fighting strength and its protective role' is to misread his patriotism as aggressive nationalist sentiment.(289) Rather he regarded himself as a patriot, a man who loved his country, the people who populated it and the institutions which expressed its history, democratic heritage and principles. He expressed pride in the achievements of the British nation and when Jennings stated that the Royal Navy was 'the greatest navy in the world' he was stating it as a fact as much as proud boast. Like George Orwell, Jennings had great affection for British society and its people, but that affection was tempered by what he saw as faults, such as self-importance and a crippling pettiness associated with the anachronistic class system.(290) He did not wish to romanticise the British people but as the war progressed, tempered by the experiences of battle his admiration grew. He was able to confirm to himself through the visceral experience of war those supposed quintessential and contradictory traits of British character.(291)

The Peaceful Nation Prepared

It is elements of his partisan and imaginative interpretation of the British nation which inform the subtext of *S.S.Ionian*. Jennings begins by presenting the British people as the peaceful

party in the coming international conflict. The supposed jingoism is undercut by the emphasis upon the protective role of the Royal Navy in overseeing the international sea lanes for the peaceful activity of promoting (free) trade. A dominant theme, reinforced by the shots and descriptions of Navy battleships and destroyers at the ports visited, is that of an ever watchful guardian. This reassurance of naval might at the ready is integral to a discourse concerned with contemporary military and merchant sea-faring history, cultural heritage and trade. In the following interpretation Hodgkinson and Sheratsky misread the film, failing to identify the propaganda messages and the poetic subtext informing the narrative:

the film is a rather dull account of a British merchant ship's routine round-trip voyage to the Near East. The film was quickly renamed *Her Last Trip* when the *Ionian* sank soon after the film was made. Despite a somewhat convoluted attempt at the start to link the *Ionian*'s dull run with the epic odyssey of Ulysses, there is a distressing lack of incident and very little beauty in her slow and plodding journey. Occasional images, such as a misty shot of Gibraltar or of the ensign being lowered against the ship's sunny wake . . . indicate [Jennings'] potential. One or two casual references to crew members . . . slightly humanize an otherwise detached commentary. But even the repetition of the *Ionian*'s cargo list ("steel, explosives, cement") does nothing to suggest the romance of the merchantman . . . If there are occasional Jennings touches, they lie mostly in the use of music: an Eastern-style tune which "mickey-mouses" the gestures of the stevedores in Alexandria, and Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" for the return home. In an occasional trope ("Imperial Airways planes . . . like enormous flying fish,"

destroyers "fast as whippets") and in the absolutely typical closing shots of moonlight over the Thames, chimneys and cranes, sailing-barges and gasholders.(292)

Logically the story would begin with the loading of cargo and departure from the Port of London. Instead Jennings chose to begin with a brief sequence of visual images depicting Greek antiquity that signify the relationship between past and present. Olive trees sway in the wind, the remains of pillars, perhaps the site of a temple, a print of a Greek galley (possibly to signify the voyage of Ulysses), a shot of a coastal plain and sea from the land followed by a reverse shot to the coast and mountains, taken from the *Ionian*, are concluded with porpoises leaping at the bow of the ship. As the images unfold the commentary informs us:

Once upon a time in the Eastern Mediterranean a Greek sailor got lost on his way home and sailed out of the Aegean Sea westward, past Malta and Gibraltar. The Greek was Ulysses, and his voyage the Odyssey. Then he sailed north until he came to the land where it is day and night at one and the same time. Today we've turned the tables on mythology, now it's the Northerners who are running their vessels South by East.(293)

The reference to the Odyssey is not as tortuous as Hodgkinson and Sheratsky think. From his school days Jennings had studied the myths, odes and epic poetry of the classics and their influence upon English poetry, drama and music. As he makes clear the existence of past and present are close, in fact simultaneous. In the geographical and cultural heartland of

western civilisation a modern English ship ploughs the Mediterranean carrying a Greek name. Fitting well with his preoccupation with the historical and cultural it is in the Bay of Gibraltar that we pick up the voyage, with the voyage itself becoming a form of contemporary odyssey as the ship plies its trade around the region before heading back to London with new cargo.

In visual and aural terms the narrative consists of a series of overlapping themes and subjects that muse upon the relationship between work and leisure, the character of the merchant seamen, tradition and the modern but set within a more uncertain and tense world. Hodgkinson and Sheratsky complain of 'a distressing lack of incident . . . in her slow and plodding journey', but in itself this is reassuring to the ship's crew and the audience. Observing daily maritime life provides Jennings with an opportunity to contemplate the nature of Englishness. Here he provides a glimpse of those strengths he regards as constituting that character which in later films become assumed as elements of British character.

teamwork . . . the love of pattern, of order . . . is responsible for their delight in ships, the supreme example of a patterned life. This absorption in pattern is one aspect of the general power of absorption, of concentration, which the Englishman enjoys. It is possible that this enabled him to pass into a civilization of the streets without becoming part of it. So the English travel in trains; not as a company, but a collection of individuals . . . They are urbane without being urban; creating their own environment within their own being, they can dwell in the midst of twenty miles of paving stones and pretend, with the aid of a back green or even a

flower-pot, that they are in a hamlet on the Downs.
Or so it seems to the outsider. Perhaps the English
have something completely different in their
heads.(294)

And so it is, interspersed within the narrative of the journey, that we see the men working together, carrying out routine ship maintenance and designated tasks. The crew must bear the extreme heat inside the ship bunkers and engine room and adapt to the rising temperature and harsh sun of the Mediterranean. They rig an improvised awning to give shade as the ship sails eastwards into the sun. These men create 'their own environment within their own being' as the ship traverses a calm sea under clear skies. They consume meals, wash clothes and enjoy moments of solitary leisure, reading, whistling to a pet canary, playing a record of an operatic aria or listening and noting gardening tips from the B.B.C. World Service. We can identify from the humanity of the representation that pattern of teamwork and individualism which Jennings celebrated in *Spare Time* and which found expression in the gentle humour of Cavalcanti's depiction of train commuters in *Pett and Pott* (1934).

Aboard ship, social time dissolves into the rhythm of everyday routine, days rather than hours pass in an unhurried fashion as they sail between ports. But the embarking and disembarking of cargo provides the opportunity to contextualise this modern seafaring trade within ancient seafaring traditions, past British naval exploits and the contemporary international situation. In the harbour at Gibraltar, with military dockyard and warships evident, stores are unloaded for the British naval base.

The cargo is recounted 'steel, explosives, cement, beer, telegraph poles, corrugated iron, and airplane spares'. The soundtrack carries subdued Spanish music to signify the region, a stevedore peers intently over the side of the ship making odd gesticulations with his hand. It is not clear what is happening and what this odd behaviour means until Jennings reveals that the delicate and animated hand signals are the common language of the stevedore used to direct the unloading of cargo. The unloading techniques may be traditional but the *Ionian* is described as modern 'new, clean, fast' her captain, appositely named William Smith, weighs anchor. Jennings takes us into the engine room where the stoking of the coal-fired boilers animates the pistons of the engine and smoke billows from the ship's funnel. The juxtaposition of how tradition and the modern co-exist is caught by the British military presence which surrounds the *Ionian*'s passage. The sequence at the British naval base at Valetta (Malta) highlights the symbiotic relationship between the Royal Navy and the Merchant Fleet. What could be a sensitive issue of imperial military power becomes both domesticated and pacified through the commentary of the soundtrack. Although we are shown a British battleship in the floating dock the rationale for the navy presence is given as watchful protection. The protection of 'merchantships, cargoes, passengers and men' is primarily 'to keep our larders full, increase foreign trade, take out stores to our naval bases and navy ships and furnish men for the navy reserves.' As the *Ionian* leaves the harbour, Jennings continues the theme:

All over the world there are big and little ships,

some luxurious some dirty but tramp and liner belong to the same family of merchant ships. When a British merchant steamer passes one of His Majesty's vessels, they dip their ensigns to recognise the relationship between the two services.(295)

These weapons of military and political power become vessels related to the merchant navy through a very long shot of a naval ship engaged with the *Ionian* in the symbolic ritual of the dipping ensigns. The immediate following shot, a crew member whistling to his canary in a cage, could be read as a visual metaphor for that relationship; a protective framework of military power surrounding and protecting the peaceful activity of the vulnerable merchant ship(s). Throughout the film Jennings contextualises the contemporary role and relationship between the Royal and Merchant Navy within the historic development of Mediterranean trade and trade protection. The histories of the geographically strategic ports of Gibraltar, Valetta and Alexandria are well known and Jennings does not miss the chance to reinforce how a modern, fast and heavily armed British navy continues to guard this vital trade route to the Near East and then through the Suez Canal, to India and Asia.

As the *Ionian* slips her moorings at Valetta to head towards Alexandria, Jennings gives us a brief visual history of shipping technology as the boat leaves port. Under the ramparts traditional Maltese rowing boats are moored there follows a quick cut to the rigging and sails of top-sail schooners, the craft which plied these waters during the nineteenth century onwards. These images are superseded in the next shot by the funnels of coal fired steamers and oil fired battleships. As the *Ionian*

wends its way between destinations each port is connected through radio messages and morse code. The linear dimension of time is implied by the notion of a journey but the time of passage allows Jennings to illustrate the voyage as a series of distinct but themed tableaux.

Like *Spare Time*, the narrative is punctuated by imagery and statements introduce each section. The sequence in Alexandria is introduced by a shot of the telegram which estimates time of arrival, dissolving to reveal a close up of an ancient but defaced Egyptian mask. The British military presence in the region is fully acknowledged. Against a background of Egyptian music with British cruisers and destroyers passing in and out of the harbour, the boat is unloaded with the aid of local stevedores. First explosives are 'mickey-moused' to the music followed by other materials. Jennings' commentary deftly interrelates the military success of past British sea power against a Continental dictator with present benefits of trade for Egypt:

Carefully stowed inside these crates are airplane parts for the RAF depot at Aboukir Bay, where Nelson smashed Napoleon's navy over a hundred years ago. Now comes material for Egypt itself, unloading heavy chains and a monstrous anchor for a floating dock, cement for Egypt's new motor roads.(296)

Like the Malta sequence, the disembarkation of cargo at Haifa allows Jennings to emphasise the simultaneous nature of past and present. The strategic importance of Palestine for Britain is reinforced at the arrival in the port of Haifa. In this brief sequence there is no emphasis on the cargo but on the modern

dock installation and the power of the Naval presence in 'four 'G' class destroyers', there one supposes, to protect 'the oil dumps of the famous pipelines from Iran'. The explicit reference to military and strategic importance is juxtaposed with the humanity of the soundtrack as the crew listen to the radio or opera.. At first we hear the delightful and tender 'Bacarole' from the *Tales of Hoffman*. The scene is shot through the porthole of the cabin where 'Jim, the other apprentice' puts on the record and the musical duet floats across the water to the men maintaining the warships. The poetic beauty of the music overlays the imagery of latent military power. The implication of the warrior poet is not far away and Jennings quickly follows this association with the image and sound of the radio operator listening to a gardening programme on the World Service.

It is from this point in the film, as the *Ionian* departs for Cyprus, that Jennings evokes the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the journey. Sensitive to the aesthetic and spiritual heritage associated with the Mediterranean landscape, as the coast of Palestine drifts by pointed reference is made to Mount Carmel, the spiritual home of a twelfth century Christian order of the Carmelites. The reference could be regarded as superficial geographical information and probably taken as such by many in the audience. But this would be to forget that Jennings literally lived his poetic sensibility. The sensate experience was not some form of artistic abstraction that could be indulged in when one 'became' an 'artist'. Rather it was a permanent mode of existence: a world of multiple meanings where public features and artifacts embody within them

timeless and latent multiple signifiers. This brief image of the mountain, like all the images in his films, can be read at differing levels of knowingness; for example as a geographical feature, a signifier of national history, as a cultural or religious monument or a spiritual statement of christian belief. As the ship approaches Larissa harbour in Cyprus another pointed visual and aural reference is made: 'Behind the harbour lies a sort of English Gothic Cathedral'. The continuity with Christianity is reiterated in a cultural artifact which, like the mountain, Jennings sees as expressing the beliefs and ideals of European cultural heritage.

As the imagery cannot be taken at face value neither should the disparate activities contained within the narrative. The ship unloads the last vestiges of its cargo of manufactured goods to begin to refill its empty holds with the produce of the region. The *Ionian* continues her voyage between the Cyrene ports with the basic principles and mechanism of free trade exemplified in the exchange of manufactured goods for raw materials. With native music on the soundtrack, locust beans, oil and wine are stowed in the ship's hold and Jennings fleetingly considers the posterity of that civilisation which has indirectly become part of our heritage through the classics. 'The last port is Stavros, where once upon a time stood the groves and temple of Venus.' Heralded by the Egyptian flag the return to Alexandria is accompanied by a list of the raw produce which is loaded into the night: 'Oilcake, cotton and onions' which will fill British larders, eventually clothe British backs and provide feed for animals.

Within each sequence, from the historic introduction of the

film until the departure from Alexandria on the home run, Jennings imaginatively and skilfully edits the material to integrate aspects of English character, of antiquity and the contemporary international situation. *S.S. Ionian* is not a jingoistic account of Imperial power but a meditation upon the interaction between the differing dimensions of historic British Imperial adventure, cultural and economic exchange and contemporary military and trade security. The return home is treated with similar patriotic and defensive caution. As Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance' swells on the soundtrack, complemented by a shot of the red ensign, the naming of the ships of the Mediterranean Fleet and sea lanes of merchant traffic, Jennings imports a feeling of security and certainty in a time of critical anxiety. Intercut with archive material of the Navy speeding through Atlantic Seas he assures his audience with the assertion:

Westward ! . . . throughout this voyage, the *Ionian* has met with ships of the Mediterranean fleet. Past Gibraltar she heads north where the Home Fleet are on watch guarding the way' (shots of destroyers, the cliffs of Dover and Butlers Wharf at the Port of London) 'By the Tower of London she unloads her cargo brought safely from Cyprus and Alexandria under the protection of the British Navy, the greatest Navy in the world'.

The soundtrack concludes by maintaining this notion of stability, order and unchanging routine as the commentary intones that the *Ionian* will soon repeat its round trip. The words are complemented by Turneresque imagery intercut with archive shots of the Royal Navy. Hodgkinson and Sheratsky quite rightly

describe it as an example of his poetic expression: 'absolutely typical closing shots of moonlight over the Thames, chimneys and cranes, sailing-barges and gasholders'. A setting sun silhouettes the skyline of the docks over a darkened Thames and sailing barge.

As in *Spare Time*, Jennings fulfils the cultural propaganda remit of the British Council and reassures the domestic audience of a peaceful nation prepared, while expressing and interweaving his own concerns within the ideological and formal properties of the text. The film would have been ready for distribution by 1940 fitting well into that season of British films at the World's Fair which, according to Cull, was 'to carry a "more definite war flavour". . . The British cinema showed a solid diet of war documentaries and reportedly became "easily the most popular feature" at the Fair. When the British pavilion closed for good at the end of the 1940 season, it did so on a note of unprecedented triumph.'⁽²⁹⁷⁾

Both *Spare Time* and *S.S. Ionian* (whose subsequent sinking led the film to be subtitled *Her Last Trip*) can be regarded as products of both the broad and immediate politics of the time. They embody not only propaganda messages but, filtered through the imagination of Jennings, his poetic response to the prevailing conditions around him. They are tentative accounts or records of 'the moment', a time of growing anxiety and impending conflict. It was a condition which would eventually undergo radical transformation once the air raids began.

Once war had been officially declared, light air attacks on mainland Britain did not begin until early May 1940, that is for another eight months. Regardless the blackout and mass evacuations of mothers, children and the infirm began. Jennings and his associates experienced a virtual close-down in mainstream cultural activities.⁽²⁹⁸⁾ This period of uneasy domestic quiet was variously known as the 'Sitzkrieg', 'the "Bore War"', the "funny war" or in Chamberlain's phrase, "this strange war . . . this strangest of wars" and later 'the Phoney war'. Between April and May 1940, allied resistance in Western Europe was defeated.⁽²⁹⁹⁾ From the beginning of June 1940 after the British withdrawal of troops from Dunkirk it was clear Britain would face the German tactic of Blitzkrieg alone. 'The only prospect for the survival of Britain and its way of life [lay] in the tenacity of the British people and the hope of American support.'⁽³⁰⁰⁾ On the 4th June Churchill addressed the nation, delivering his famous "fight them on the beaches" speech. Four days later, Greater London heard its first air raid alert of the year as bombs fell in the London region. By the 11th, Paris had fallen and just over a week later the French signed an armistice with Germany. Like a portent of things to come, the number of light air raids intensified across the Midlands and East Anglia. From July until October, prior to the concentrated bombing of the cities, battle commenced between the Royal Air Force and the Luftwaffe to decide air supremacy.⁽³⁰¹⁾

It is in this military context and the lack of propaganda film organisation that we must consider the production and

distribution of *Spring Offensive* (1940) and *Welfare of the Workers* (1940). Both films are symptomatic of the wartime situation under which the Unit and Jennings were forced to operate. It was a period of frustration, uncertainty and often adhoc responses to the immediate demands of official propaganda policy.⁽³⁰²⁾ Jennings was, apart from producing *Spring Offensive* and *Welfare of the Workers*, also involved in a variety of collaborative but often aborted film projects. What the two films represent are tentative examples of the film style he would later refine with his editor Stewart McAllister. *Spring Offensive* contains elements of the documentary neo-realism he would subsequently develop with *Fires Were Started* (1943) while *Welfare of the Workers*, similar to *Words For Battle* (1941) is constructed primarily out of archive material which provides visual support for a commentary.

With the declaration of war, existing production was cancelled and according to Harry Watt, requests to the Ministry of Information for guidance were met with silence. It was Cavalcanti who galvanised the unit and Watt's account neatly encapsulates the mood and attitude of the time:

Cavalcanti . . . sent us all into the streets to film anything we saw that was new and different. Cav realised that history was being made all around us, and a tremendous opportunity to record it for posterity was being lost, so six small units went out with all our film stock and filmed the extraordinary scenes of a nation amateurishly preparing its capital for a new kind of war . . . By the end of ten days, we had an enormous amount of material and still no word from the Ministry, so, absolutely off our own bat, we decided to make a

film of it . . . we bashed out a script, and with the help of an excellent commentary by Robert Sinclair, produced a half-hour picture we called *The First Days* . . . a rather disjointed record of the obvious.(303)

The First Days reflects Cavalcanti's and Jennings' desire to capture the spontaneous and voluntary response of the people within the contingency of the moment:(304)

The First Days is an impressionistic little film which is important in that it was the first wartime documentary to use the idea of the 'people's war' which was to become the main theme of British propaganda. It captures the mood of the people of London in the late summer of 1939 through a combination of memorable images, evocative use of popular songs and a refined eloquent commentary. Opening on 3 September ('London was at peace on this Sunday morning') it shows people going to church, setting out on bicycle rides and walking in Hyde Park. The outbreak of war comes in almost a dream-like manner: the streets are empty and quiet, while people gather to listen to Chamberlain's announcement on the wireless. The peace is broken by the first wail of air raid sirens, though in the event it is a false alarm. The film then shows how London prepared for war: the filling of sandbags, the construction of earthworks and defences, the tethering of barrage balloons, the evacuation of children by train, and the removal of art treasures from the National Gallery and the British Museum. The film suggests that a process of social levelling is under way. The filling of sandbags becomes a metaphor for solidarity and teamwork . . . people from different class backgrounds are shown working together for the common good. In hindsight, of course, the degree of social cohesion depicted in the film is exaggerated, but at the time it was regarded as a sincere and honest little film.(305)

Released in November 1939 the film pre-empted the official Ministry of Information agenda for propaganda issued at the end of January 1940.⁽³⁰⁶⁾ Interwoven within the sober but reassuring commentary the film contains those familiar touches of imagery and snatches of dialogue that create the sensation of a disturbed super reality. Empty streets, military and blackout preparations, evacuation and the dialogue between mothers: 'It gets that quiet, doesn't it? Funny, it takes a war to give us a bit of peace and quiet.'⁽³⁰⁷⁾ The surreal touches caught a mood of a breakdown in normality and existing conceptions of reality creating new psychological and social perceptions, personal and social relations. 'During the first weeks of the war', Calder states, 'observers were impressed with a bizarre phenomenon. In buses, the trains and the pubs of Britain, strangers were speaking to one another.'⁽³⁰⁸⁾ Irene Byers felt that 'Everybody and all familiar things and jobs seemed so unreal; we even spoke differently to each other as if we should soon be parted, perhaps for ever - uncanny but understandable . . . Had that strange but familiar feeling which always comes with any crisis that we are all *one* just belonging to one another.'⁽³⁰⁹⁾ Jennings too was caught with such feelings of solidarity, uncertainty, excitement and concern; people were living for the moment.

December 1939 - June 1940: *Spring Offensive*

I think that things Jennings did with me, like *Spring Offensive*, like *Spare Time*, are perhaps the best jobs that were done at the G.P.O.(310)

Alberto Cavalcanti.

The production of *Spring Offensive* began in December. But due to the nature of the subject matter (land reclamation) and wartime events it was not completed until June 1940. Once Jennings had completed location filming in March and editing over April and June the Phoney War had been brought to an abrupt end. Even then it did not receive a general release for another six months (January 1941) coming after the release of *Welfare of the Workers* in November 1940. By this time the heavy bombing of towns and cities had begun.(311) It is likely that the final narrative, the inflection of the commentary and the change from the original title *Unrecorded Victory* to *Spring Offensive*, was a direct response both to the times and the policy outlined for propaganda by Kenneth Clark at the Ministry of Information. With the military situation escalating into high drama the film quite clearly intends to cover the objectives of the policy. This had three intentions: first to explain what Britain was fighting for; second how Britain should go about the fight, and third the sacrifice required if the fight was to be won. Integral to answering these questions was the need to ensure that people understood this military conflict as 'a people's war'.(312)

The aim of *Spring Offensive* was to explain a vital but rather dry and tedious subject; how new Agricultural Executive Committees (C.W.A.E.C.s) or 'War Ags' were to implement and

administer the task of bringing an extra one and a half million acres of land into agricultural production over the winter and early spring months of 1940. At one level *Spring Offensive* can be regarded as justification for the state under extreme conditions of war to intervene at the expense of individual rights for the national good:

The War Ags had power . . . to send their own labour to work on any land, to take possession of any land, or any idle machinery, and to give directions as to the cultivation, management or use of agricultural land, which the tenant could disobey only at the risk of dispossession. They allocated the more important farm requisites, including machinery, fertilizers, feeding stuffs, and of course labour.(313)

However the change in title from the more ruminative *An Unrecorded Victory* may not be what Jennings intended. If the propaganda messages are considered under the original title, a more subtle and ambiguous complexion to the film emerges.

Jennings probably realised that the nature of the C.W.A.E.C. system was in political and practical terms tantamount to a revolution in the configuration of the relationship between the state, the individual and agriculture in modern society. In ideological and practical terms, what the system offered was a form of popular democratic control in which the role of the state was reduced to that of facilitator. Each C.W.A.E.C consisted of eight to ten Government appointees, including one trade union representative. Responsibility for the implementation of policy at local level was devolved to individual district volunteer committees of between 'four to seven local residents' who

visited designated farms to evaluate potential productivity and disseminate instructions and advice. As Calder writes, 'execution was supervised, not by civil servants picking their way through the mud in their pinstripes, but by fellow farmers The progressive, intelligent and successful farmers now had their chance to restore the land, and they made their work a crusade. Thanks to the war, they could tell others to put the best methods into effect almost without counting the cost.'⁽³¹⁴⁾

Spring Offensive contains such a message with wary and recalcitrant farmers persuaded by their compatriots to commit their land to secure the national food supply while absent landlords were having their disused properties and land requisitioned. This concern with the popular was part of a developing ideological climate described by Andrew Higson as 'the articulation of the public sphere as the sphere of national interest immediately recognisable as transcending sectional interests'.⁽³¹⁵⁾ Higson regards the propaganda message as addressing the people in such a way 'that the individual citizen should be in no doubt as to the importance of the assigned role which he or she must play'⁽³¹⁶⁾ which, according to the official historian of the wartime agriculture, the farming community fulfilled in 'magnificent' fashion.⁽³¹⁷⁾ East Anglia was to become famous for the scale of the reclamation plan and the degree of mechanisation required in the project.⁽³¹⁸⁾

For Jennings the victory lay as much in the spirit of local voluntary commitment as the nationally co-ordinated system. As he knew in the recent past, industrialisation and the market economy had radically undermined and restructured rural life,

divorcing a majority of the people from the land. The destructive consequences of an unregulated market economy was now being subordinated through politics to the requirements of the people. The socialist principle of the need of people was usurping the capitalist demand for profit. Closely associated with this theme is Jennings' wish to raise with his audience the potential and imaginative implications of the new agricultural revolution for Britain. The mobilisation of urban labour to the land and the dispersal of evacuees to the relative safety of the countryside had brought an urbanised and industrialised people back in contact with the soil. This experience of the rural environment and the recognition of the vital relationship between rural and urban existence opened up the opportunity to transform social consciousness and the potential to reconsider existing urban-rural divisions.

Sons of the Soil

As in *Spare Time* and *S.S. Ionian*, Jennings contextualises the surface narrative of the film through a preamble and coda supported by archive material of the countryside. Each states and underlines the ideological pivot around which he constructs the narrative, namely the value of the land and its people to the war effort, while simultaneously asking the audience to reflect upon the meaning of what they see and how it relates to them directly. A dramatic chord and trumpet call coincide with the opening title, immediately followed by the visually symbolic gesture of cutting from the trees of winter to spring bloom. It is a gesture which succinctly expresses the whole tenor of the

film, the idea of reawakening, mobilisation and rebirth. The dramatic music maintains the underlying urgency as we are presented with a series of rural images and the implications of war. Workers relax, drink beer and converse, a poster exclaims the call up of army reserves, there is a close up of wheat stalks as the camera pans across a harvest field. The accompanying commentary spoken by Hugh Gray interprets and contextualises these images within an organic relationship between people and land. 'September 3rd 1939. The English countryside [and] its most important crop: the English countryman . . . in the midst of harvest comes news of war . . . what will war mean to the countryman? What will war mean to the land?'⁽³¹⁹⁾ Once the agricultural offensive is complete over the closing pastoral shots of the film Gray intones 'Remember in the last hundred years we've looked after the land properly only during periods of war . . . In September 1939 you asked the countryside to provide you with a safe refuge for your children and security against famine. Both these things it has given you. Now the countryside asks you to do something in return. When peace comes, don't forget the land and its people again.' The surface reality of the narrative depicts the processes by which the land and people are mobilised to provide both security and food but underpinned by what Jennings would regard as a deeper authenticity. An authenticity expressed in the subtextual themes of the nature of the countryside and its people, popular politics, a new form of economy and reintegration of the nation. It is these sub-textual themes which provide the terrain upon which he illustrates and weaves a story of rural regeneration galvanised by the need of

the nation. This agricultural revolution brought about by the labours of the farming community underpin that unrecorded victory Jennings wishes to celebrate.

Between the preamble and coda, the mode of address is primarily neo-realistic but supported by the commentary. This approach allows Jennings to fasten directly upon the human dimensions of the subject. Like his film *English Harvest* (1939) he chose to return to the countryside of his childhood focussing upon the workings of just one regional committee. Using the same technique as in *S.S. Ionian*, he locates the national within the particular. He is able to address the audience through the distinctive human qualities demanded at this time from people who, if not sharing the same lifestyle, are confronted with similar wartime demands. The propaganda message therefore becomes synthesized within the character and actions of the main protagonist rather than through an abstract appeal. Jennings' politics of trusting the people and allowing them to speak for themselves adroitly avoids the class bound and socially divisive mentality found in early official propaganda which attempted to promote national unity.⁽³²⁰⁾ In a limited sense there is evidence of a diegesis similar that to which would emerge more fully in later wartime documentary and fiction films:⁽³²¹⁾

there is a dispersal of narrative attention on to a multiplicity of narrative lines. The ideological effect of this is an articulation of nation as responsible community *and* individual desire, an articulation which finds a place for both the public and the private, by inserting the vulnerable individual within the protective communal

It is a narrative style in which the nation as community is addressed through the words, actions and deeds of seemingly ordinary members of that community. As Higson explains: 'To say that these films narrativise their action is to indicate that there is temporal development, and a structural movement from the definition of a goal to be achieved' [the requirement to put under the plough one and a half million new acres of land by early spring] 'through the various blockages to that goal' [overcoming the resistance of farmers, lack of technology, poor drainage of land and the dereliction of farms] 'to the successful fulfilment of the goal and textual closure.'(323) Also:

These films . . . try to hold together two different forms of characterisation: on the one hand, the stereotyping, or *typage* . . . that is, the casting of non-professional actors who bear a physical resemblance to the social type to be represented; and on the other hand, the psychological realism of the narrative . . . that is, the progressive inscription of character with the marks of a unique individuality.(324)

With *Spring Offensive* Jennings chose his 'actors' to represent specific social types with the heroic figure of Fred Martin at the centre of the narrative.(325) Filming began in December as the commentary tells us at 'Fred Martin's farm at Shottisham in East Anglia.' We watch and learn how 'Fred pulls his weight in all sorts of ways'. The Martin family and particularly Fred provide a symbolic and practical representation of the wartime spirit. He is a bluff, stocky, even tempered and intelligent man with a rich

evocative East Anglian accent. It is through his activities (volunteering for the 'War Ag' committee) and his family's (taking in a young evacuee) that to paraphrase Higson we see how 'the private and domestic and the emotional capacity of the individual must accommodate the national interest.'⁽³²⁶⁾ The representation takes on a number of forms, through the universal human qualities of co-operation, altruism, family life and the intimation of a love story. Such practical and romantic elements are interwoven into the central narrative of ploughing and land reclamation.

With his poetic, literary and theatrical sensibility it would have come naturally to Jennings to experience and conceive this war *as* drama. In literal and metaphorical terms his wartime films make use of small human details, imbuing the surface realism of his films with intimations of a deeper meaning and emotional authenticity. Simultaneously, these details of universal humanity slip easily into a representation of the everyday qualities of English rural life that must be defended. Fred Martin is extolled as a good farmer who 'knows his job'. He not only volunteers to sit on the new local executive, spending time travelling the area attempting to persuade local farmers to commit their land to the plough, but he also oversees his own farm and the revitalisation of the derelict Grove Farm. Higson points out that

In many of the story documentaries of the late 30s and early 40s, the power of the state is visible only as the power to set in motion a chain of communication which has a double function: it prepares for the successful completion of an act of

national interest . . . and, at the same time, it protects the private sectional interests of a relatively individuated but tight-knit community [it is] an image of the state as a benevolent entity, mapping and sustaining a set of relations between different sectors of society, and ensuring the smooth running of the public process.(327)

Hodgkinson and Sheratsky complain that the representation of the regional element in the chain of communication 'suffers from the self-conscious performances of the non-actors invited to play roles and the invented dialogues provided for them.'(328) Even when the stilted rendition of contrived dialogue is apparent, given the conditions and moment of production, and the film's later distribution during the Battle of the Atlantic, the delivery does add to the human dimension of the story. But as they concede, 'Scenes of committee deliberations . . .are . . .relieved by the portraiture of the splendid English faces.'(329) At times the black and white tone of the film and the pictorial beauty created through a careful use of natural light playing across the features of individuals, helps undercut the self-conscious delivery of lines. This meditative photographic style is evident in many of Jennings' films and points towards the work of Henry (Chick) Fowle.(330)

Rather than the depiction of some cold bureaucratic process, the local executive develops the appearance of a Parish Council meeting. Apart from the camera work the saving grace of these sequences comes from the performance of Fred Martin. Martin becomes the embodiment of government policy by his commitment to and literal articulation of the government scheme. Woven early into the main narrative a pointed reference

is made to the six o'clock radio news. Following the signifier of the pips and the call of his daughter 'Don't miss the news', we are given an outline of the new C.W.A.E.C scheme which emphasises that Executive Committees are encouraged to protect the sectional and individual interests of the farmer by having 'as free a hand as possible in their own areas'. This message is reiterated at a meeting of the committee by the chairman. When delivering the target of one and half million acres of land to be ploughed by April, he adds informally that 'believe it or not [it's] given to farmers to tackle.' Fred's participation includes disseminating this message to a wary community who regard past experience of government as intrusive and ineffective. Now the alien state bureaucrat has been transformed into the local enthusiast. The visual image and actions of Fred Martin become the embodiment of Higson's state, 'a benevolent entity, mapping and sustaining a set of relations between different sectors of society, and ensuring the smooth running of the public process.' Jennings provides us with a cameo of negotiations amongst a cross section of the local farming community. We see farmers who are immediately co-operative and those who may be suspicious or even hostile to the plan. 'You'll get the Government grant of £64. Response: I'll give you sixty-four quid to mind your own business and clear off!' Eventually even this elderly farmer is reconciled which creates an overall picture of participation.

At this point the narrative confronts the practical implications of implementing the momentous plan. This, as commentators have noted, allows Jennings to indulge his fascination with the historic interaction and consequences of

the relationship between the farmer and the land.⁽³³¹⁾ Kenneth Robson has perceptively identified that aspect of Jennings' modernist perspective, which is underpinned by two critical assumptions:

The first is that these subliminal stirrings are manifest in a principle of recurrence or multiplicity, and even, in a sense, simultaneity . . . The second assumption . . . is that the legacy [of feeling] is expressed in terms of the unity of apparent oppositions. Some of the more frequent are oppositions between city and country, mechanical and natural forces, creation and destruction.'⁽³³²⁾

As Robson comments, once Jennings addresses visually the ploughing and reclamation the film becomes 'a visual poem that rejoices in nature's renewal and abundance.'⁽³³³⁾ The historic struggle between the people and environment is, through the commentary and visual imagery, made synonymous with the organisation and conflict of a military operation.⁽³³⁴⁾ It is ironic that war has once again brought vitality and the communal spirit back to the land. The first part of the sequence considers the ploughing of existing grasslands between September and November of 1939. As fields are drained and ploughed the struggle is underlined by the tempo of the music. Jennings provides evidence of old and new technology simultaneously brought into service; horses, traction engines and tractors. Robson provides an apposite evaluation of this imagery:

In celebrating the farmers' victory over the land, Jennings also celebrates the continuation of tradition which, however altered by contemporary

events, remains the solid foundation of the nation. The pre-industrial horse and plough are no less in the service of this agrarian war than the motorized tractor. Man [sic] has always triumphed over adversity by using his ingenuity, and he is most effective when he combines the traditions of the past with the innovations of the present.(335)

Jennings gives, as in selected accounts for *Pandaemonium*, an image of industrialisation that, even as it tears into the natural resource of the countryside to provide sustenance, opens up new opportunities and meanings for the present and future. Yet he is fully aware that this technology has in part been responsible for the destruction of tradition and rural life. A particularly striking image of a traction engine in longshot smoking in the tranquil landscape provides the terrifying and ambiguous beauty of the inheritance from the industrial revolution. One can see it as human triumph or pride yet have a simultaneous emotional response of horror, similar to that expressed in the novels of Thomas Hardy at the consequences of mechanisation upon country life. The sequence concludes with shots of tractors ploughing, climactic music and Gray announcing 'How they barked and stuttered through September and November!'

The film now cuts to Fred Martin giving a relatively informal progress report of the ploughing 'offensive' to the executive committee chairman. In front of a map plotted with military precision the conversation shifts to the next phase of the operation; the identification and reclamation of abandoned land at Grove Farm. This sequence provides an opportunity to meditate upon the processes of natural time, the struggle between the farmer and the elements and the metaphorical significance that

neglect and ruin may symbolise. A dissolve from Martin's thumb on the map takes us to a farm building reflected in a choked stagnant pond. Emphasised by the tonal darkness of music we see through a series of slow reverse tracking and panning shots the evidence of neglect and decline. The farm has literally been captured by nature; the farm building and surrounding area are derelict and in decay, weeds, brambles and bushes smother an abandoned cart and harrow. The image of a cartwheel, with its spokes entwined with grasses and weeds, is a pungent visual metaphor of rural decline and decay (this image probably formed the basis for Jennings short poem 'Autumn 1939').⁽³³⁶⁾ The commentary states: 'This is what happened after the last war' and we hear the voice of an elderly farm-worker reminiscing about the loss of rural labour to war service and subsequent post-war decline.

These images of neglect and decay, the consequence of an earlier politics and economy, underscored by the soundtrack add a critical edge to the film. The health and productivity of the land is a manifestation of the health of the political, economic and social system. There is an equation to be drawn between the corruption of the land and the nature of the system which allowed it to happen. As Robson infers Jennings is saying that 'we care most for the land when it is threatened; in peacetime we ignore it and allow it to decay. The creative act is born of struggle'⁽³³⁷⁾ but the startling regeneration underway is the product of a new radical politics and spirit, something which Jennings does not want forgotten. The emphatic closing statement by Gray, already looking forward to post-war

conditions, demands that the experience of the new politics and communal spirit must be absorbed and acted upon: 'When peace comes, don't forget the land and its people again.' The narrative takes us back to a discussion at the 'War Ag' concluding that Grove Farm can only be brought into immediate production through direct possession and the application of specialised heavy machinery in the form of a ground tiller to root out the trees and brambles. The question then arises of who will oversee production and Fred is not slow to volunteer.

Women, Family and War

By December severe frost made the filming of farming activity impractical until early spring. Jennings therefore concentrated on other strands of the narrative which focussed around the Martin family. In these early wartime documentaries he points towards the contribution of women to the war effort. In *Spring Offensive*, along with the care of an evacuee, the Women's Land Army is mentioned. *Welfare of the Workers* (1940) emphasises voluntary female industrial labour and billeting. *Heart of Britain* (1941) focuses upon the role of the air raid support service, while *Listen to Britain* (1942) provides a kaleidoscope of female wartime participation. Unfortunately reference to gender is sometimes irksome; Gray's comments about land girls in *Spring Offensive* have a heavy patronising tone.⁽³³⁸⁾ But Jennings' visual representation and scripted comments in no sense regard women as playing a subordinate role. He depicts women voluntarily proactive in the war effort from the very beginning of the conflict. For him this is a total

war where all aspects of life, including gender relations and the most mundane and routine of practices have undergone a radical reconstitution in meaning and value.

At the beginning of the narrative we are introduced to Fred returning from the railway station in his car with a young schoolboy evacuee (Ken). The commentary tells us 'on Monday evening, Mr Martin is at Woodbridge, meeting a train'. Mrs Martin and their daughter Mary are ready to welcome them home. At this point we have the first 'natural' dialogue in the film. Mrs Martin exclaims with ambivalence 'Here comes the car Mary ! I do hope he's a nice clean child.' Fortunately he is, in fact Ken is a model evacuee, clean, tidy and suitably deferential when introduced. The next encounter with the Martin family and Ken, the commentary informs us, is the Sunday before Christmas. An ideologically appropriate time for a family reunion and communal celebration, we are shown the living room decorated for the celebration of family, peace and goodwill. Ken is by now well integrated into his proxy family and waiting for the arrival of his parents from the railway station. This sequence provides evidence of Jennings' theatrical skill in simultaneously evoking a gently nuanced human episode between thwarted lovers, in the characters of Bob 'the tiller driver' and Mary, while providing an associative link to the following sequence of land reclamation at Grove Farm. His observational style provides a degree of distance from a scenario that many of the audience may have recognised. Gentle humour is derived from an unstated but frustrated romantic meeting between Bob and Mary because of Ken's innocent and naive hero worship of Bob. Like some older brother,

Bob's attention is monopolised by Ken in an effort to get his meccano model of a tiller working properly. Bob at the table with Ken fiddles with the mechanism, Mary meanwhile must stand by and watch. Success achieved the chance of any romance between the two is lost with the arrival of Ken's parents in the farmyard.

The arrival and reunion with Ken allows the commentary to emphasise the existing gulf and new found relationship between urban and rural society. 'Father: We don't know how to thank you, Mr Martin . . . It's the first time I've been on a farm' Martin: That's the trouble nowadays' . . . Ken shows the model tiller to his parents. Martin says: 'You'd be driving a real one of it weren't for the frost.' Jennings cuts to snow and ice covered fields and adeptly introduces the last act of the offensive. The relentless nature of the struggle and the coming of a new offensive is reinforced through language reminiscent of the Great War. Over the images of winter Gray intones 'But don't think country folk are taking a holiday.' [Tractor smoke against landscape.] 'At the forge, new parts for tractors . . . Just waiting for snow to clear, then we're going over'.⁽³³⁹⁾ Continuity is maintained with the preceding sequence as we see Ken watching an elderly smithy at work repairing a broken part from Bob's rotary tiller, an image as Robson remarks, 'reminiscent of pre-industrial England. Their equipment is meagre but their skills and resourcefulness are extensive.'⁽³⁴⁰⁾

Reclamation begins with the thaw. 'First job - digging trenches for drains, the countryside has to have drains just like the town.' There are shots of men digging and complaining to Martin, 'It's wet, very wet' Both Mary and Ken are present and

with Ken's exclamation 'Mr Martin look !' the massive rotary tiller driven by Bob hoves into view. Jennings depicts the immense power of this steam driven technology by evoking its size and mass through low angled close up shots as it lumbers towards the camera. The aesthetic qualities of the machine: the dark glistening metal, the roar of the engine, recorded by Ken Cameron to become a virtual distortion on the soundtrack, and the vehicle's wheels and tracks crushing obstacles in its path dramatically communicate the raw power that has been harnessed. Ken is given a ride on this animated metal monster and we see the circular ploughs of the tiller gouging into the earth uprooting brambles and bushes while the commentary claims 'After twenty years, the earth gets another chance to produce food instead of brambles'. This is accompanied by fleeing wildlife, startled horses and a dog barking as the machine lumbers on its way. Robson identifies a flaw in existing criticism about such aspects of Jennings' pastoral style; 'Shots like the one of the horses running freely in an open field are said to appear simply gratuitous in the light of the film's stated purpose, but they are actually central to the development of Jennings's larger purpose, which is to reinforce the idea of the interconnectedness of the natural and mechanical forces.'⁽³⁴¹⁾ The dramatic rendition of industrialism and the mechanisation of country life is juxtaposed against time-honoured pastoral imagery of horse-drawn ploughs, seeding the land, a scarecrow and the harvesting of the corn. It is at this point the audience is asked to remember in future the value and service of the land.

According to Robson a problem specific to *Spring Offensive* is

that although inspirational about reclamation 'it will tell them [the people] little how that should be done. The film is very pleasing to watch, but [echoing Nowell-Smith's description of *Spare Time*] it is highly pictorial and static'. (342) Jennings' stance of witness, which encourages such 'pictorial and static' qualities, is a deliberate attempt to remove authorial intent from the text and allow the images as much as the people to speak for themselves. The film is not intended to provide purely mundane and practical advice on reclamation. What he was attempting to promote, through a process of visual montage within and between frames, neo-realism and the creative application of sound, was a deeper form of knowledge and understanding stimulated by imaginative self-revelation. As Robson identifies:

he seek(s) to combine the contemplative with the active. Hence, the coexistence of the message that we must act with the reflective and ruminative style of much of Jennings's work. These I would suggest, are the qualities that make his films memorable today, although they are the very features that earn Jennings the reputation for being an aesthete, aloof from everyday events.(343)

Although Fowle and Cameron had worked independently with Jennings on earlier film projects, *Spring Offensive* is the first occasion we find them recorded as working together.(344) The work of editor Geoff Foot although competent, lacks the imaginative flair and inventiveness found in the later work of Stewart McAllister. To some extent the film is handicapped by the commentary which is no more than a support to the visual

narrative and 'natural' dialogue. The most interesting element of the film is Jennings' use of the neo-realist style which fits well with his belief that the poet must utilise popular modes of communication to achieve the aim of engaging a large audience.⁽³⁴⁵⁾ The people had to be taken seriously because at this time it was only the people who could save themselves.

The Evocation of Nation and National Identity

Neatly bound up within the official propaganda message of *Spring Offensive* is the nucleus of Jennings' developing wartime and post-war appeal to the British people, an appeal articulated through patriotic sentiment. Jeffrey Richards states, 'the nation is, above all else, in Benedict Anderson's felicitous phrase, "an imagined community", a focus of loyalty and a source of identity, providing a sense of belonging to something bigger than oneself. It is pre-eminently, therefore, a cultural artifact.'⁽³⁴⁶⁾ The pastoral is a powerfully evocative myth and image from which to signify British (particularly English) character and national qualities.⁽³⁴⁷⁾ The combination of neo-realism and supporting commentary allows Jennings to explore and meditate upon the immediate practical and political dimensions of the crisis through the seemingly eternal character and qualities of the English farmer who turns wild nature into a domesticated landscape. Modern industrialised warfare focussed its technological destructive power on the very cradle of its inception the town. 'For while cities could be blitzed and bombed, the countryside remained - eternal, timeless, self renewing and indestructible, a fitting symbol for Britain at bay.'⁽³⁴⁸⁾ It is

here, tapping into a rich vein of English literary romanticism associated with the cultural critique of both the political left and the political right, that Jennings is able to play upon profound considerations concerning universal human values and the human condition.⁽³⁴⁹⁾ In 1947 C.A. Lejeune would describe this as articulated through

emotional truth: it is not just that of providing a convincing representation, but of giving the total emotional experience of people and events so that their truth shines from the screen, "expressing the spirit of the country" or of an individual. "Art does not consist in repeating accurately what can be seen and heard around us. Art must try to conjure up, with the help of familiar symbols, things that are not perceptible to human eyes and ears. It must be a kind of second sight, what Baudelaire calls a 'sorcellerie evocatoire'. The feeling of absolute actuality."⁽³⁵⁰⁾

Such beliefs resonate with assumptions and the critical language of Jennings's modernist aesthetic. The evocation of the physical and human dimensions of the English countryside, evident in most of Jennings' wartime and post-war films, represent a selective representation of history, which stimulate a similarly selective memory, authenticity and truthfulness. As with *Heart of Britain* (1941), *Words For Battle* (1941) and *Listen to Britain* (1942) through the vernacular, artifacts, the countryside of southern England or the North with their deep historical, cultural and ideological connotations, Jennings can evoke the history of a national identity, the secure insularity of our islands and past dominance over other nations while eliding the evidence of past domestic conflict and division.⁽³⁵¹⁾

Spring Offensive implicitly makes the case for the stimulation of new economic life and economic relations, increased productivity and a new feeling of community. These changes wrought by total war demanded a reconstructed nation and new concept of national interest, in other words a new 'national popular' idea.⁽³⁵²⁾ For Jennings the implication is the necessity of consigning laissez-faire capitalism, unrepresentative politics and social division to history. The film's discourse carries within it not only Jennings' response to the immediate threat of invasion but several interwoven ideological propositions embodied within the human qualities and actions of the characters. First a recognition that past management of the economy combined with a reliance upon the free market had failed; farms and farming had suffered to the point of dereliction. Second, a new beginning is emerging and farmers (the people) are the ones who through their knowledge, skills and effort can change this situation to the benefit of all; land is reclaimed and made once more productive. Third, the obvious rewards of popular action should be a new and radical social, economic and political settlement with the people as beneficiaries of popular action not a ruling elite.

January - October 1940

Between January and June 1940, before beginning work on *Welfare of the Workers*, Jennings was involved with a variety of often unsuccessful film projects which attempted to respond to the immediate wartime situation.⁽³⁵³⁾ By the 24th August, as his attention was directed towards research for a film provisionally entitled 'Men on the March' or 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' and location work in Coventry for *Welfare of the Workers* (1940), the Luftwaffe had begun nighttime raids on London. Then both projects were abruptly abandoned with the beginning of the daytime blitz.

On Saturday 7th September between 4 and 5 p.m. the first heavy daylight raid occurred on the docklands of East London which heralded nine months of the Blitz. The Blackheath studio was eventually evacuated and relocated to Denham. During September, along with Harry Watt, Jennings was out filming in the capital. Primarily edited by Stewart McAllister the outcome of just under three weeks' intensive labour was the celebrated propaganda film *London Can Take It!* cut to a commentary written by Quentin Reynolds. By the 15th of October the film was ready for distribution in the United States.⁽³⁵⁴⁾ A decision was taken in the same month to abandon 'Men on the March' but complete outstanding work on *Welfare of the Workers*.

Welfare of the Workers

After release in November an anonymous review in *Documentary News Letter* described the film as 'somewhat

scrappy and shapeless';⁽³⁵⁵⁾ a conclusion supported by Hodgkinson and Sheratsky: 'Most of its images are simple illustrations of the commentary's narration or provide neutral, generalized shots of factory workers, etc., as background for its generalities. Although the film brought together again the team of Watt (as producer), Jennings, and Jackson, [Pat Jackson however is not credited on the film] they seem to lack enthusiasm for the task'.⁽³⁵⁶⁾ Such criticism touches on a lack of enthusiasm and also the fragmented and hurried circumstances under which the film was produced as well as the competing messages it was trying to deliver. The discontinuity in production, the recutting of a text patched together out of film of variable quality, a propaganda call for female volunteers to enter the factories while simultaneously attempting to secure the co-operation of skilled male trade union labour and assuage their fears over the loss of union power and the dilution of labour by women, undermine both the formal and ideological coherence and value of the film.

The fact that production was stopped then restarted after the daytime bombing and hurried making of *London Can Take It!* must have been significant. Jennings was already discussing the possibility of a companion piece to *London* based on the situation in the North and Midlands.⁽³⁵⁷⁾ As a leading director in the Unit this would have been a more interesting and relevant assignment than returning to the comparatively uninspired topic of billeting voluntary labour. Although Jennings and Jack Lee are credited with editing the finished film, that responsibility seems to have fallen to Joe Mendoza who remembered it as 'the

most boring film I've ever seen. I used to drop asleep in the cutting room.'⁽³⁵⁸⁾ Any scrappiness in continuity is highlighted by the variable photographic quality of archive film sequences and shots assembled with Jennings' billeting material. Material was recycled from *Spare Time*, *Spring Offensive*, probably an earlier but abandoned 'munitions film', footage of workers on lunchbreak and newsreel of Ernest Bevin - Minister of Labour - encouraging workers at a lunchtime concert to 'work hard'. All this was assembled to illustrate a commentary spoken by Ritchie Calder which stresses the need both for the temporary sacrifice of trade union rights and working conditions for the war effort and to encourage new trainees (in this case women) to enter the factories to boost productivity.

As a Labour Party supporter Calder intimates that the need to suspend existing worker's rights, conditions of employment and the dilution of skilled labour will be translated in the post-war world into state sponsored gains for working men. The introduction of *Welfare of the Workers* includes images of workers and factories. Music from *Spare Time* intercuts with a domestic scene (probably filmed by Jennings) of a skilled worker and his daughter listening to Government propaganda on the radio to 'go to it'. Calder stresses the historic struggle of the skilled working man to achieve industrial rights and the erosion of those conditions under the first year of war. A landscape shot moves us from the introductory remarks to the central sequence of the film; the redeployment of labour and Government arrangements and procedures for the billeting of female volunteers shot by Jennings in and near Coventry. He begins the sequence with a

standard motif of trees against the sky. Calder explains, as the young woman leaves home, that she 'is being asked to transfer from her job in one part of the country to war work in a distant factory'.⁽³⁵⁹⁾ Cutting to shots of a Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange we are shown the role of the Women's Voluntary Force in finding her a billet with a local family. Travelling to work, the 'distant factory', a modern building located in a rural setting, turns out to be 'hush-hush' where (with a close up of how to use a micrometer) she will be trained in the production of armaments. Over shots of a welfare officer at work the commentary emphasises the improvements in work conditions, leisure and welfare provision she will enjoy because of modern state reform, planning and regulation exercised through the Ministry of Labour: 'compared with what she's been used to, it's like stepping from the nineteenth century into the twentieth'.⁽³⁶⁰⁾ The commentary (illustrated by factory and agricultural scenes taken from *Spring Offensive*), becomes a direct appeal to organised labour across the manufacturing sector, to realise that the setbacks and losses trades unions experienced in working conditions and welfare during the depression of the interwar years, were to be not only recouped but extended through the rigorous enforcement of lapsed Factory Legislation, the introduction of new Welfare Boards and the role of Welfare Officers and Factory Inspectors to monitor and maintain standards.

At this point the reviewer of the *Documentary News Letter* identifies a disjuncture in the formal relationship between the general optimistic tenor of Calder's words and the imagery of

factory conditions:

We are shown some of the new wartime responsibilities of the factory inspector and some of the measures being taken to ameliorate the effects of work under war conditions - for example, the introduction of improved lighting which helps to relieve the strain of night-shift work. (It is a pity that with the presumable intention of achieving a particular aesthetic effect - in any case inappropriate to the subject - the factory interiors are consistently photographed as if they were dungeons.)(361)

As Calder outlines the improvements, we are shown young men and women operating lathes in an environment far from the image and aspirations celebrated. A dark and gloomy interior, cramped machinery and a brief shot of guns stacked against a wall, all point towards material that Jennings, Jackson or Lee may have shot under the very conditions Calder described earlier: 'Factories had to be camouflaged. Sunlight was blacked out, workers were shut in', for a French Language munitions film abandoned after the fall of France.

Similar to the introduction the final sequence is a composite of filmed material. This brief sequence consists of newsreel depicting musical entertainment by the Scottish comedian Will Fyffe at a works canteen and Ernest Bevin giving a short morale boosting speech. However it is patently clear that the intercutting of reaction shots to the music and speech by Bevin are constructed from two different canteen audiences, including a shot that would later appear in *Listen to Britain* of an elderly worker spitting on the floor apparently listening to Flanagan and

Allen. The film concludes on a rousing cheer from the workers in response to Bevin's morale boosting words 'We can not only fight, but we can be cheerful in doing it as well.' *Documentary News Letter* detected a condescending and possibly insidious political message: 'its principal fault lies in the patronising attitude, which it takes towards the workers (simple child-like folk), and its representation of the Ministry of Labour, not as a body of public servants, but as a father from whom all blessings flow.'⁽³⁶²⁾ Through the commentary of Calder, and the newsreel image and words of Bevin the political ethos of this wartime propaganda film carries the corporate labourist values that became personified in the character, actions and personal beliefs of Bevin himself. What the reviewer may have regarded as patronising could, on the other hand, be seen rather as the practical stirrings of a modern post-war social democratic politics:

Towards the organized working classes, whom he called, biblically enough "my people", his attitude was that of an elder brother left to rear an enormous family . . . Bevin embodied and spoke for and to a working class of, well, Bevins' sober, thick sinewed men who had overcome their early abhorrence of their employers, had educated themselves, and would now show the bosses how to do the job properly. After the failure of the General Strike in 1926, Bevin had led the retreat from industrial action towards "Mondism", a doctrine which sought to win the trade unions a confirmed place in the councils of their industries, neither as serfs or masters, but as partners. No one was less of a red revolutionary than Bevin, an early convert to the ideas of J.M.Keynes.⁽³⁶³⁾

In political tone *Welfare* has much in common with *Spring Offensive*. Although initiated under conditions different from those of their eventual release, there are strong formal and ideological similarities between the two films which allow us to consider them both as products of pre-blitz conditions. Both are concerned with securing the support of volunteers and the co-operation of key workers to the war effort. *Spring Offensive* highlights the productive efficiency of the enlightened farmer while *Welfare of the Workers* focuses upon the critical value of the craft worker. Both emphasise the need to maximise production and entice voluntary labour, particularly young men and women, into war work.

The depth of the national crisis after the fall of France justified wartime state intervention. It directed and regulated the skilled labour market to provide 'arms for men, arms for liberty and arms for victory' while saluting the historic role of skilled industrial labour in the struggle to improve rights, wages and conditions of work. The Agricultural Committees had both extended and rewarded the new opportunities and power conferred upon the farmer. The Ministry of Labour, on the other hand, explicitly demanded that the traditional skilled man relinquish some of those 'hard won' industrial rights and accept an intensification of labour and the dilution of their skills, status and power with increased employment of new trainees and women. This temporary agreement, Calder intones, was far better than the alternative: 'the blackout of liberty [where] on the Continent, Hitler had destroyed the trades unions . . . To resist such tyranny, the British worker [gave] up by choice what

Hitler takes by force.'⁽³⁶⁴⁾ As a palliative for compliance, the commentary stresses that the impact of war will transform existing industrial relations and bring future rewards, particularly the implied incorporation of the trade union movement within a developing tripartite relationship between state, labour (unions) and capital (employers).

But in reality the propaganda appeal for volunteer female labour to head for the factories was having little effect. The patronising tone behind government appeals (evident in *Spring Offensive*), combined with the harsh reality of much factory work did little to convince women to give up either domestic life or transfer from existing occupations.⁽³⁶⁵⁾ The contrast in *Welfare of the Workers* between the modern building and 'twentieth century' work conditions and the dark 'dungeon' like interior of the supposed same factory would only have confirmed the fears of many female volunteers. Even though a central theme is billeting and the vital role women could play in increasing war production, female labour is not highlighted but subsumed within the needs of the general war effort, the male world of work and corporate industrial relations.

With *Spring Offensive* Jennings had recorded the political and practical changes created within the agriculture world while intimating the need to strengthen postwar rural-urban relations. Now the demand to maximise wartime production in manufacturing was transforming the industrial politics of work seemingly towards the corporate model of a social democratic state. Prior to the blitz, the civilian response Jennings had recorded in *Spring Offensive* and *London Can take It!* had implied

how war had begun to undermine the self-serving 'rackets' of business and state. In the industrial field and in broader political terms this is not the message of *Welfare of the Workers* and it is not a message that Jennings would necessarily have had much enthusiasm to expound. The film in political substance and style lacks any of the subtlety one associates with Jennings' propaganda. His next assignment, however, like *London Can Take It!* would allow him to return to and explore not state regulation but the voluntary and spontaneous actions of the people to the immediate conditions of the blitz.

I think it is also true that Jennings was particularly inspired by the war and found for himself a social role, that in certain respects the war was a stroke of luck for Jennings, because it gave him not only the perfect subject matter, which was Britain under strain, Britain considering its past, Britain contemplating its future. But it also gave him a unique set of circumstances within which to work.

Kevin Jackson.(366)

On the 7th September, from the Blackheath studios, Jennings could hear and watch as the massed squadrons of the Luftwaffe pulverised the docklands and surrounding area of East London with incendiaries and high explosive. As an artist and propagandist he was truly living the moment, witnessing at first hand the power and destructive force of this first massive, highly intensive localised air assault.(367) At times the sheer scale of the destruction and fires overwhelmed the emergency services, turning night into day.(368) Afterwards he 'went out all night photographing the fires', immersing himself in the smell, heat, sight and sound of the aftermath.(369) He must have been relieved that the day before the mass bombing began his family had departed for America. Through the rest of 1940 and into 1941 Jennings often lived at a frenetic and exhausting pace, moving around the country recording events and urgently completing assignments.(370) The intensity of raids eventually forced him to move and stay with Ian Dalrymple in the relative rural safety of Chorley Wood. In Dalrymple he found not only a producer but a close and supportive colleague and friend.(371)

Over the following months, time and the routine of work dissolved in the process of recording the transformation, under the nightly air raids, of a seemingly fixed physical and social existence. The physical and social world became fluid, literally disassembled, turned upside down and inside out in the surreal juxtapositions and terrible beauty of landscapes created by air raids. The facade of reality Magritte would explode with a cannon, became real through the impact of the bombs. The discourse of symbolic violence and mutation expressed in the art and antics of the surrealists was now itself real, impinging directly upon the popular conscious.

Importantly, modern warfare was as much directed at civilians as at the military.⁽³⁷²⁾ Jennings found in the mutation of the physical and social geography of London and the urban areas of the Midlands and North, caused by the destruction of buildings and artifacts, mass evacuations and loss of life, a parallel in the psychological and social experience of the general population and front-line volunteers. In total war the aesthetic is literally transformed into an explicit form of bodily knowledge. Often in direct danger from the raids, people found themselves living for the moment in an acutely heightened state of existence and uncertainty. The transformation in the psychic state and the emotional response of the civilian population to the outrages visited upon them Jennings saw as tapping into a popular will, stimulating the re-emergence of values and a spirit of community which had not been present since the advent of modern society. In mid-October he wrote in almost rapturous terms of his experience and perception of the heroism and

morale generated by the bombing:

Some of the damage in London is pretty heart-breaking - but what an effect it has all had on the people! What warmth - what courage! What determination. People sternly encouraging each other by explaining that when you hear a bomb whistle it means it has missed you! (373)

Civilians, who in the past had had little opportunity to show physical courage in face of the enemy and to express their determination, were now in the front line. The human warmth, strength and unity, borne out of sacrifice, fortitude and determination Jennings felt should be recognised and celebrated. 'It was a sad truth ' he remarked to Kathleen Raine 'that only the situations of war could give to the common people opportunities to show their finest innate qualities':(374)

People in the north singing in public shelters: 'One man went to mow - went to mow a meadow.' WVS girls serving hot drinks to firefighters during raids explaining that really they are 'terribly afraid all the time!' People going back to London for a night or two to remind themselves what it's like.(375)

If nothing else, these outrages clearly delineated this conflict as a just war. The apocalyptic nature of the London Blitz, later repeated when he witnessed the aftermath of the first devastating air raid on Coventry, encouraged Jennings to see the violence as an opportunity to begin expiation for the interwar politics of appeasement towards Fascism. Personal and social relations were once more imbued with a new form of communal solidarity and moral certainty:

Everybody absolutely determined: secretly delighted with the *privilege* of holding up Hitler. Certain of beating him: a certainty which no amount of bombing can weaken: only strengthen. A kind of slow-burning white-heat of hatred for the Jerries and a glowing warmth of red flame of love and comradeship for each other which *cannot* be defeated: which has ceased to think of anything except *attack*. (376)

Although differing in emphasis, *Heart of Britain* (1941) and *Listen to Britain* (1942) share a similar concern with the social and the psychological dimensions of the everyday. Here Jennings focuses on the understated defiance and resilience of a people maintaining routine in the face of adversity. Here he sees the emergence of a new communality, freeing individuals from existing imaginative constraints, opening up the promise of a new material and social reality. The intense and sensate nature of total war had created an opportunity to extend and deepen this heightened condition of existence:

As we get deeper into the war we shed past fashions of opinion and politics and ideas like useless clothes or equipment, and repose more & more on what we all have in common instead of crying out our differences: we remember past history and average likes and dislikes, not for good or bad qualities but because all that is what *this* has come out of.(377)

Jennings set out to record the evidence of this experience of a nation 'standing alone'. Thus he saw the on-going sacrifice as imbued with deep moral significance. His contemplation of popular morale and resistance can also be read as a consideration of those qualities of the English people that he

believed had been submerged under the centuries of modernisation but once more able to blossom and change society for the better. The associated imaginative rebirth provided a critical opportunity for poets once more to take up their true role to explore and reveal both the new and intimate connection between the material and spiritual dimensions of popular life and hold up a future vision of the possible. It was an opportunity to draw upon traditional notions of national identity and remind the people of the intimate and relevant connections between past and present. The crisis of war opened he believed an opportunity to a more sensitive recognition and receptive response to the 'historic world of culture', to recognise how tradition permeates the lived texture of the present. Tradition was a source of strength and those diverse symbols of English ancestry and cultural heritage found in music, famous individuals, events, poetry and landscape could be reworked in the present crisis. It was also an opportunity to contemplate and present to the people in the words and actions of the people the unfolding drama. A drama which above all was leading to a transformation in the imagination, one in which the moral and spiritual were once more connected to the material and political. Despite the physical and human cost, it was he felt a price worth paying:

Maybe by the time you get this one or two more
18th cent. churches will be smashed up in London:
some civilians killed: some personal loves and
treasures wrecked - but it means nothing: a curious
kind of unselfishness is developing which can stand
all that & any amount more. We have found
ourselves on the right side and on the right track at
last!(378)

Similar in style to *London Can Take It!*, *The Heart of Britain* combines a contemplation of the civilian army and popular morale with the propaganda imperative of encouraging domestic resolve and persuading the United States to intervene in support of Britain. The production of *Heart of Britain* is instructive for a number of reasons. First, it is possible to reconstruct the approximate timetable of production and to show how a combination of Jennings' philosophy and artistic sensibility combined with specific opportunities to lead him to include particular civilians and events in the film. Second, how the notorious blitz on Coventry impinged directly upon shooting and the eventual propaganda message of the film. *The Heart of Britain* provides a clear impression as to how Jennings articulates a universal message of the spiritual conflict between good and evil, darkness and light that he saw being played out in Europe. Third, the film brought Jennings, Chick Fowle (photography), Ken Cameron (sound) and Stewart McAllister (editor) together for the first time as a team. Jennings had worked previously with Fowle and Cameron. Now the practical Jennings-McAllister editorial partnership was formed. Compared to his earlier films, the editing of *The Heart of Britain* provides an indication of the critical influence of McAllister.

Along with *Words For Battle* and *Listen to Britain*, Anthony Aldgate regards *The Heart of Britain* as the first of a 'trilogy of key films which show the extent to which Jennings sought to evoke the images and sounds of the past and mix them with his

observations of the present to sustain the country in its time of crisis.'⁽³⁷⁹⁾ That evocation was a product of their partnership and would develop beyond the professional to a closer artistic relationship.⁽³⁸⁰⁾

Timetable of Production

After the making of *London Can Take It* it was suggested that London is not the country, and that it would be sensible to make a film dealing with conditions in the north of England. At that time the blitz had not reached the Midlands and the North.

Humphrey Jennings⁽³⁸¹⁾

The Heart of Britain was an opportunity to provide a companion piece to *The Front Line* and *London Can Take It*! According to James Chapman, the film was to 'pay tribute to the Northern and Midland industrial centres and their workers . . . primarily for distribution in the Empire and the United States.'⁽³⁸²⁾ Prior to filming, Jennings returned to locations with which he had some familiarity in the Midlands and the North.⁽³⁸³⁾ *The Heart of Britain* was to be a consideration of an urban-industrial response in regions still relatively undisturbed by heavy air-raids. It is in this sense we can understand his description of the film as being a 'kind of *Spare Time* assignment'.⁽³⁸⁴⁾ By the middle of October he was engaged in a preliminary investigation and came across several individuals he felt best represented the qualities emerging under the siege:

Earlier I had been working on another picture, and had been to see some people at Coventry who were dealing with billeting [*Welfare of the Workers*].

Some people at the labour exchange said that the person to see was Mrs. Hyde, the head of the W.V.S. Mrs Hyde turned out to be a remarkable person; and when it came to starting this film about the Midlands and the North, I remembered her, and thought it would be sensible to start there . . . she offered the inevitable cup of tea, and then sat down and gave me a heart-to-heart description of the raid the night before - a really outstanding piece of dialogue. It was just a question of putting that dialogue down as rapidly as possible and treasuring it. From there I went to one or two other places. Here is another point of selection: I wanted to introduce something about the conditions in Lancashire. I went to a mill that somebody recommended as being a mill that had already been used in a film, and were therefore used to the lights and other troubles. There was some difficulty about getting a key, and I was told to see the foreman of the next mill, who had the key. He did almost exactly what Mrs Hyde had done - asked me in and we started talking about the war. It was before there was compulsory fire watching; he said: "The mill would be a big blaze if it got hit - we have to be very good at watching because of inflammable material." There followed another terrific piece of dialogue about putting out incendiary bombs. We never went back to the other mill, because it was obvious that that was our man.(385)

By the 29th of October Jennings had produced both a first draft and a reworked script which included his conversation with Mrs. Hyde and the mill foreman.(386) Where *Spring Offensive* has scripted dialogue here Jennings allows both Mrs Hyde and the mill foreman to deliver a modified form of their experiences direct to camera. The seemingly unscripted nature of their delivery is undermined by an earlier and obviously contrived sequence in a steel mill, but it still manages to sustain the illusion of the

people speaking for themselves to the people: 'That is one reason for presenting people to people - that people in the audience should see people who are like themselves, and that the documentary film should make clear that the people are like themselves.':(387)

It is a case of not having prejudices of throwing one-self into it. One must not go round with a hard method, saying "I want somebody to represent cotton" and "I want somebody to represent steel", but treating people primarily as human beings, making friends with them. You might have a perfectly good film in which the steel and cotton industries are nicely covered, and the whole thing beautifully tidy, but if in fact you have not made friends with the people, and altered all your plans because of the persons you have met, you will not be able to put people on the screen whom the audience can make friends with.(388)

However, a violent raid on Coventry on the 14th November was to intervene. For Dai Vaughan the filming of the aftermath of the Coventry blitz dislodged the very premise of the film.(389) 'The footage, if it was to be used, required a rethinking of the structure and rendered the treatment obsolete. But it seems also to have led, in consequence, to a partial - but only partial - liberation of the film from its preconceptions'.(390) Vaughan does not clarify what he thinks these pre-conceptions were or how the Coventry incident made the treatment obsolete. In discussing the production, he quotes an early synopsis, ' "in this film it is proposed to combine a little poetry of *London Can Take It* with the forthright vigour of *Front Line*." This does not quite sound like Jennings, and is probably Ian Dalrymple trying to sell

the idea to the Ministry.'⁽³⁹¹⁾ Even if true, however, Jennings was not constrained by this vague proposition. There is no reason to regard the second draft as having delineated anything other than that Jennings wished to portray the spirit of the people.

To what extent did the Coventry material make the second treatment obsolete and compromise the formal elements of the narrative? To justify his argument, Vaughan applies his expertise as an editor to interrogate supposed weaknesses in the formal structure and by consequence the propaganda message of the film. Although a pertinent commentator, Vaughan underestimates Jennings and the nature of the propaganda message which can be attached to the film. In turn this leads him to misinterpret specific editorial decisions and those formal aspects of the narrative which he regards as evidence of Jennings' failure. Vaughan gives little consideration to a number of immediate and interrelated factors which shaped the nature of the film. For example, he recognises the significance of the aerial bombardment but underestimates the impact the raid had upon Jennings and the nation and the ways in which the ensuing anger and outrage became metaphorically expressed in the adept editing of imagery and sound. Regardless of draft scripts, like the other films in this trilogy, the final narrative of *The Heart of Britain* was constructed in the editing room taking into account the propaganda imperative of the moment. Vaughan's failure to recognise the historical gravity associated with the incident, his misjudgement concerning Jennings' preconceptions and the weight given to the film treatment cause him to focus upon the film as narrative. This in turn leads him to an interpretation and

evaluation which is at times flawed.

The Coventry Raid

During his initial sortie in October, Jennings found the 'Midlands & the North . . . quiet & warmhearted & practically untouched.'⁽³⁹²⁾ During his exploratory visit to the regions air raids were still relatively infrequent, which may help account for an early form of commentary which, like *London Can Take It!* refers to British retaliatory action against German raids: 'the quiet villages of Yorkshire hear every night the drone of our bombers.'⁽³⁹³⁾ By early November relatively light air raids had occurred making his draft factually inaccurate: 'Just as we were starting on our work the bombing of the Midlands began although not the famous blitz on Coventry'.⁽³⁹⁴⁾ Between the 3rd and the Coventry raid on the 14th he was filming in the Lake District, Sheffield, Manchester, the North and Coventry. He wrote of 'a few exciting nights in the Midlands but not much else. The hills and valleys of the North are as quiet as ever & the pubs & dancehalls are fuller and brighter than before.'⁽³⁹⁵⁾ *The Heart of Britain* was an attempt to capture and express what he felt was this spirit of the times.

The news of the raid on Coventry brought to an end the relative security of the provinces, signifying a shift in the geography of bombing. It also heralded a new bombing strategy by the Luftwaffe.⁽³⁹⁶⁾ Jennings wrote:

Since writing the above (12.November) there has been a grim attack on Coventry - which I am glad to say we were not in: we had left there a few days

before. But we have very many good friends there and I am at the moment on my way there to find out how things really are. The voluntary workers there - canteen girls and others - we have been photographing & had been out all night in the canteen washing up mugs and making tea. A superb group of people: sweet young kids and magnificent women: how are they?(397)

He was to learn that the consequences were unprecedented and catastrophic. 'The raiders first fired the medieval centre, crowned by its beautiful cathedral, which was gutted. They then poured hundreds of tons of bombs into the city, in an attack which lasted ten hours . . . A hundred acres of the city centre were destroyed. Five hundred and fifty-four people were killed, eight hundred and sixty five seriously wounded.'(398) During the raid, hysteria and panic gripped some of the inhabitants, the communications infrastructure and a third of the housing was more or less completely destroyed. The following day, the authorities cordoned off the burning city.(399) Mass Observation reported that "the small size of the place makes people feel that the only thing they can do *is get out of it altogether* . . . 'Coventry is finished', and 'Coventry is dead' were the key phrases in Friday's talk . . . Rationing was suspended. A hundred thousand loaves were rushed from neighbouring cities in a single day. The W.V.S. brought in their mobile canteens and cooked stew in the ruined streets. For some time, all drinking water had to be boiled': . . Nazi propaganda now coined the verb "*Coventrieren* " to "Coventrate". The word embodied the idea of the physical and psychological destruction of an entire city.'(400)

By the time Jennings arrived, the situation greeting his team

was not as dramatic as the morning immediately after the raid.⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ The fires were now either smouldering or out and roadways had begun to be cleared. During the course of the week they recorded a series of images of a city struggling to recover a semblance of organisation and normality. On camera we have evidence of fire appliances, rescue squads and W.V.S. vans distributing refreshments and food at the side of the road as civilians are caught gaping at the destruction. Jennings wrote that 'the week at Coventry was not I think as grim as we expected: at any rate the people really were magnificent'⁽⁴⁰²⁾, an estimation confirmed by the research of Angus Calder and captured in the footage of the completed film: 'Even in the first week after the raid, five-sixths of the employees turned up for work. They went on with their jobs under the open sky, through snow, wind and rain, in greatcoats, sou'westers and gumboots, and some times with tin hats to ward off chunks of falling masonry.'⁽⁴⁰³⁾ Jennings took the evidence of the ferocity of the raid and the general defiance of the people in Coventry and worked them into a narrative which attempts to present the quintessential nature of the English character manifest in the duty, selfless bravery and heroism expressed through the words and thoughts of individual volunteers; what Vaughan refers to as 'large slabs of direct speech' to camera.⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾ The raid also provided an opportune propaganda moment which could influence American opinion to support the British cause. Cull reports that Churchill, hopeful that the Blitz would bring America into the war, 'demanded extensive publicity for the devastating raid . . . He later informed the War Cabinet (on the 18 November) that "the

effect had been considerable . . . in the United States" '(405) and on December 9th an explicit photograph of the charred remains of victims was cleared for circulation in the United States through the United Press News Agency.

The Poetic and Propaganda Vision of *The Heart of Britain*

In a pre-war society as diverse in region, ethnicity and politics as the United Kingdom, the majority of the population could only be effectively mobilised and incorporated within an idea of the nation if that concept was protean enough to include all members of the nation. Exported to the United States as *This is England*, the film was eventually distributed under three different titles to take into account the appropriate sensibilities and sensitivities of the target audience: in England as *The Heart of Britain*, Scotland as *Our Heritage* and in the neutral Eire as *The Undaunted*. (406) What underpins the treatment and links all four titles together is not the portrayal of a regional response (although this is important) but the particular and universal spirit of the people; the defiance and resilience of the communities which, in their actions and words, transcend regional and national character and the threats and dangers they face. To achieve this, Jennings considers the personal strengths, practical response and fate of the individual. We also see how domestic routine and the mundane are by circumstance transformed and imbued with the spirit of heroism. Each volunteer and each voluntary and communal act translates into a broader configuration of the spirit and response of the people to the conditions of the historic moment. This is implied

by the emphasis laid upon the first word(s) of each title '*The Heart of Britain*', '*Our Heritage*', '*The Undaunted*' and '*This is England*'.

Witnessing and filming the aftermath of the Coventry raid, a town with which he was now familiar, supplemented Jennings' existing treatment. The filmed material required a rethink but the eventual outcome did not render the basic treatment obsolete. What had started out as a contemplation of the human spirit and the expression of the humanity and defiance of a people under attack was to be dramatically reinforced by the ferocity and human catastrophe of Coventry into one of both celebration of the human spirit and righteous anger. Jennings and McAllister edited the film between late November and late January 1941. On the 25th of January, Jennings wrote that he felt the country was 'on the verge of historic something or others'.⁽⁴⁰⁷⁾ Four days later, an unprecedented raid occurred, one which Philip Ziegler describes as 'the nearest London ever got to the fire-storms which were later to consume Dresden.'⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾ It 'produced one of the most enduring propaganda images of the war: the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, alone, surrounded by a sea of fire.'⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ Soon after, the prospect of direct American intervention was brought a step closer: 'On January 6, 1941, Roosevelt publicly pledged himself to an "all inclusive national defense" and "full support" for the allied cause. Congress replied with the Lend-Lease bill', though as Cull notes, 'the passage of Lend-Lease was by no means a foregone conclusion.

The need for a concerted British propaganda policy in the United States remained strong. A new theme was needed to

replace the stale "Britain can take it" line of the Blitz'.⁽⁴¹⁰⁾ That theme was articulated by Churchill in a radio broadcast to the world on February 9th: Cull states that 'building up to the recent victories in North Africa. He painted a picture of a country not simply "taking it" but fighting back. Churchill took care to respect the United States' desire to avoid direct involvement in the war. He stressed: "we do not need the gallant armies which are forming throughout the American Union. We do not need them this year, nor next year that I can foresee." He concluded: Give us the tools and we will finish the job". These words became the keynote of Britain's approach to America in 1941'.⁽⁴¹¹⁾ Earlier in 1940 and symptomatic of a general feeling in the Films Division, Harry Watt had been arguing for a more proactive representation of Britain at war and by November had begun work on *Target For Tonight*.⁽⁴¹²⁾ The dramatic tenor of *The Heart of Britain* in emphasising the people's response to the Coventry incident and now resonating with the recent heavy raid on London, would provide the crowning moment of the film and express that feeling within the Films Division. Churchill's words of retaliatory action were already central to the film.

Approximately three months after the Coventry raid *The Heart of Britain* gained its theatrical release. Ed Murrow narrated a longer American version which according to Cull was a great success, playing in '200 New York movie theatres' just in the first week.⁽⁴¹³⁾

The Heart of Britain

Embedded within the film are a series of powerful ideas which play upon elements of what Jeffrey Richards regards as British national characteristics. According to Richards these characteristics are 'relate[d] to elements of the national identity: from parliamentary democracy come the values of tolerance, compromise, law-abidingness; from Empire a sense of superiority; from Protestantism, individualism, anti-intellectualism, duty and service.'⁽⁴¹⁴⁾ He continues, 'What these ideologies had in common was the overwhelming importance of the ideas of personal restraint and concern for others, of duty and service. Merged together, they helped form the national character. Both these traditions seem to have been grafted on to older ones, specifically English rather than British . . . [a] sense of humour [and] the ineffable sense of English superiority.'⁽⁴¹⁵⁾ They are also found in the writings of George Orwell and radio broadcasts of J.B. Priestley.⁽⁴¹⁶⁾ An important aspect of this ideological blend is that in general it surpasses specific political affiliation to reflect the true nature or 'Heart' of the British people as here discussed by George Orwell:

Myths which are believed in tend to become true, because they set up a type or persona which the average person will do his best to resemble. During the bad period of 1940 it became clear that in Britain national solidarity is stronger than class antagonism . . . It was exactly then . . . that class feeling slipped into the background, only reappearing when the immediate danger had passed. Moreover it is probable that the stolid behaviour of the British town populations under the bombing was

partly due to the existence of the national 'persona' - that is, to their preconceived idea of themselves.(417)

Jennings and McAllister encapsulated dimensions of that national persona in representing the people's war. The 'national persona', Richards writes, 'was faithfully projected in wartime cinema, where the same characteristics come through time and again. There is a sense of humour . . . sense of tolerance . . . Stoicism or emotional restraint is the third quality . . . Lastly, there is the sense of duty and service.'(418) At the time, these attributes were articulated through the very structure and phrasing of Churchill's early wartime speeches.(419) Addressing Parliament about night bombing his method of delivery would according to Angus Calder 'take his listeners up and down an emotional switchback.'(420), a method and style of delivery that finds a strong resonance in the structure and propaganda message of *Heart of Britain*:

First, the warning, the stress that the danger must not be underrated. Then the joke that the raids up to now had hardly paid the German' expenses. Then the note of courage - "learn to get used to it" - then the swoop "into the intimate and the conversational". . . Then the warning again, stronger this time . . . The bracing note of bulldog determination was sounded a little later . . . The method had two main features. Churchill would descend from lofty rhetoric to irony or even low humour . . . And he mingled warnings with buoyancy . . . so that listeners thought, here is a man who has foreseen the very worst that may befall, and yet remains confident.(421)

Through adept editing of filmed material and soundtrack

Jennings and McAllister simulate Churchill's method of peroration to express those quintessential elements of national persona: humour, tolerance, stoicism, courage, duty and service. Through the words and actions of the people, the interpretation of the commentary and the juxtaposition of music and image, they emphasise both the national character and the manichean dimensions of the conflict culminating in the pitiless attack on Coventry and the response of the British people.

During the introduction and coda of the film a specific ideological metaphor based within the pastoral is applied to articulate the warning of immediate danger, the spiritual dimension of the war and the response of the British people to the threat at one and the same time. Evident in *Spring Offensive*, Richards identifies in *The Heart of Britain* the 'tendency of wartime propagandists to draw on the rural myth to define the nation. The celebration of the countryside as a source of national strength . . . For while cities could be blitzed and bombed, the countryside remained, eternal, timeless, self-renewing and indestructible - a fitting symbol of Britain at Bay.'⁽⁴²²⁾ With the music of Edward Elgar on the soundtrack the film title is superimposed over an image of 'a strong rock-face filling the screen'. As the opening music subsides, the introductory commentary supported by appropriate illustrative imagery, intimates, in Churchillian declamatory style, the proximity of danger and strength:

The winds of war blow across the hills and moorlands of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. They stir the grasses in the sheep valleys of Cumberland and ruffle the clear surface of Ullswater. They sing in

the cathedral towers of Durham, in the tower of
Liverpool (still building), in the spires of Coventry.
But the heart of Britain remains unmoved and
unchangeable.(423)

Jennings returns to the rock face, reinforcing the initial image of the eternal and organic relationship between the people and their country. With an adept phrase and image, linking nature with the power and imagination of the British people, a cut to an aerial shot of the shadow of hills over an industrialised valley is supported by the commentary. 'In the shadow of the hills live the great industrial people, thronging the valleys of power and the rivers of industry.' Similarly the coda returns once more to this theme and style of expression but this time accompanied by Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus'. 'Out of the valleys of power and the rivers of industry will come the answer to the German challenge'. ([successive] Shots of moors, spires, moors, bomber, landscape, night bomber.) 'And the Nazis will learn - once and for all - that no one with impunity troubles the heart of Britain.' This central theme is humanised in the main narrative by celebrating the stoicism, duty and service, the energy and personal courage of three volunteers each engaged in a different but major aspect of air raid work. Around these three volunteers Jennings emphasises the heroism of the ordinary people involved in the consequences of air raids. To begin with we see the appositely named George Goode, a steel worker and member of the Air Raid Patrol (A.R.P.). The duty of an air raid warden demanded amongst other things that blackout regulations be enforced. Goode is followed by two unnamed men in a Lancashire mill responsible for watching, locating and if possible

extinguishing incendiary devices. Lastly Mrs Hyde, as a central figure in the Womens Voluntary Service (W.V.S.) in Coventry, ensures that after the raids refreshment and food is available for firefighters and A.R.P. search and rescue teams.

As the introduction concludes, followed by a fade, darkness fills the screen for an instant. But we hear the anticipatory roar of industry on the soundtrack. A scene filmed for *Spare Time* emerges, with steel workers in front of a furnace. The literary intonation of the commentary is briefly maintained by the phrase 'In black Sheffield the flames of the steel furnaces scorch the men's faces night and day', and a dissolve takes us from stock material to a team of workers coming off shift. The commentary changes intonation to a more informal but affirmative style of delivery. 'At the end of a shift one of the first hands, George Goode, comes off hot and tired but nowhere near beaten and nowhere near through. He's not only a steel worker, he's an air-raid warden as well.' Once George has spoken, a quick shot of men drinking water is followed by a wipe and an establishing shot of mills and terraced housing. The commentary continues without losing stride. 'From Yorkshire to Lancashire; from steel to cotton.' It is clear that the brevity of editing style, with the application of wipes and dissolves and the close co-ordination of sound to image, is far in advance of what Jennings had utilised before. This may indicate the influence of McAllister.

From the brief Sheffield sequence we are launched into the next. Over the images and sound of an operational weaving shed, the commentary stresses the existing relationship between Britain and America, 'All day long the looms are weaving poplin

for export, to pay for arms from over the Atlantic.' Another dissolve takes us to the smoking factory chimneys in the evening light which connects visually with the commentary. 'But all night now there must be men to watch for fire-bombs'. Yet again a dissolve takes us into the A.R.P. office where an individual is caught finishing a cup of tea. Placing it down he turns to the camera and delivers in a quiet, unaffected and conversational manner an anecdotal account of activities. It is a gentle, understated and disarming performance about two friends doing their bit and how 'youngsters' are also employed to extinguish incendiary bombs. Even though Jennings has previously arranged the meeting and the details of the speech, the delivery, and the visual aside which catches his friend fiddling with the strap of his helmet, gives the strong impression of someone asked to say a few words 'off the cuff'. The informality is highlighted by the authoritative urgency of the commentary which, after his speech concludes, is combined with a visual wipe to explain the next scene - a training session for Rescue squads in the playground of a Liverpool school.

In his attempt to justify the argument that Jennings was forced to rethink the treatment of the film, Vaughan asks why Jennings should include the mock-up of air raid damage when Coventry suffered the reality. In answer to this he misrepresents the training sequence as 'an invocation of the documentary imperative: an insistence that we scrutinise the image for just those properties which will distinguish the Coventry wreckage from the school playground simulation.'⁽⁴²⁴⁾ I would argue that Jennings here wished to represent what he perceived as the

spirit of the moment. At this time prior to the Coventry air raid, localised attacks in the North and Midlands had been light compared to London. The winds of war may be blowing over the region but the full force of the storm had yet to arrive. The presentation of mock damage in a playground was the next logical step in the sequence of showing preparatory air raid training and volunteer activities. First we have Sheffield, A.R.P. duty which implies monitoring the blackout, then Lancashire, watching for and training to extinguish incendiary bombs and thirdly Liverpool, the consequences and aftermath of a raid with the rescue squads and the provision of help for victims. The commentary does clarify the artificial nature of the situation, not to help the audience identify the genuine article but to conclude the last sequence in preparation for future raids. Vaughan has not recognised that this brief sequence concludes the first part of the narrative and links it to the descriptive sequence which follows:

This used to be the playground of a school, now it is one of the places where Liverpool trains her rescue squads. Behind this grim work lies an infinite number of patient everyday tasks for the women [pause]. Dull jobs like typing lists of addresses [pause], unending ones like sorting clothes for the homeless [pause]. Routines which women fill with love and devotion [pause] and the simplest, most difficult task of all just staying put with war round the corner.

Jennings directly links the 'grim work' to the routine and tedium of 'patient everyday tasks'. As earlier in *Spring Offensive*, Jennings highlights the vital social role fulfilled by

women in the routine of war. Here the commentary, pensive in tone and illustrated by appropriate shots, attempts to imbue the routine nature associated with these mundane images with the charity of the familial and communal. A dissolve during the final pause brings us to a street scene shot through the arch of a viaduct cutting to an aerial shot of terraced blocks of housing. A final sentence of fortitude ends the first part of the film and neatly recalls the introductory intimation of impending battle 'and the simplest, most difficult task of all, just staying put with war round the corner'.

In structural terms therefore the first section of the film weaves together elements of the national persona of tolerance, stoicism, duty and service. The second section of the film reiterates these traits but with greater force. Through humour, visual rhetoric and ironic statement the latent spiritual dimension of the propaganda message is opened out and augmented by an undisguised religious and sacrificial temperament. The blitz on Coventry provides the focus for the warning of greater danger to come, the character of the people in their response and the resolve of the civilian army to defeat the enemy.

The transition from preparation to action maintains the sprightly narrative drive. From the shots of residential housing we cut to a long shot of air raid spotters on the roof of a mill next to an enormous chimney. Before the commentary quickly intervenes we hear the anticipatory rumble of aircraft engines on the soundtrack. Over the cut to a medium shot of spotters scanning the vapour trails in the sky, the commentary takes on

an informative and urgent tone, 'On a hazy day, Jerry comes droning over about three miles up [pause]. When the roof spotters think he means trouble they send the millgirls down to shelter for a few minutes' [cut to external of air-raid shelter and to internal shot of women in shelter]. The visual and aural irony of this brief sequence has an inflection of traditional low humour as a group of mill girls perform a race with balloons to the absolute delight of their friends. A form of party entertainment becomes a weapon with which to maintain morale in the face of immediate danger.

It is in the rapid editing of the sounds and images of the women that the main effect is created. We begin and end the sequence with reaction shots in medium close up of two women sitting by the wall of the shelter winding wool and observing the game. Through a series of very rapid medium and close up shots we follow the progression and delighted participation of two teams in the race. Except for one member of each team they sit on a line of chairs. The aim of each team member is to run as quickly as possible around the line with the balloon sitting on the vacated chair left by the team member to whom they have passed the balloon. The race is completed when the last team member loudly bursts the balloon by sitting on it on the floor. The rapid intercut imagery of the passage of the balloons is complemented on soundtrack by the sounds of excitement in the shelter. The command to start, the shouts of encouragement, and the squeals of delight as the balloon is transferred at rapid pace between the members of the team reaches an extended crescendo as the balloons explode. Here Jennings creates a surreal and

ironic joke at the expense of the German raiders through the notion that explosions are turned by the women into fun and games boosting morale and defiance inside a bomb shelter. Instead of the raiders causing demoralisation and fear we have the opposite: courage, solidarity, joy and exuberance. There is also defiance implicit in the shouts of glee which accompany the vulgar humour of the balloons exploding like enormous farts at the enemy above.

From the shelter we cut to the doors and poster at Manchester Free Trade Hall, followed by an interior shot of the Halle Orchestra and their conductor Malcolm Sargeant who, after bowing to the audience turns to the orchestra. The commentary intones 'But in Manchester today they still respect the genius of Germany (pause and with added emphasis) the genius of the Germany, that was.' Jennings and McAllister immediately draw a correlation, as they would later with *Listen to Britain*, between the sustaining values of the supposedly frivolous and popular and the 'respectable' or 'serious' high culture. It is at this point Vaughan argues that Jennings achieves 'a partial - but only partial - liberation of the film from its preconceptions.':

In the treatment (second version), the Halle orchestra is introduced by what one assumes to be sketch commentary: 'In the quieter cities where there are no raids . . . the Halle Orchestra still plays at Manchester, and the voice of Handel still thrills and portrays the hearts of the North Country.' In the film the Halle orchestra is introduced via a visual simile between the doors of (I take it) the Free Trade Hall and the air-raid shelter in the foregoing sequence - the concert thus taking on the colouring of 'entertainment under attack'. The music,

Beethoven's Fifth, then continues over shots of bomb- damage in what - though a shot of the cathedral spire gives us a hint - is only later verbally identified as Coventry; and by virtue of the images with which it is associated, it changes character during this sequence from the doom laden to the heroic. (425)

The second treatment, written prior to the raids in the North and the attack on Coventry, was now historically inaccurate but of little matter compared to the overall conception of the film and Jennings' response to the incident at Coventry. Rather the Coventry raid allowed Jennings to revise the treatment not render it obsolete. As Denis Forman has made clear 'When Humphrey was out on a shoot the script was in his mind. He had strong ideas and a determination to find material to illustrate them, picking up images as they came before his eyes. Some sequences were planned and dutifully shot, but usually they would melt away in the cutting room where the real creative process took place. Here his partnership with Mac was a close one and sometimes stormy.'(426) Rather than attempting to liberate the film from preconceptions he was reworking the musical material in the light of the Coventry incident. If the raids had not taken place he would perhaps have adhered to the second version of the script and 'the voice of Handel' would have been applied in a symbolic representation of defiance. However the music of Handel is now used to provide a message of heroism and militancy that would have been lacking prior to the Coventry incident.

Vaughan scrutinises the transition between air-raid shelter and Halle Orchestra, identifying the connection of 'entertainment

under attack' and the associative ironies and symbolism. Unfortunately he does not take his analysis far enough. He describes the sequence as follows:

The music, Beethoven 's Fifth, then continues over shots of bomb-damage in what - though a shot of the cathedral spire gives us a hint - is only later verbally identified as Coventry; and by virtue of the images with which it is associated, it changes character during the sequence from the doom laden to the heroic. The use of Beethoven over the achievements of the Luftwaffe, and its gradual inflexion into a statement of the heroism of ordinary British victims, is sufficiently rich in ironies not to need verbal reinforcement.(427)

Vaughan's brief descriptive analysis of the sequence is broadly correct, the juxtaposition of great German (humanitarian) music over the pictorial devastation caused by German bombers speaks for itself. However it is surprising, considering his wish to celebrate and raise the profile of the editorial achievements of McAllister, that he has not given this sequence further and more detailed analysis. He under-estimates the cultural significance and contemporary meaning Jennings and McAllister generate in their use of Beethoven's Fifth over the images of destruction that were once Coventry. Analysis of the relationship between the images of Coventry and the music of Beethoven reveal that it is composed visually out of two dissolves, one at the beginning and one at the end of the sequence, two pans, one at the beginning the other approximately in the middle and 15 cuts, six prior to the central pan and eight afterwards leading to the final dissolve. This structure is

closely related to the beat and phrasing of the music, providing a rhythmic intensity to the editing, emphasising the irony identified by Vaughan and providing a visual commentary on the meaning of the event. As the orchestra strikes up the prophetic opening bars of the Fifth, the camera lingers on the orchestra and the opening phrase of the symphony. This comparatively extended shot acts as an effective formal and ideological suture between the first and second half of the film. The war 'just around the corner' has now become a reality with the scurry to the shelter and the dramatic statement of the famous symphonic phrase sounding like the knocking of fate and explosion of bombs. The camera begins to pan slowly across the orchestra and, as they pick up the next musical phrase, a quick dissolve takes us into the same panning motion but over the wreckage of a devastated urban landscape. Music and image now comment. The genius of Beethoven, committed to the poetic expression of humanity and peace, plays across images of war. It is here that Jennings and McAllister emphasise the manichean dimensions of the conflict. As the camera pans across the rubble, gutted houses and the remnants of chimney stacks, the music reiterates variations on the famous opening phrase and provides rapid and violent accompaniment. The salutary call of french horns provides a poignant introduction to the next musical and visual sequence. It is on the very dying of those notes, as the woodwind take up a more delicate theme, that the first cut of the sequence is introduced, a close up of the remnants of a stained glass window. A literal and metaphorical correlation is drawn between the crucifixion of Christ, the house of God and that of Coventry.

Two faces stare up from the blitzed ruins of the cathedral into an empty sky so recently crowded with enemy aircraft. In time to the music, there follows a series of cuts. First the wall of the now open cathedral revealing a statue, perhaps Jesus or a saint with the lamb of God, quickly followed by an associated landscape shot of chimney stacks which mirror the surviving spires of two churches in the background; then the gutted remains of a house, sheared in half with its interior exposed to the world. On each rising musical phrase we cut to a closer view of this surreal domestic scene to focus on an upper room where a clock still sits on the mantelpiece. Again, as the music once more gathers pace, we cut back to a landscape shot of devastated homes in the foreground with the cathedral in the distance.

At this point the second theme of the sequence is introduced. The landscape shot initiates the second pan which provides a brief moment of calm in the rapid flow of imagery. As the camera pans across the scene we move from the theme of violence and destruction to the theme of the courage, resolve and spirit of the people. The pan follows a rescue worker climbing a ladder to secure a damaged building. We now focus at street level as people walk in the middle of cleared roads while rescue workers continue providing sustenance and help. The people and the life of Coventry are seen to be carrying on despite the obliterated buildings and disruption. A car bumps across a debris strewn road, a water tanker stands nearby and a mobile canteen, staffed by the W.V.S. is providing drinks for the people and rescue workers. It is at this point that the commentary interjects, linking the previously mundane preparatory activity

of the women in the first half of the film to the horrors of Coventry: 'Here in Coventry, those everyday tasks of the women came right through the fire and became heroic'. The final word is stressed as we cut to a window complete with W.V.S. logo.

The sequence of devastation is now complete. Through a quick dissolve we move inside the building to our last volunteer. During his first visit to Coventry, Jennings had been impressed by the character and ability of Mrs Hyde to tell a story. It is to her that the film turns after the images of the raid. Sitting behind her desk the commentary urges: 'Listen to Mrs Hyde', whereupon she delivers with underplayed but dramatic intonation, a poetic description of the drama of her work:

Y'know you feel such a fool, standing there in a crater [pause] pitch darkness of night [pause] holding mugs of tea, to the men bringing up bodies [pause]) you feel useless, and till you know that there's someone there - actually in that bombed house, who's alive and you can give that tea to. [pause] Then to hear the praises of the men themselves, 'that tea's jolly good, I've just washed the blood and dust out of my mouth' and we feel that we really have done a job, and a useful job.

Vaughan also refers to the interview with Mrs Hyde and how the second script had continued the commentary. 'So, with these leaders and helpers, the North lives and works and fights and manages to keep cheerful.'(428) But with the changed circumstance of the raid, he notes, 'In the film, we cut straight to the Huddersfield Choir; and even before they have struck up with the Hallelujah Chorus, there is an extraordinary frisson about this juxtaposition, as if the massed ranks of the people

were rising in homage to the woman's shy smile.' This celebratory statement is in fact both a link to Mrs Hyde and the Coventry blitz. However, he continues 'To add, 'and even now in Yorkshire the people find time to sing' is to add nothing.'⁽⁴²⁹⁾ But the statement in fact acts as an introduction to the final section of the film, one which celebrates the resilience and courage of the people and their response to the nature of the threat that now faces them.

The immediate cut to the choir is even more striking than Vaughan admits. As soon as Mrs Hyde has uttered her last line the cut is to the choirmaster who, as if he has been watching and listening to her speech, signals to the massed sitting ranks of the choir, by turning his head and raising his arms, to stand. It is over this image that the line discussed by Vaughan is delivered. But in fact what is being introduced is another dimension of national identity. Handel's *Messiah*, from which the Hallelujah Chorus is taken, was significant in the lives of many practising Christians in the United Kingdom. As Jeffrey Richards notes it is an Oratorio that holds within it powerful historical resonances of those defining elements of the British nation, 'Protestant, democratic, parliamentary, commercial and progressive' which in the past had informed resistance to earlier militant forms of continental expansionism.⁽⁴³⁰⁾ At this critical juncture the music and words of the oratorio enabled Jennings to stress the role of the warrior poet. On the word 'sing' we cut to large organ pipes issuing the thunderous opening notes of the Hallelujah chorus. A vertical pan down the pipes to the organist is followed by a cut to the massed ranks of the choir under the baton of the

conductor as they issue the first sequence of 'Hallelujah's'. At the beginning of the next choral sequence we cut to serried ranks of women, like Mrs Hyde herself, members of the respectable middle class, proclaiming 'Hallelujah'. Now the cutting follows the tempi of the music and choral response between the differing vocal sections of the choir. The more powerful, deep and resonant male voices, emphasised by a low angle shot, take up their vocal statements while the women respond with their calls of 'Hallelujah'. As the film cuts to the people walking to work along cleared streets past the ruins of the cathedral in Coventry the commentary continues 'People who sing like that in times like these cannot be beaten'. It was this feeling of resilience, courage and dogged determination that Jennings wanted to capture.⁽⁴³¹⁾

So far Jennings and McAllister have presented the preparation for battle; a literal and spiritual representation of a fearsome baptism into war complete with purgatorial fire. Now the people rise to the challenge, drawing upon a militant form of christianity that will answer the barbarism of the German attack. The religious connotation of sacrifice associated with the burnt out shell, the remaining tower of the cathedral and church spires of the city now become, like the dome of St Pauls which Jennings also used during these years of siege, symbols 'of Britain's indomitable spirit and resistance.'⁽⁴³²⁾ We cut to another street scene and the commentary continues: 'These people are slow to anger, not easily roused' (a sentiment reiterated in *Words for Battle*). As people stream past the camera and landscape of blitzed housing the commentary

accompanying the scene takes on both anger and hyperbole. 'Now they and their mates, their wives and children, have been subjected to the most savage ordeal ever inflicted upon human beings.' With a brief pause and dissolve we are taken to a scene of men working on an aircraft production line and here, with appropriate shots of diligent teamwork, the commentary continues: 'But these people, have the power to hit back [pause] and they are going to hit back, with all the skill of their hands [men working on aircraft engine], the tradition of their crafts [welding], and the fire in their hearts [men with screwdrivers working on aircraft components]. Once more, as the Hallelujah Chorus bursts forth, the people's skills, intellect and emotion are fused within a long shot of an aircraft production hanger. This is followed by a close up of men working on a machine gun turret and undercarriage and finally in a long shot, looking out through the doors of the hanger to the airfield, we see men busily completing tasks on a new Wellington bomber. The concluding commentary, echoing the introduction, breaks over the music to accompany these images: 'Out of the valleys of power and the rivers of industry will come the answer to the German challenge [pause] and the Nazis will learn, once and for all, that no one with impunity troubles the heart of Britain.' The final images of the film are now interwoven with the finale from the Hallelujah Chorus.

The winds of war alluded to in the introductory passage of the film may have passed over the North and Midlands, leaving in their wake a terrible legacy, but as the commentary asserts, the people still stand proud and the valleys of power and rivers of

industry have responded to the challenge. Once more the introductory motifs with their organic and spiritual connotations re-appear. This time, however, they are intercut with the take-off at dusk of a Wellington bomber. As the music rises to the crescendo of the final extended 'Hallelujah' the plane rises into the twilight on its journey as the screen darkens.

Expressing the Poetic and Emotional Response

Through a sophisticated interrelation of music and image the final sequence provides a symbolic summation of the courage, strength, and determination of the British people to win the war. Within sequences the formal elements of music and image are orchestrated to create an emotional and patriotic climax which reflects the distinctive technical strengths of Jennings and McAllister. The assessment by Hodgkinson and Sheratsky that *The Heart Of Britain* 'might well be considered the prototypical Jennings' war film, blazing the trail for the masterpieces that were to follow' holds more truth than they possibly realise.⁽⁴³³⁾ McAllister had proved that he could manipulate sound and image to capture the attention and emotions of the audience and turn relatively mediocre film material into an exceptional narrative.⁽⁴³⁴⁾ The subtle use of anticipatory sound, the visual editing of images and the camera panning across the Halle orchestra and then the desolation of Coventry to the music of Beethoven, prove that time, space and place could be transcended. The major weakness of the film is found in the quality, tone and intrusiveness of the commentary.

Music is integral to *Heart of Britain*, *Words For Battle* and

Listen to Britain. But there is a musicality to the very rhythmic structure of the film sequences that enables the ideological elements of the narrative to be woven into a dialectical and polythematic structure:

Both men [Jennings and McAllister] shared an equal acuteness of ear and eye, and both had mastered the very individual technique that they applied to most of Humphrey's non-dramatic work. This was, in effect, to construct an immensely sophisticated and powerful soundtrack, using speech, music and natural effects in equal measure, and to cut against the most striking complementary images they could find. (435)

It is this dynamic quality which is produced by the creation of harmony, dissonance and crescendos which help encourage an emotional response within the audience. The two musical sequences give an intimation of the ideas and techniques used to construct a text where sound and image are in dissonant and harmonic accord. Jennings and McAllister would continue to experiment with the interplay of sound and image. Their technique would be refined to a point where Denis Forman would regard their joint contribution to editing as equivalent to 'what Eisenstein and Pudovkin had done for the editing of pictures.' (436)

Jennings was probably quick to recognise the technical artistry of a first class editor who would not easily accept or subordinate himself to the authority of one of the senior directors in the Unit. As any editor must do, McAllister had to work with the materials provided and broadly within the parameters of the remit demanded by the director. Without

McAllister, however, Jennings' patriotic vision of the provinces may have taken on a more episodic form as we find in *Spare Time*, *S.S.Ionian* and *Spring Offensive*. The inclusion of the Coventry material, combined with the skill of McAllister altered the rhythmic and emotional intensity of the film. Jennings still has the introduction and episodes of static regional monologues to camera, but McAllister's influence is seen in the overall drive of the narrative and particularly in the visual and aural counterpoint of the Beethoven/Coventry devastation, the Handelian counter-attack and the closing sequence of the film. By matching the symbolic and notational tempo of Beethoven and Handel to the images, McAllister helps to inject into the film both a formal dynamism and enhanced symbolic meaning to achieve the appropriate emotional and patriotic response Jennings required. In *Heart of Britain* the monologues to camera and the combination of music and images reduced the overt presence of director/author to one of facilitator. The aim now was to reduce unnecessary and intrusive commentary further and use sounds and images with greater precision, a route he and McAllister were to follow in *Words For Battle* and *Listen to Britain*.

According to Hodgkinson and Sheratsky the original title for *Words For Battle* was to be *For Us the Living* but eventually regarded as 'too lugubrious' was abandoned.⁽⁴³⁷⁾ In keeping with his belief that the artist or poet should attempt to capture and express the historic moment the working title Jennings adopted for his three varied treatments became 'In England Now'.⁽⁴³⁸⁾ It seemed to him that the war was encouraging a new strength drawn directly from the people's heritage, art, literature and music. At the time of making *Heart of Britain* he wrote that 'people are singing Handel and listening to Beethoven as never before'⁽⁴³⁹⁾, though the extent to which this supposed expression was tantamount to some form of true democratic cultural shift is debatable. Jennings did perceive a shift in the average person's relationship to literature, poetry, music and art which had been absent during the thirties. It was a view that had some credence. Myra Hess had initiated the famous concerts at the National Gallery from October 1939. The B.B.C. had become more democratic and populist with its programming. The demand for classic literature and modern books could not always be fulfilled, and exhibitions by war-artists and the theatre were well attended.⁽⁴⁴⁰⁾

During a relatively quiet period, which Ziegler refers to as the 'enervating lull'⁽⁴⁴¹⁾, Jennings and McAllister had the opportunity in *Words For Battle* to touch on this reawakened poetic and literary sensibility while tailoring the film to the historical moment and the broader propaganda imperative.

Production however coincided with a change in Film Division policy. By early 1941, as the propaganda message moved towards an offensive posture, the function of the five minute film was being reconsidered:

There was a body of opinion, both inside and outside the MOI, that people were beginning to expect more than just the morale-raising type of film which had proved most successful in the first six months of the scheme. This view was expressed, for example, in a reasoned letter to the *Manchester Guardian* from a Liverpool University academic:

. . . these five-minute films might well be used to give direct information on matters of topical interest. The indirect method which documentary producers have built up has proved its worth, but it should not rule out the direct method . . . If the films are well made with good commentary and deal with topical matters they can be as successful as the more dramatic and 'human' films.(442)

Grierson would have supported such a suggestion - and the view that the Ministry of Information should 'bang them out one a fortnight and no misses.'(443) It is not surprising that when *Words For Battle* was eventually released it ran into the harsh criticism of *Documentary News Letter* :

Words For Battle is an illustrated lantern-slide lecture, with Olivier's curate-like voice reverently intoning various extracts from poetry, verse and topical political speeches. That tough old republican revolutionary, Milton, rubs shoulders with minor Browning ("reeking into Cadiz Bay") and lesser Kipling. Winston Churchill with his "fight on the beaches" is elbowed out of the final pay-off by Lincoln in Gettysburg war-aims vein, and the whole is neatly rounded off by long-focus shots of groups

of soldiers, sailors, airmen and women in uniform stepping gaily through the civilian crowds on the pavement. Altogether an extraordinary performance the effect of which on morale is quite incalculable. The man who must feel most out of place is poor old Handel. As he stood on his gaily coloured barge conducting the Water Music that was to bring him back into royal favour, he can hardly have guessed that it would come to this.(444)

Subsequent analysis has tended to treat the film with more respect and consideration with discussion identifying both supposed strengths and weaknesses in the film.(445) Kenneth J. Robson for example draws similar conclusions to *Documentary News Letter* but with added speculation:

In *Words For Battle* he chose the texts of seven famous men, all but one British, and all renowned authors or statesmen. The film's organizing principle is the juxtaposition of images - frequently busts - of famous men and well-known texts with contemporary scenes. The film's unity is provided less by any sense of beginning, middle and end than by a clustering of related ideas and images. The transitions are achieved through frequent dissolves as well as by continuing the text through a sequence of shots, each related in some way to the text . . . The texts are so familiar, the images of their speakers so static, that the film labours under their weight. Despite the imaginative cross-cutting, especially in the final scenes, *Words For Battle* looks like an illustrated text more than a film. Jennings may have been so awed by his sources that his respect for them led him to choose a very solemn tone, inappropriate to action.(446)

Recalling Nowell-Smith's description of *Spare Time*, Robson sees Jennings failing to achieve the appropriate degree of momentum

to achieve narrative progression. Vaughan also identifies a restrictive 'structural logic', while Winston regards the film as the 'end of a short road' - a formalist cul-de-sac marked by an 'insufficient inscription of causality and chronology . . . As Dai Vaughan observes the film "'works better in the head than on the screen.'"(447) But Hodgkinson and Sheratsky regard it as an 'exquisite little masterpiece . . . deceptively simple . . . perhaps the purest form of documentary, in that the words of documents themselves are used as material for documentary and the images are taken entirely from other documentary films [sic] . . . combining the quintessence of Jennings' love of England with a clear call for assistance from the as yet formally uninvolved United States.'(448) Cull describes the film as 'short and lyrical [with] stirring passages'. And Nowell-Smith finds the film's climax 'chilling and exhilarating'. Vaughan, though, detects a 'chauvinist bias' and 'suggestion[s] of jingoism'.(449)

The Politics of Language

The key word in each title of the film trilogy - 'Heart', 'Words' and 'Listen' - emphasises the correlation between the physical and the aesthetic; the sensual response of the body to external reality and experience. Richard Rorty believes that in the struggle for survival words function as tools enabling human beings to comprehend and adapt to their environment.(450) Language itself adapts and changes over time, a form of metamorphosis which reflects both the development and developing qualities of that 'organism' the nation. Echoing Jennings, Peter Abbs asserts:

'Art comes out of art . . . We improvise and even extend artistic grammars, but we rarely invent them; they are 'there' in the culture, and it is in the transpersonal culture that art is both made and understood. The development of the sensory mode as a means of apprehending the nature of human experience depends upon the availability and range of these artistic grammars.'⁽⁴⁵¹⁾

In a radio broadcast of 1938, 'Poetry and the Ordinary Listener' Jennings described Darwin's explanation of the development of language and the arts. 'Man evolved first music, then poetry, and then finally language in general . . . for a definite social reason - that's to say, to frighten enemies by making noises, and also partly to enjoy themselves and to show off to each other . . . Darwin said that our feeling on hearing a piece of music or poetry . . . was due - not to any superficial pleasure . . . but that it touched something inside us, which actually goes straight back to our original primitive needs.'⁽⁴⁵²⁾ Each film in the trilogy attempts to utilise elements of those 'artistic grammars' to illustrate that 'protection and showing off' located within the primitive nature of humanity. *Heart of Britain* had already considered the relationship between poetic expression, memory, the environment and the human response. *Listen to Britain* would chart how 'spiritual' strength would combine with their ingenuity, skills and technical ability to face, adapt and respond to the enemy. More immediately, through a pragmatic approach to poetry, *Words For Battle* would provide spiritual sustenance through the words of the poet. Poetic language would reveal the relevance of poetry and the poet to the defence of the country.

In the radio broadcast 'Plagiarism in Poetry' (1938), Jennings

discussed the technique of Thomas Gray:

poetry does not consist of naturalness on the one hand and artificiality on the other, but a fusion of the two . . . If, simply by the gift of being a poet, a poet manages to get into words (and let out of words) real human emotions, we shall call them natural, as indeed we must, because it's the most natural thing in the world to us as human beings to recognise human emotion, and we must allow our poet to write his poetry just as he wishes. Gray wished to employ plagiarism as a method of writing poetry.(453)

In *Words For Battle*, Jennings attempts to engender emotional responses by reworking historic and contemporary poetry and speeches and marrying them to contemporary images of war. From a linguistic perspective we may interpret *Words For Battle* in a literal and metaphoric sense. Churchill's propaganda call to 'Give us the Tools' is taken up by Jennings as he offers the English language as a metaphorical weapon in the hands of the warrior poet and statesman. In doing so, he illustrates not only the timelessness of poetry but 'poetry in action' a 'poetry which is doing something'.(454) Now when poet and public are, as he puts it 'in agreement with each other', poetry can acknowledge not only the 'practical' and 'everyday', the 'simple and familiar', but throw into relief situations in our lives which correspond to those confronted by our ancestors.(455) Here was a chance to use documentary film in a similar way to the theatre of the past: 'For a short period at the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth several Englishmen used 'the theatre' as they found it, for their own purposes of poetry and

analysis of behaviour - *connaissance* - we have no word for it - naturally.'⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ Jennings re-iterates those supposed universal and timeless qualities of the English and their democratic tradition to encourage moral strength and morale. It is a discourse complemented by images of industrialism, the consequences of bombing and the defence of the British Isles. By juxtaposing contemporary and historic images against selected passages of poetry and prose he creates a reflexive and potentially subversive discourse out of the democratic principles of English republicanism that looks towards the democratic heritage of the United States and post-war reconstruction.

To attempt his form of '*connaissance*', *Words For Battle* demanded the choice of familiar poetic texts and speeches which could embody both his personal vision and the propaganda imperative. To fully appreciate *Words For Battle*, one must therefore pay close attention to the choice and ordering of the extracts and the associations and connotations expressed by the visual imagery. This required editing that was highly sensitive to the interrelationship of the aural and visual. As Jennings said, 'we chunked ourselves into it pretty deep and the result turned everybody's stomach's (sic) over'. But more important, he felt vindicated by what he perceived as the 'huge and quite unexpected success in the theatres here.'⁽⁴⁵⁷⁾

Poetry as Propaganda

In formal terms, probably the most important factor connecting *Words For Battle* and *Listen to Britain* is the

soundtrack. Both increasingly extend elements evident in *Heart of Britain* such as anticipatory sound and the integration of music and image. Hodgkinson and Sheratsky regard *Words For Battle* as an evocative tone poem: 'The accompanying images do not merely illustrate the words. They reverberate with them, providing fresh associations in the same manner as do words in poetry'.⁽⁴⁵⁸⁾ Bjorn Sorensen asserts that 'Jennings's defined purpose with the film was to let the verbal text take prominence, subordinating the cinematic treatment to the established code of verbal poetic language . . . In *Words For Battle*, poetic film language can be seen as an *extension* of poetic verbal language.'⁽⁴⁵⁹⁾ Arguing that the cinema audience tends to identify prose and fiction with narrative (fictional) cinema and poetry with documentary (factual) or associative cinema, Sorensen regards *Words For Battle* as transcending the boundary between the two linguistic codes and associated cinematic principles.⁽⁴⁶⁰⁾ This is most evident in the alliterative relationship between the spoken and visual image:

During eight minutes [*Words For Battle*] presents seven texts read by Laurence Olivier, each text 'illustrated' by film segments. The texts are, in order of appearance, excerpts from Camden's *Description of Britain*, Milton's *Areopagitica*, Blake's 'Jerusalem', Browning's 'Home Thoughts From the Sea', Kipling's 'The Beginnings', Churchill's famous speech of 4 June 1940 ('we shall fight on the beaches') and finally Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Three of the texts are excerpts from poems, the other four may be termed 'belles-lettres'. The poetic connotations in this film are quite obvious as it is fully possible to regard the film as a visual paraphrase of the texts.

The editing takes great care in juxtaposing images to correspond with the text down to single word level.(461)

In this sense a formal correspondence exists between *Words For Battle* and *The Heart of Britain*, with the precise correlation of image and sound to the rhythm and beat of the music creating multiple emotional statements. As Sorensson notes, the poetic has a 'paradoxical ability to convey an increased amount of information compared with non-poetical verbal texts. [By] imposing the restrictions of poetic language on a verbal text (rhyme, metre, etc), one finds that the number of meaningful elements in it acquires the capacity to grow.'(462) The choice of texts not only deconstruct boundaries between documentary and fiction but when complemented by the chosen imagery, take on a timeless quality and heightened polysemic property.

The Chrono-Logic of Text and Image

The poet could not fulfil his role, Jennings believed unless 'he does two things: unless he talks about the things that the community knows about, the things that they're interested in, and unless he also looks on the community's past - at the figures, the monuments, the achievements, the defeats, or whatever it may be, that have made the community what it is.'(463) *Words For Battle* makes no particular distinction between past and present. It is a text emphasising how the past informs the present and a possible future. The words stir the memory to indicate the contemporary condition but also future potential. The choice of extracts is both eclectic and relational. In the past communal and individual identity were often lived

through the traditions of ritual and the execution of the everyday. In the modern world to remind us of who we are, we are likely to turn to sites of memory such as literature, monuments and poetry which become invested with notions of national identity.

Words For Battle possesses a chronology but it is not explicitly apparent in the formal structure of the film. Rather it is created through an overarching narrative composed out of a series of seemingly discrete aural/visual episodes. These episodes present an interrelated multi-dimensional commentary directed towards British and American audiences. Included are elements of a shared international identity based on a belief in individual freedom, support for free trade, popular democratic principles and resistance to totalitarianism. The thoughts and words of the poets are at once personal and universal, applicable in their equivocal sentiment to the identity of both nations. The words of the poet and the speech of the politician help fix the historic and contemporary drama in our lives and the collective memory. By touching upon the popular memory and the drama of past and present, each extract informs and stimulates the imagination, encouraging awareness, resolve and future militant action. The imagery, far from being merely illustrative, provides the appropriate signifiers to connect the text to the individual and collective identity. In addition Jennings also attempts to salvage from history a radical domestic political message and to instruct the general sensibility in such a way as to cope with the coming sacrifice of life for a new future.

Adam Phillips remarks that Darwin and Freud 'were

fascinated by the losses that could be survived, as evidence of lives that had been lived . . . Life was about what could be done with what was left, with what still happened to be there.'⁽⁴⁶⁴⁾ The politics of memory Jennings articulates in *Words For Battle* does not wallow in nostalgic or patriotic sentiment. Memory provides the trigger for action and justifies loss. Text(s) and image(s) take us through a series of reflections upon the intellectual and physical conditions which combine to state the imperative of continuing the struggle of a just war. Jennings' vision is not chauvinistic as Vaughan believes but a dynamic and progressive force set against the forces of reaction and oppression.⁽⁴⁶⁵⁾ The words are declaimed by one of the leading English actors of the day, Laurence Olivier, readily recognisable here and in the United States through Hollywood films. In terms of the overall narrative, each quotation is stated with appropriately weighted emotion. They gradually build through an associative logic to express Jennings' three simultaneous but distinct messages: the rousing of a peaceful British nation to defence and justified retaliation; an appeal to the United States to commit itself to a programme of military intervention; and a celebration of the human resources and will indicating the potential for radical post-war change.

A 'Just War': Polysemia of Text and Image

Apart from the penultimate sequence of the film, all the imagery utilised in *Words For Battle* was culled from archives. By focussing on the theme of a just war, the chronology of the film can be characterised as follows: passive speculation on the

human and physical resources of the nation (Camden); the raising of consciousness (Milton); popular mobilisation and taking up of arms (Blake); a reflection on duty (Browning); justified action (Kipling); the defence of and sacrifice for democracy by the old world (Churchill); a call on the world's largest and most powerful liberal democracy for assistance and similar sacrifice (Lincoln). All are bracketed between a wordless yet stirring introduction and a conclusion supported by the music of Handel resonant, as in *Heart of Britain*, with militant protestantism.

Most of the eight minutes of film are taken up with poetry, prose and associated imagery.⁽⁴⁶⁶⁾ Each text is prefaced by an appropriate image related to the author, a bust, gravestone or a statue. As the introductory music nears its conclusion, the introductory imagery of clouds dissolves to an ancient map of the British Isles, the frontispiece to *Camden's Description of Britain*. Olivier begins the quotation outlining the physical and human properties of the island. As Sorensen notes, 'the editing takes great care in juxtaposing images to correspond with the text down to the single-word level':

In the initial excerpt from Camden the principle is followed closely: the words ' . . . The earth fertile with all kind of grain. . .' are juxtaposed with a long shot of a landscape of wheat fields; ' . . . Abundant with pasture . . .' is illustrated with a long shot of landscape with cattle in the foreground. During the sequence a convention is so convincingly established that when the words ' . . . beautified with many populous cities, fair boroughs, good towns and well-built villages' are read while the image of a landscape with a copse of trees (introduced to the words ' . . . plentifully wooded . . . ') lingers on the screen for a short time, it conveys

the same feeling as encountering a halting rhyme in an otherwise well-crafted poem.⁽⁴⁶⁷⁾

The criticism is correct though it tends to verge on the pedantic. The editing must to some extent compromise between the tempo of the visual image and that of the spoken word or it would become a rapid litany of images crudely illustrating the text. Care has been taken to ensure that each visual cut falls upon a specific word or brief phrase within the overall description. For example at one point in this sequence the text is as follows: 'the earth fertile with all kind of grain, manured with good husbandry, rich in minerals of coals, tin, lead copper, not without gold and silver, abundant with pasture, replenished with cattle both tame and wild, plentifully wooded - beautified with many populous cities, fair boroughs, good towns, and well built villages'. On the word 'grain' we cut to an image of grasses in the foreground and in the distance the rolling scarp of a chalk down and fields of grain stretching into the distance; an image sustained until the word 'tin' coincides with a cut to a quarry face. Again the image is held until the word 'pasture' which is accompanied by a cut to fields and cattle on a hillside. The supposed break in the relationship occurs in the final lines. At the phrase 'plentifully wooded' a large copse of trees appears over the words 'with many populous cities, fair boroughs' supposedly dispelling the rhythmic association. However on the following phrase 'good towns' we cut to a silhouette of a castle with houses pressed closely against its walls followed by the final words 'and well built villages'. It would not have been feasible to illustrate cities and boroughs without the associated

images becoming purely perfunctory. Sorensen overlooks the final image, failing to recognise that McAllister and Jennings maintain what Hodgkinson and Sheratsky call the reverberation between words and image; that echo of the oral by the visual present throughout the sequence.

The choice of Camden to open the film bears strong comparison with the opening of *The Heart of Britain*, with its emphasis on the organic link between the soil, the bounty of the earth and natural defences, the people, their communities and national persona. Superficially we may regard Camden's description as a brief historic and geographical appraisal of Britain, but the implication is one of a peaceful and resourceful nation at peace with itself. In very superficial terms this general description, divorced from the specific history of either nation, equates Britain with the United States. Both can be regarded as countries that were forged through the energy and imagination of their inhabitants. By exploiting its natural resources, the United States, like Britain has become a natural and bountiful fortress based upon the principles of liberty. The implication of such an assessment is that any relatively isolated (or isolationist), industrious and peaceful nation becoming warlike (reinforced by Handel's music at the end of the sequence) is the response to external aggression.

The transition to the following Milton sequence is comparatively unrefined. Originally Jennings had envisaged an introductory montage of landscapes to accompany Milton's words, but it was abandoned for the Camden sequence. Over the music of Handel we cut rather inelegantly to an internal shot of

the rose window in Westminster Abbey.⁽⁴⁶⁸⁾ A vertical pan runs down to Poets Corner and a close up of the bust of the protestant republican Milton which introduces the notion of the warrior poet. A visual correlative can be drawn between sites of popular memory, the last shot of the medieval castle (the seat of secular power) and that of a medieval cathedral (spiritual power). These, along with the close-up shot of Milton (radical democratic republicanism), are held together by the vigour of the music. The Milton sequence maintains the association of Christian militancy and popular action with the existing political and military relationship between United States and Britain. As the music fades we are introduced to Milton's text:

Methinks I see in my mind a mighty
and puissant nation rousing herself
like a strong man after sleep,
and shaking her invincible locks.
Methinks I see her as an eagle
mewing her mighty youth, kindling
her undazzled eyes at the full
midday beam, purging and unscaling
her long abused sight at the
fountain itself of heavenly radiance,

Following a dissolve from the bust of Milton, this part of the stanza is accompanied visually by an aerial shot of an industrial landscape followed by a sequence depicting Air Training Corps Recruits watching a hurricane fighter going through its paces. One obvious interpretation of the sequence is to regard it as a visual metaphor for the spirit and resolve of the British nation.⁽⁴⁶⁹⁾ Sound and image are edited in such a fashion as to create both general and specific associations through

aural/visual alliteration.(470) However Vaughan interprets this sequence as evidence of an unconvincing attempt by Jennings to marry populism and patriotism:

In *Words For Battle*, the feeling that the quotations have been selected by criteria other than the filmmaker's conviction of their appropriateness can be located in a certain discomfort, a chafing, in the individual symbols. Thus Milton may liken the nation's spirit to an eagle, drawing upon the metaphoric associations of splendour, sovereignty and soaring flight; and a Hurricane may be likened to an eagle in its physical grace and in the literal similarity whereby it swoops upon its enemy out of the sun: but to set the Milton quotation against shots of Hurricanes is not to enrich the symbolism but - since the similes are of radically different kinds - to confuse it. The suggestion of jingoism which crystallises at such a moment derives from the fact that to construe the multiple metaphor as it appears to be intended would be to consent to a nationalism so prejudged as to be uncritical.(471)

Vaughan assumes that Jennings shared the broad left hostility towards patriotism. In fact Jennings regarded such leftwing dislike as irritating.(472) For him patriotism implied a love of one's country but not necessarily the jingoistic celebration implied by Vaughan. It is the people's resilience and determination to preserve their life, identity and here particularly their liberty that he celebrates. Robson recognises this yet interprets such aural/visual associations as lacking in focus:

Words For Battle displays considerable patriotic fervour, but it conspicuously lacks any personal animus. The film promises retaliation, but, as is

typical with Jennings, its emphasis falls upon the enormous capacity to withstand assault, rather than the desire to respond in kind. His films could stir up towering emotions, but they seldom directed these at a specific target.(473)

In fact Milton's text articulates three messages addressed to two distinct audiences. The opening sentence picks up on the latent power implicit within the description provided by Camden: 'Methinks I see in my mind a mighty and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks.' Such an expressive opening echoes Jennings' criticism of the British establishment and his exaltation of the spontaneous and voluntary efforts of the common people to save themselves. An aerial shot of a domestic industrial landscape mirrors the notion of 'valleys of power and rivers of industry' that Jennings spoke of in *Heart of Britain*, which may be read as a statement correlating with the passage of the Lend-Lease Bill in the United States.(474) The decision to move from a position of neutrality to formal alliance in order to confront the totalitarian threat finds poetic and symbolic expression in the following lines: 'Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam, purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance'. This combination of domestic and international action becomes crystalized within the image and flight of the hurricane. Like the spitfire, it takes on domestic and international meaning. Continual reporting in the United States of the Battle of Britain and Blitz led informed opinion in America to believe that it was only a matter of time before Britain would

capitulate under the German onslaught. However the vital line of air defence was held by young British and allied conscripts and young American volunteers who were later organised into 'Eagle Squadron', the eagle being the national symbol of the United States. It is possible to equate Milton's eagle with the British people, the American volunteers and the nation of the United States. It is also possible to regard the young trainees, gathered around the plane and watching the soaring flight of the hurricane, as representative of the sacrifice by American and allied pilots in defending the birthplace (fountain) of modern democracy. That defence hinging on a fighting machine built by the effort, ingenuity and technical skill of the British civilian army.(475)

The determination of the civilian army and the spirit and bravery of the pilots are immediately contrasted with the Nazi high command through a combination of Milton's words and imagery:

The metaphoric treatment continues after a short transition ('While the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds'/aerial photo of moving evening clouds) with a direct reference to the Germans in which '... with those also that love the twilight' is placed directly over a sequence that starts with a shot of the German flag with the swastika, to be followed by shots taken from *Triumph of the Will* and German newsreels portraying the Nazi leaders. In a pan shot showing an assortment of prominent Nazis, we find this unique attempt at alliteration in film. At the end of the panning movement, we (and certainly the British audience at the time) immediately recognize the face of Joseph Goebbels, a fact that is underlined by an editing trick which makes the moment the pan reaches Goebbels' face

coincide with the word 'gabble' in Milton's '. . . and in their envious gabble.(476)

This very brief sequence is more dense than Sorensson realises. While identifying the alliterative style of the sequence, Hodgkinson and Sheratsky also comment upon the 'moody', 'obscure' and 'blurred' quality of some of these filmed images.(477) In fact the quality of the film and its manipulation enhance the poignancy of Milton's words. The sequence begins after a fade from an aerial shot of the fighter wheeling upward, on the words 'heavenly radiance', into the brilliant sunlight of a still cloudless sky above the English Channel. With the screen dark, Olivier commences the second half of the sentence, 'while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds' and there appears an ominously turbulent, dark, clouded sky which in turn quickly dissolves into a fluttering German flag. The contrast between the sky of 'heavenly radiance' and the clouded sky is accentuated by running the very brief segment of film in reverse at speed. This unnatural image which depicts a corrupt or corrupted nature, where clouds dissolve in a violent and unnatural wind, may symbolise a world and time out of joint. An immediate dissolve into the fluttering of the German swastika associates the corruption of the elements with that of the political corruption and violence of the Nazis. The manichean nature of the symbolism is continued through a cut to an image of Hitler and Goering walking through a wood and obscured by the trees. The gloomy, secretive and voyeuristic nature of the scene is enhanced by the grainy quality of the imagery. Over these images Milton's words 'with those also that love the twilight, flutter

about' directly reinforce the imagery of sky and flag, associating them with the source of evil and corruption. Immediately another cut brings two successive low angle images of military band leaders on the words 'amazed at what she means', thus emphasising the pomp of militarism. Here words and images gain dual meaning. On the one hand it can be understood as an 'amazed' German response to the defiance of the British while on the other intimating that the evil of fascism, like some delirium, has caused the German nation to take leave of its senses and liberty. The final cut takes us to a comparatively slow panning shot over various faces of the Nazi elite seemingly in a trance-like state listening to a speech. As they stare hypnotically upward, possibly toward a podium, it is not difficult to imagine that they are following the wheeling course of the British fighter. As Olivier utters the final line of the extract 'and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms' the screen once more dissolves into darkness.

The imagination and technical dexterity informing this exceedingly brief sequence is symptomatic of the film as a whole and in part belies Vaughan's assertion that McAllister was overly constrained by the soundtrack. Vaughan inadvertently undermines his own argument when discussing the differing role of symbolism for McAllister and Jennings in the editing of collaborative texts:

It is obvious, however, that Jennings's practice - particularly as revealed in such a film as *Words For Battle* - tends towards a form of symbolic usage; but whereas the 'symbolism' of McAllister was, on the whole, transient and generated from within the

text, that of Jennings consisted more in the importance of associative, connotative meanings from the wider sphere of culture and history.(478)

Although the poetic texts chosen by Jennings provide the organising principle for the film, the images are not merely reduced to a subordinated role of illustration. Vaughan concedes that 'The two were to prove compatible. Indeed, it may well be that in this tendency towards symbolic working we see the common ground - the aesthetic and procedural as opposed to the ideological/personal common ground - for the Jennings/McAllister partnership.'(479) In fact rather than constraining McAllister the choice of texts would have challenged him to integrate the soundtrack with the visual representation of the ideas Jennings wished to articulate.

Originally the idea for the film was more substantial, with *Words For Battle* to be partnered by an anti-Nazi equivalent. Losing the prospect of a companion piece Jennings was faced with the problem of integrating the overall propaganda message of both films while achieving a balance between running time and his specifically interrelated poetic and political messages. Reduced to one film initially he included a rather pedantic introduction explaining the idea of poet as warrior and an extract from Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy*.(480) Both were eventually deleted for the abridged verse from Camden, so introducing the audience to verse and image without explanation but improving the overall tempo and poetic style of the film. This may help account for the change in title from *In England* *Now* to the more self-explanatory *Words For Battle*.

However the omission of the Shelley text, originally located

after the extract from Blake's 'Jerusalem', had implications for the tenor of the domestic political message of the film. Its deletion both structurally and ideologically abridges the implied political and poetic radicalism of the text and undermines the meaning which can be attached to the sequence based upon Blake. Robson describes the sequence as follows:

The section that introduces Blake is typical of Jennings's technique in *Words For Battle*. Just as in the preceding scene a bust of Milton served for the introduction of his lines from *Aereopagitica*, a plaque commemorating Blake accompanies his famous lines from *Milton*:

Bring me my bow of burning gold;
Bring me my arrows of desire;
Bring me my spear - O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

The accompanying images are of a train (Jennings's image of industrialism) and the scenes of London streets. Clearly this is Blake's London with its "dark satanic mills." Reverting to scene of pastoral innocence, "England's pleasant pastures," Jennings provides images of children playing in the woods and rowing gently in boats as the narrator concludes with Blake's determination that

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant land.(481)

He concludes: 'Blake's idea of contraries seems labored and obvious, suffering from too great a literalism.'(482) Robson, like Vaughan, does little justice to the deliberate and balanced editing of sound and image, failing to notice the anticipatory

sound of the sequence. It is the sound of children over the final frames of the Nazi High Command. The image of an apparently transfixed group of elderly men is disturbed by the natural sound of childish voices and patter of feet. Through a quick dissolve appears the explanation - the organised evacuation of children from the homes and streets of inner London. The four lines which make up this first brief stanza are complemented by the initial dissolve, three precise cuts and finally another dissolve prior to the start of the second stanza.

Through scenes reminiscent of *London Can Take It!*, the United States are made aware that it is the young, innocent and vulnerable who are at most danger from the Nazis. A medium shot of children's faces with their parents is held until the first word of the poem is uttered. On the word 'Bring' we cut to the London County Council plaque locating the birthplace of Blake the poet and printer. This shot is held until the last word of the second line 'desire' with a cut back to a high vertical shot of the young evacuees. This time they are walking across a covered concourse carrying bags and suitcases. It is on the last two words of this short stanza that we deduce where they are. As Olivier utters the words 'of fire' a cut to a low angled close up of a train steaming majestically to the platform reveals their initial destination to be a railway station.

The editing follows the same pattern in the second stanza to extend and bring this mini-narrative to a conclusion. Moving out of the darkness of the dissolve we are now part of that group of child evacuees in a moving railway carriage staring out of the train window. An extended point-of-view shot reveals the backs

and serried ranks of inner city Victorian terraced housing. It is not until we reach the word 'Jerusalem' that we cut to a medium shot of the children happily playing in a boat. This image is given more geographical and ideological weight by the following cut on the word 'green' to a longshot which contextualises the preceding image and reinforces the pastoral notion of rural tranquillity and safety. The rural lyricism of the scene is emphasised by a final cut to depict a large group of children engaged in gathering tinder under the sun-dappled canopy of a wood while we hear the dying strains of Parry's 'Jerusalem' enhanced by a full string orchestration. As the last chords subside the image dissolves into darkness.

The combination of children and war is an emotive and powerful propaganda weapon. It reinforces Britain's need for both American official (Lend-Lease) and voluntary civilian aid in all forms. Like *Spring Offensive*, the emotion behind this message also intimates at popular post-war social and economic reconstruction. Both Robson and Vaughan castigate what they regard as crude literalism.⁽⁴⁸³⁾ Vaughan writes that: 'to accompany these specific lines with specific shots of kids frolicking in the woodlands . . . can only be to limit rather than expand the sense', while Robson feels 'the film ultimately loses its purpose in its reverence for its subjects' speculating that the poetic gravity of the texts may have 'over-awed' Jennings '[leading] him to choose a very solemn tone, inappropriate for action.'⁽⁴⁸⁴⁾ Robson makes a literal association between 'a train (Jennings' image of industrialism) and the scenes of London streets. Clearly this is Blake's London with its "dark satanic

mills"" thereby drawing attention from the broader historical conditions that inform the film content and helping to perpetuate the myth of Jennings the esoteric artist and intellectual.

It is unlikely that Jennings was 'awed' by the poetry. The association between text and contemporary images are purposely direct in order to emphasise the value and relevance of the warrior poet committed to liberty. Simultaneously Jennings is attempting to express, through the poetic relevance of Blake and the narrative of the evacuees, the potential for change which could emerge out of the existing crisis. To say the film 'lacks personal animus' is to fail to recognise how he allows each text to speak for itself and for him. With chosen extracts from Milton, Blake, the deleted Shelley and later Lincoln we can ascertain that running through *Words For Battle* is a call to defend and extend liberty. Not only are their words actively mobilised to defend democracy against Fascism but also to encourage a newly confident people to realise and at least begin to imaginatively contest the existing balance of power, which has contributed to the existing situation, and to consider a post-war democracy in their own image. Like Philips' assessment of the writings of Darwin, Jennings' early war films represent a 'slow and silent side attack, his language hints at a politics and a theology that the content and the context of the work seem to disavow.'⁽⁴⁸⁵⁾ The children leaving London see through the train window similar cramped urban housing conditions from which they have recently departed. It was the Labour controlled London County Council that encouraged slum clearance, housing redevelopment and helped pioneer rural conservation around

London in the nineteen thirties.⁽⁴⁸⁶⁾ Within this context the second stanza of Blake's poem, symbolically prefaced by the London County Council plaque, can be understood not as concluding with pastoral idealism but with a sharp political reminder to those in power that after the war there will be no returning to the previous living conditions. Just rewards must be delivered: 'I will not cease from mental flight, Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand, Till we have built Jerusalem, In England's green and pleasant land'. The conclusion evokes as well as a pastoral idyll, a hard political goal for the future.

Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* was written in response to the 'Peterloo Massacre' of 1819. The deleted sequence skilfully maintains the polythematic nature of the propaganda message which tacitly suggests action by the people and the politics of reform:

Sequence 4

Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nursling of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another;

Man ploughing
Man at bench in factory
AFS man
RAF recruits changing
into uniform.

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you -
Ye are many - they are few.⁽⁴⁸⁷⁾

Army marching
Navy.

In the first stanza the civilian army is at work and the critical front line over the English Channel is being held by young airforce recruits. These men are themselves an example of the 'Backbone of Britain' that historically unsung class of English

men and women who are absent from the written history of British society. It is as much their skill, energy and sacrifice that has made Britain the country it is.

The second stanza however mystifies Jackson: 'even allowing for rhetorical exaggeration it does not make sense to say of Britain's war against the Nazis 'Ye are many - they are few'.⁽⁴⁸⁸⁾ Although Jackson regards these stanzas as 'silently fret[ting] at questions about the history of English radicalism and the place of poets in that history' he fails to associate those lines with the contemporary position of Jennings the poet, immersed in the potential of the moment. Jackson states that: 'Shelley's vision of working class revolution in 'The Mask of Anarchy'. . . and Peterloo itself, weighed heavily in Jennings' view of English history. He included both of them in *Pandaemonium*, and . . . discussed both at length in the second of his radio talks'.⁽⁴⁸⁹⁾ However in this case Jackson does not connect Jennings' reading of history to any contemporary message related to future domestic politics. When the concern of Shelley is coupled with the earlier stanzas from Milton and Blake, it becomes clear that a radical proclamation for domestic political reform is being made.

If we regard the last stanza as both an appeal to the numerical superiority of the Empire and the United States and a call to the British people to confront their rulers with the demand for future political reform and economic emancipation, the deleted sequence brings an emotive and imaginatively charged climax to the first half of the film. Jackson inadvertently points towards another possible reason why this passage was excluded: 'Shelley sent the poem back from Italy,

his editor Leigh Hunt suppressed it on grounds that "I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse"; another conspicuous failure of the poet to reach his public.'⁽⁴⁹⁰⁾ As the film reaches the climax of the Blake sequence it is followed by a fade to black indicating the closure of the first half of the film.

The propaganda message now becomes more clearly directed at the United States. By April 1941 the Battle of the Atlantic was reaching its height.⁽⁴⁹¹⁾ Jennings had intended to include reference to Wavell's North Africa campaign. However by the time of production many of those gains had been reversed.⁽⁴⁹²⁾ The British merchant fleet in the Mediterranean and Atlantic were increasingly vulnerable to U-boat attack. Both the Browning and following Kipling sequence emphasised duty, sacrifice and the nature of the cause. Browning's *Home Thoughts From the Sea* emphasises similarities between the historical and contemporary military position of Britain. The sequence is introduced by depicting the highlighted title and opening lines of the poem and illustrated with extracts originally shot for *S.S. Ionian* and *Able Seaman*. With its direct reference to British maritime history and military heritage Browning's poem provides an opportunity to recall the central message of Alexander Korda's *That Hamilton Woman* (1941):

It is a haunting thing how the times of Lord Nelson
so closely parallel those of today. All Europe was
ruled by a mighty dictator. England was being
blockaded mercilessly and in turn was enforcing a
counter blockade. Napoleon with a huge army openly

declared "Give me six hours as master of the English Channel and I will be master of the world".(493)

Olivier played Nelson in *That Hamilton Woman* and now was reiterating the same sentiments he uttered in the film: 'Nelson tells the isolationist Court of Naples: "If you value your freedom, stir yourselves," and warns his own Admiralty: "Napoleon can never be master of the world until he has smashed us up - and believe me gentlemen, he means to be master of the world. You cannot make peace with dictators, you have to destroy them, wipe them out!"(494) This time Olivier's tone is wistful as we follow the uncertain passage of a merchant ship. The words of Browning are associated visually with the vulnerability of merchant convoys travelling from the Mediterranean to Britain. The often hazy imagery enhances the wistful delivery with an almost dream-like quality while meditating upon past military glory and the contemporary threat to the ship and Britain's survival:

'Nobly, Nobly Cape Saint Vincent
to the North-West died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red,
reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full
in face Trafalgar lay

The cut from the highlighted passage on the word 'Cape' takes us on board ship. The camera tracks the progress of porpoises leaping in the wake of the bow. A second cut on 'Sunset' contextualises the ship in a long panning shot of a merchant convoy in the evening sunset. Another cut on 'mid' and we are

back on the boat watching a merchant seaman at the stern caught in a haze of light about to raise the ship's ensign. This is followed by a dissolve to a close up of a bust of Nelson over the words 'Trafalgar lay'. This parallel between naval history (the British victory at the battle of Trafalgar) and the contemporary military situation continues over the words 'in the dimmest North-East distance, dawned Gibraltar'. Another dissolve brings an opaque longshot of Gibraltar Rock and the Spanish coastline as the ship nears this historic British port. On the final words of the line 'grand and grey' we cut to a similar medium shot of the towering rock as the ship nears the safety of its destination.

The following line becomes an appeal to the United States for aid and the British audience for action: 'Here and here did England help me: How can I help England? - say'. On 'help me' there is a cut to a point-of view shot from the ship passing the old fortifications of the harbour. These words are given added emotional resonance and poignancy in the context of the following line. 'Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray'. The first half of the sentence is accompanied by a shot of the captain on the bridge of the ship which equates him with the 'I' of the sentence. The previous and present line becomes a highly personal and immediate statement of a man risking his life, and by association the crew, rather than an abstract appeal. So far the ship has survived the risks of the convoy run. But after a cut on 'this evening' to a shot of the raising of the flag signifying departure (and held through the opening words of the final line 'While Jove's planet') a cut is made to a long establishing shot of the evening sky from

Gibraltar Rock. As the ship is about to leave the protective harbour there coincides the last phrase 'rises yonder, silent over Africa'. With the ship slipping its day-time refuge to continue its hazardous night-time passage towards England we are also reminded of the uncertain outcome of the conflict being waged by British land forces on the shores of that continent. The screen darkens.

A vital element of the Jennings/McAllister partnership was their ability to imbue the material and spiritual dimensions of the conflict with humanity and the psychology of the personal. The words of the poet intercut with the imagery, assume the thoughts of the people and in turn through each brief narrative, including trainee pilots, evacuees and merchant seamen, the audience can connect with those thoughts and feelings. Jennings celebrates the heroism of the people and the heritage which has bolstered their courage, but he is also not afraid to intimate at the human trepidation which may underlie many of their actions. Fear is natural and to show people overcoming that fear and continuing to do their duty turns what could be regarded as intimations of defeatism into heroic defiance. Ian Dalrymple effectively captures this imperative behind the early films:

We say in film to our own people: "This is what the boys in the services, or girls in the factories, or men and women in Civil Defence, or the patient citizens themselves are like, and what they are doing. They are playing their part in the spirit in which you see them in this film. Be of good heart and go and do likewise". And we say to the world: "Here in these films are the British people at war." And the world is either moved, or it is not moved. It has seen the truth and it can make up its own mind.

And this, in our view, is the finest type of propaganda.(495)

This spirit is captured in the following sequence where Jennings applies two short verses from Kipling's 'The Beginnings' to images depicting the aftermath of an air raid. Like the images the words are stark and grim. They carry a general message but the emotional response is heightened by focussing upon the fate of an air-raid victim. The words and images are not presented to hector the audience with denunciations of German atrocity but allowed to speak for themselves and by association those feelings that lead toward expressions of righteous anger:

It was not part of their blood,
It came to them very late
With long arrears to make good,
When the English began to hate

It was not suddenly bred,
It will not swiftly abate,
Through the chill years ahead,
When Time shall count from the date
When the English began to hate.

The choice of extract is instructive. Kipling was a prolific writer, a Tory, and patriot who celebrated the military and naval exploits of the ordinary soldier and seaman. Written in the middle of the Great War, the poem is enhanced by the heroic but often ambiguous rhetoric associated with apportioning of blame for the seemingly interminable and unprecedented nature of that conflict. Paul Fussell argues that the 'subliminal persistence' of the conflict through the inter-war years meant this rhetoric was easily resurrected to permeate the language of the next.(496) The

resonances of 'The Beginnings' go further than just rhetoric. Spinning out from the words come a variety of memories about the previous war. It is the same enemy and similar horrors are being visited on British civilians. For some it may renew the memory and anger against an incompetent military establishment which persisted with a war of attrition. While for others it could act as a reminder that it was with American assistance that the Great War was finally ended. But a primary purpose is to emphasise the righteous justification for both British resolve and practical American intervention. The sequence begins, like that of Milton's, in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey. Over the first line Kipling's tombstone with name, date of birth and death is highlighted. On the last word of the line a dissolve takes us to the aftermath of a night bombing raid. Although the location of the raid is unacknowledged, the level of devastation points towards film Jennings had taken in Coventry after the infamous fire-storm raid. As the lines continue the camera in long shot pans slowly from left to right across devastated houses and a rubble strewn street. Rescue workers are clearing up after the raid, while others continue their search for survivors. Civilians pick their way along what remains of the road. Finally the camera comes to rest upon a team of workers atop a mound of smouldering rubble. In the foreground some of that team advance toward the camera carrying a stretcher. These images are underscored by the lines 'With long arrears to make good, When the English began to hate'. Redolent with retribution on the word 'bred', we cut to civilians passing by and staring at the scene. A man wipes his nose with

his handkerchief, a woman wipes her eye as another cut on the word 'abate' takes us closer this time in medium shot to the grisly labour of the rescue workers hacking their way through the smouldering ruins. On the word 'count' we cut again to the stretcher bearers taking the body away down the street from the camera. The final cut of the sequence, coinciding with the word 'English', depicts a striking funeral cortege. An emotional force is generated by the ostentatious nature of the horse drawn hearse and the ranks of mourners wearing tin hats marching in military step.

This representation of the recovery and burial of an 'unknown victim' under fire provides a signifier for the general predicament that the civilian population faced under German attack. 'It also' Robson over-states 'marks the film's transition from contemplation to action'.⁽⁴⁹⁷⁾ Action has been at the centre of the film from the beginning but at this point, as the cortege with its mourners pass by, a trumpet call is heard like a call to arms. Over this image Olivier's voice breaks in with the word 'We' and the screen fades to black. He continues the line from Churchill's famous speech of June 1940 'will fight them on the beaches'. The following statement 'We shall go on to the end' is supported by newsreel film of Churchill reviewing a Scots regiment continuing over the words 'We shall defend our Island'. Again the anticipatory soundtrack enables a direct association to be drawn between the civilian army behind the cortege, the ranks of soldiers under inspection and Churchill speaking on behalf of the British people. This famous oration Calder remarks was delivered after what Churchill called the 'colossal military

disaster' of Dunkirk. He 'dwelt on the dangers of invasion, and prophesied that much would depend on the Air Force. [Ending] with a peroration aimed at American as well as British opinion'.⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾ By 1941 the Americans were familiar with the character of Churchill who embodied the spirit of the British people. Olivier's measured style gathers appropriate martial emphasis as he delivers an abridged version of the speech:

We shall go on to the end; we shall
defend our Island whatever the cost
may be; we shall fight on the beaches;
we shall fight on the landing grounds;
we shall fight in the fields and in the streets;
we shall never surrender.

Jennings focuses upon tenacity. On 'Island' a cut to a low angled close up of a soldier holding a machine gun at the ready is held until the last word of the two following lines 'whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on the beaches'. At this point with the anticipatory sound of surf breaking upon a beach we cut to that image. This image is held through 'we shall fight on the landing grounds; we shall fight in the fields and in the streets'. At the word 'street', the soundtrack takes us from the sound of waves crashing on a beach to that of traffic. Another cut brings the scene of bricklayers in the foreground with busy road behind, beginning the reconstruction of Coventry. The noise of passing traffic and the work of reconstruction, which signify energy and the resilience of life, is maintained beneath the following lines; 'we shall fight in the streets' with a cut to a hazy establishing shot of Edinburgh Castle sitting atop its volcanic outcrop with the town beneath, until the last word of the last statement 'we

shall never surrender' on which an image of St Paul's Cathedral appears. Accompanied by the noise of traffic the shot is taken across a busy road with the dome of the cathedral standing high and proud above the wreckage caused on December 29th 1940 after a similar devastating air-raid on Coventry. This image of St Pauls acts as a visual bond between defense and the call for assistance over the first line of the following stanza which is accompanied by another trumpet call:

And even if this Island were subjugated
and starving, then our Empire beyond
the seas, armed and guarded by the
British Fleet, would carry on the
struggle until in God's good time,
the New World with all its power
and might steps forth to the rescue
and liberation of the Old

This time the call sounds initially for the gathering of our allies from the Empire and over the words 'then our Empire beyond the seas' a dissolve introduces a long shot of the massed ranks of marching Australian and New Zealand troops accompanied by the words 'armed and guarded by the British Fleet'. A cut follows showing these massed troops now presenting arms on parade' which complements the line 'would carry on the struggle'.

Another cut to an image showing the troops marching off provides the visual alliteration to 'until in God's good time, the New World with all its power and might steps forth to the rescue'. At this point visual alliteration reinforces the verbal association in the text by equating 'the New World' not only with British colonies but with the United States. The phrase 'forth to

rescue' triggers a dissolve to a medium shot of the statue of Lincoln in Parliament Square. The pose, head bowed holding the lapel of his coat, not only projects the stance of an orator but also the sense that he too, from the height of the pedestal, has been reviewing the colonial troops and their readiness for battle. There is no immediate fade to separate the words of Churchill from the image of Lincoln. Rather this initial shot of Lincoln is sustained until Olivier states 'and liberation of the Old' when a brief fade acts as a cut to a close up of Lincoln's name carved upon the plinth. Both the momentum and aural/visual association is adeptly maintained as we launch immediately into an extract from the Gettysburg Address:

It is for us, the living, rather to be
dedicated here to the unfinished
work they have thus far so nobly
advanced. That we here highly
resolve that the dead shall not have
died in vain, that the nation shall, under
God, have a new birth of freedom, and
that the government of the people,
by the people, and for the people,
shall not perish from the earth.

The speech was written to commemorate the lives of Union forces lost in the decisive battle of Gettysburg in 1863. There are symbolic parallels between that moment in U.S. history, signifying the struggle for liberty, the emancipation of slaves and the formation of a unified and democratic United States, and the contemporary Battle of and for Britain, something many Americans could possibly appreciate. Jennings urges the United States and the Americans not to regard the European struggle as

a distant conflict between warring states, but as about the very existence of liberty, democracy and the upholding of the fundamental principles and mechanisms that express human dignity and freedom.

Lincoln's words, rooted at the very core of the national identity of America, become mobilised for the international defence of the democratic ideal. After the initial phrase 'It is for us, the living' (that is the United States and associated supporters of liberal democracy) we cut to a close up of the bowed head of the statue framed by the branches of young trees. On the soundtrack we hear the beginning of the chime sequence from Big Ben, so resonant for the British and her allies of the institutions of British democracy. These chimes and the sound of traffic continue throughout the entire sequence underscoring and helping to inflect the words of Lincoln as a direct statement of support for Britain: 'rather to be dedicated here [Parliament Square] to the unfinished work [the ongoing war] they have so nobly advanced.' At this point an establishing shot of the statue is introduced [Lincoln now peruses Parliament Square] showing the traffic, including tanks, passing in the background and as the speech continues Big Ben begins to chime the hour. This is mixed with the noise of traffic and the eventual rumble of heavy military vehicles. 'That we [the United States] here highly resolve that the dead [the British and her allies] shall not have died in vain, that the nation [Britain], shall under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, [here a cut to a longshot of the clock tower and Houses of Parliament on 'people' is held over] 'by the people, and for the people'. At this

point, as Nowell-Smith observes, there is 'a pause (probably lengthened by McAllister during the sound edit), and an armoured car [it is in fact a tank] enters frame right, before the voice continues: 'shall not perish from the earth.' The effect here is no mere illustration of Lincoln's famous (too famous) words, but the generation, through montage, of a cluster of ideas around democracy and armed defence; and it happens in a moment, both chilling and exhilarating, which no amount of verbal explication can re-create.'⁽⁴⁹⁹⁾ The inference between verse and image neatly integrates the words of Churchill and Lincoln.

Simultaneously the saving of democracy carries with it a message for post-war domestic politics. The future building of Blake's new Jerusalem in post-war Britain can only be achieved through the instigation of that American ideal of 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people'. Inevitably such political sentiments and any post-war settlement would require a radical reappraisal of the existing hierarchy of political power, a necessary redistribution of economic and social rewards amongst the social structure and the expression of popular will through at very least, reformed mechanisms of representation, government and legislature.

Now unconstrained by the tempo of Olivier's speech we enter the brief but thrilling climax. Sound and image can be seen to revert to the classic formal relationship. An instance of traffic noise and the hourly chimes of Big Ben merge with the rumble of tanks. We rapidly cut to the convoy passing Lincoln's statue [and his symbolic revue] from left to right in rapid progress. Another fast cut takes us to a point-of-view shot from a tank turret in

the convoy. On the following cut music bursts onto the soundtrack. The beat of Handel's Water music momentarily maintains the beat of the chimes as we see the tanks moving left to right down the road. Now the dynamic rush of the music towards its climax is complemented by five cuts from a series of telephoto images originally intended for *London Can Take It!* that show: 'servicemen and women mingling with civilian pedestrians, all striding across London streets [again like the tanks moving from left to right] blurred by the passing vehicles but symbolizing the movement onward toward victory of the ordinary people of Britain.'⁽⁵⁰⁰⁾ As the music reaches its final dramatic chord the screen fades to black and the words 'The End' appear on the screen

Vaughan is tempted to consider that it was McAllister who was primarily responsible for this concluding sequence from the fact that there is no evidence in Jennings' final treatment to indicate the use of either the filmed material or Handel at the conclusion.⁽⁵⁰¹⁾ Vaughan is probably correct to consider the decisive influence of McAllister in the formulation of the final sequence, but this may also apply to the revised introduction, the interrelation of words and images within and between sequences, and the use of an anticipatory soundtrack. If the film had included Jennings' initial commentary and the sequence based on the extract from Shelley the running time of the film would have been nearly ten minutes, twice as long as the propaganda short series demanded. The deletion of both the opening commentary and the Shelley sequence still leaves the film running for eight. But when one considers the rather stilted

and illustrative nature of the earlier proposal⁽⁵⁰²⁾ compared to the overall editorial brevity of the finished film (with the revised opening, a new title, and the climactic wordless conclusion) it is editorial technique which has simultaneously enhanced the meaning of the poetry and by association Jennings' artistic and poetic aims. *Words For Battle* echoes the application of images to music found in the *The Heart of Britain* and prefigures the use of an anticipatory soundtrack and the optimistic energy and physicality found in introduction and climax of *Listen to Britain*.

The brightly illuminated white clouds shot from an aeroplane over the introductory titles and the rapid and purposeful strides of the sunlit crowd in Piccadilly Circus at the conclusion are underpinned by the same musical dynamism and agitational rhythms of Handel's 'Water Music'. This combination of music and light, at both the introduction and climax of the film, not only provide a symmetry to the film's formal structure, they reinforce the spiritual and emotional dimension of the text. In *Heart of Britain* we are given the direct analogy between crucifixion and militant protestantism. In *Words For Battle* we have a similar invocation of God and the righteousness of the cause, through the texts of Churchill and Lincoln, the militant protestantism in the words of Milton and the music of Handel and the symbolic spiritual comparison between darkness and light. Although brief, *Words For Battle* offers an alternative form of propaganda to the triumphalism and military chauvinism depicted in Nazi films such as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1934). An opening sequence of Hitler descending by plane

through the grey clouds over Nuremburg to the lyrical strains of Wagner is in direct contrast to the sunlight, clouds and energy of the opening to *Words For Battle*. The direct correlation of Hitler and his high command to 'those who love the twilight' with a similar obstinate professional army under their influence is juxtaposed against the relaxed, ordered and assured belief of the British civilian army, her military and allies. The degree to which McAllister may have been directly responsible for the climax or any particular aspects of formal expression in the film is open to question. But as Jennings admitted, they threw themselves into this project and at least in professional terms, although they did not have praise from the critic of *Documentary News Letter*, their efforts were rewarded with a phone call from the Hollywood mogul David O Selznick.⁽⁵⁰³⁾ Jennings and McAllister may have felt that such recognition of their artistic and professional partnership was worth pursuing. This experiment with the basic principles of cinematic technique and the detailed integration of sound and image would be taken another step further. 'It is perhaps significant that the next film they were to make together - the one on which McAllister is given the co-director/co-editor credit - dispenses with the verbal track altogether and works only with images, sounds and music.'⁽⁵⁰⁴⁾

The Turning of the Tide

April - Late July

Prior to the completion of *Words For Battle* Jennings was already considering another short film 'as part of the five minute series suitable for America' that continued his theme of the meaning and relevance of poetry for the people.⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾ It was to be based on one of the famous classical lunch hour concerts given by the pianist Myra Hess in the National Gallery. These concerts became a spectacular example of history and myth in the making and provided an opportunity to illustrate how the poetic power of music could sustain and reward the human spirit in time of war.⁽⁵⁰⁶⁾ By late April Jennings had sketched a treatment which, through music and imagery, would consider the highly contingent nature of the musical event itself.⁽⁵⁰⁷⁾ Over a framework of sound there was to be a series of associative shots and sequences cut to the rhythm and tempo of the music, including the 'character of the audience . . . Lunchtime crowd partly in uniform representing all services and war workers including members of the R.A.F [and the Queen as symbolic head of the armed forces and nation who] still find time in their lunch hour to listen to Mozart and to invigorate themselves for the final battle' along with 'spitfires and hurricanes above the clouds and smoke . . . Beautiful shining things, flying in a world very like the lyrical world of Mozart.'⁽⁵⁰⁸⁾

Through May and the first weeks of June Jennings filmed concerts and reconstructed a recital sequence with the Queen in

attendance. Other proposed elements included 'the dawn fighter patrol; balloon barge on the Thames (with crew having lunch on deck); an A-A battery ('We should prefer one where the predicator is handled by ATS girls'); and [a reconstructed sequence] in Ambulance Station No.76 in the Old Bailey.'(509) At the same time Jennings and McAllister produced a similar but more ambitious film treatment entitled 'The Music of War':

Today war involves everybody, all human aspirations are touched by it. So today the call on the human heart is profounder than ever before - and do you think that freedom has no songs? This war involving everybody has framed men and women into new groupings - not only the Navy, the Army and the R.A.F. - but new social groups - work groups - men and women ranged together in factories, in fire stations, in gun-emplacements, in troop-trains and shipyards - all of which have their particular music. More than ever when men are flying through the night and women are away from their homes and their children, their hearts have need of music. All kinds of music - classical music, popular music, the nostalgic music of a particular region and just plain martial music to march and work to. For music in Britain today is far from being just another escape: it probes into emotions of the war itself - love of country, love of liberty, love of living, and the exhilaration of fighting for them. Listen . . .(510)

This treatment included ideas which Hodgkinson and Sheratsky list as: 'the Blackpool Tower Ballroom sequence, the Canadians in the train, [they also include] "The Ash Grove" sung to ambulance workers in the basement of the Old Bailey (a scene witnessed one night by Jennings and McAllister), Flanagan and Allen, and the already shot National Gallery concert.'(511) Ideas

for military music led to requests for access to 'the Officers Mess of a Scottish regiment where pipers play after dinner - preferably in a large country house or castle' and the titles of the most popular tunes played over the tannoy at Waterloo Station.⁽⁵¹²⁾

However a month later in the early hours of June 22nd, Hitler initiated the surprise and eventually fateful decision to invade Russia. It became clear that any immediate invasion of Britain had been postponed. Churchill, broadcasting the same night, immediately supported the creation of an alliance with Stalin: 'The cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe.'⁽⁵¹³⁾ In the United States: 'Before Barbarossa [the invasion code name], Roosevelt interpreted America's prime interest as "everything we can do, short of war, to keep the British Isles afloat." After the German attack in the east his priority was to keep both Britain and the Soviet Union fighting.'⁽⁵¹⁴⁾ Around the same time practical work on the 'National Gallery' was suspended while Jennings worked on another film:

a sequel to *London Can Take It!*, called 'Dear Doktor . . . Do you remember Quentin Reynolds. .did a broadcast, a reply to Dr Goebbels, on the radio, called 'Dear Doktor' - Dear Doctor Goebbels. Humphrey was to make a movie out of this broadcast of Quent's. So we flogged away at 'Dear Doctor', and we shot all sorts for 'Dear Doktor'; and we already recorded the Mozart concerto in the National Gallery. There was a kind of gap, you see; and so we were going to use the last movement of that concerto - just the track only - for Dear Doctor'. Then 'Dear Doktor' wouldn't work, because it was all talk; and Humphrey abandoned it.⁽⁵¹⁵⁾

According to Joe Mendoza filming included 'the tank factory, the armoured column passing through a village and the girls in a cornfield'(516) Probably between mid to late July Jennings returned to Suffolk and 'Martin's Farm' to shoot the sequences of waving corn and baling.(517) Hodgkinson and Sheratsky also include 'the opening scene of Spitfires flying over Suffolk cornfields . . . scenes of bombs being loaded onto night bombers; of tanks being built; and of troop carriers rumbling through the Sussex village of Alfriston.'(518) It is not unreasonable to include here the landgirls collecting potatoes, the official plane observers at their post, built up in a mound in the middle of a field, and possibly the playground sequence and the evening shot of the cottage with the lamp in the window.

Late July - December 1941

we'd all been flogging away for about two or three months, and Humphrey said, "Well, we're off for a holiday . . . it was while they were on that holiday that they got the idea of *Listen to Britain*.

Joe Mendoza(519)

Throughout the summer the *Wehrmacht* had made rapid progress into Russian territory. Initially British official and popular opinion believed Russia would be defeated and that it would not be long before the German forces could be turned against Britain.(520) However, from July until December the allies watched as the Russian collapse was converted into a counter-offensive which slowed the German advance. At the beginning of August Jennings was on holiday at McAllister's home in Wishaw near Glasgow. From here he expressed a new

optimism in the potential for a reinvigorated counter attack from the left against the forces of conservatism at home and Fascism abroad:

If our official reaction to the invasion of Russia was a surprise to a few people so should be the feeling for the USSR here at the moment. Britain whether she likes it or not is being forced into historical honesty. It only remains to become allies of China & the Spanish Republic & we shall really be in a position to expiate our sins . . . The way in which people have been misled about the USSR is dawning on them - since the Red Army's resistance is a *fact* ' . . . The country has really been transformed these last two years. So rich & deep & good to see & hear & smell.(521)

The film treatment that emerged over this brief holiday begins to detail scenarios which express this transformation. Entitled 'The Tin Hat Concerto' it depicts how music in all its forms expresses, sustains and rejuvenates the individual, communal and national spirit:

It is half-past nine - the children are already at school and the teacher is calling out the orders to a PT class in the playground. Just over the school wall a housewife is washing up the breakfast. The sound of the children comes in through the window. She stops for a moment - looks across to the mantelpiece, to a photo of a boy in a glengarrie: a great wave of emotion sweeps over her - the sound of the pipes played not in the hills of Scotland, but in the sand dunes of Syria, where her lad is away at war. And then she comes back to the washing up, and the kids in the playground go on with their PT. All over Britain, the morning's work is now in full swing: and at 10.30 the BBC comes 'Calling All

Workers', and in the factories all over the land half-an-hour of 'Music While You Work' peps up production: the production of tools for finishing the job.

At half-past twelve, the clatter of typing in the Ministries and offices in London lessens as the girls begin to break for lunch. And in the centre of the City wartime Londoners are crowding up the steps of the National Gallery for what has become one of the most popular creations of the War: the lunchtime concerts. Inside, in one of the great galleries, where the visitor in peacetime used to tip-toe and whisper and admire, now there sit a thousand Londoners, in and out of uniform, who have come from homes and works and offices to hear the music of Mozart. And sitting among them the Queen. The music is in uniform too - played by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force.

After all the blitzes, London still remains a strong and noble and beautiful city, and she is not being left in ruins. Facing St Paul's, giant cranes swing metal girders high up over the traffic, and in a thousand places inside its huge circumference, London is being rebuilt in the sunlight.

Now the boom of traffic is pierced by the shrill of fifes of the Marines Band, and they in turn are drowned by the tremendous rhythms of industry: the screaming of the cold chisel, the pounding of the steam hammer. And now in a factory canteen, the roar of working-men's voices, and the clatter of spoons and metal plates applaud the profoundest clowns in the country: Flanagan & Allen. Then, as the final music builds up, the afternoon shifts put their back into it, and the twenty-four hours of life in Britain that we have just seen will have played their full part in The Tin Hat Concerto.(522)

As Vaughan notes, this 'resembles the finished film . . . closely in spirit and in certain salient details'.(523) In effect the film treatment 'The Music of War' and the filmed material for 'National Gallery' and 'Dear Doktor' have been integrated into the

new treatment. As the war on the Eastern Front ran through late August into October Jennings continued with research and location work accompanied by McAllister.⁽⁵²⁴⁾ By mid-September Jennings felt he could see increasing evidence for his belief that the Russian response had galvanised the British people. As Jennings intimates for any politically alert individual the pro-Soviet propaganda campaign from the Government, National Press and the B.B.C revealed the general mendacious nature of the Establishment stance:

everywhere seems to be at a kind of turning point. The break-up of the Russian-bogey illusion and the years of trickery and dishonesty which produced it are now becoming really clear to the nation here as a whole and producing a new kind - or several new kinds of people who wish the USSR well. People who cannot be bothered with politics and who regard newspapers as rubbish and arguments as propaganda are yet tremendously impressed by Russian newsreels and by the simple fact of Russian resistance - one of these days this is going to come back on the people who have misled everybody. Yet another stage in the stripping bare of British illusions.⁽⁵²⁵⁾

On the 22nd September Stalin's plea for military aid was finally answered with an official declaration of "Tanks For Russia". In oratory that would find its visual equivalent in the climax of *Listen to Britain*, the arch establishment figure Beaverbrook proclaimed "'Come then, in the foundries and forges of Britain, in the engine works and the assembly lines, to the task and duty of helping Russia to repel the savage invaders, who bring torment to mankind.'"⁽⁵²⁶⁾ As Calder notes:

At a midlands factory on the 22nd, Maisky's wife (the wife of the Russian ambassador) named the first tank for Russia to leave the assembly line, "Stalin". On other tanks around, the workers had chalked such unofficial titles as "Marx", "Lenin" and "Another for Joe".

It was reported that in one factory where labour relations were unusually bad, a big order from the Soviet Union transformed them overnight; the job cards were stamped "GOODS FOR RUSSIA" and the trick was done. A railway works in Kent finished an order of a thousand freight waggons for Russia in less than ten weeks, in spite of seventy-six raid warnings. Russian flags and slogans decorated the shop, and, as a far from left-wing journalist records, "If for a single moment a single man seemed to be taking life easily he was urged on by his fellows with 'Come on! old Joe wants that one.' All worked double shifts night and day, and produced double the usual output in each shift.(527)

This response Calder believes was in part fuelled by a persistent but 'naive admiration for Russia as a workers' state' amongst the working class.(528) Representatives of organised labour on the home front became central to achieving or even surpassing the production targets set by managers and employers. The survival of Russia and the future of the whole war could be conceived as dependent upon the efforts and the domestic and international solidarity of the working class. Eric Hobsbawm, a member of the Communist Party and at that time serving in the British army, also felt that: 'the war itself seemed to have elements of a war between both classes and states.'(529) It was possible to simultaneously celebrate the patriotic commitment and international solidarity of the workers and castigate inefficient or profiteering employers as undermining the war effort.(530)

Jennings felt that the imaginative disturbances in the existing socio-political settlement were gathering pace: 'clearly enough England & Scotland & Wales are beginning to look at *life*: the way they did in 1400 - the way they have been unlearning for so many centuries. But looking at a life of what possibilities and what disasters. .There is a kind of malaise in the air now like the wind worrying the leaves: ideas turning over: self criticism: parties dissolving: the clouds changing'.⁽⁵³¹⁾ These changes opened up an opportunity for him to express this spirit, to depict how, through the power of the imagination and human will, it is possible to transform the spiritual and human dimensions of life. At an increasingly urgent rate during the rest of October he and McAllister edited the material into its final form. Similar to *Spare Time* the relationship between the community, music and (war) work are imaginatively extended to incorporate the natural sounds of work, industry and national productivity, what Jennings referred to in May as 'harmony and mechanisation'.⁽⁵³²⁾

McAllister later described *Listen to Britain* as "'a sound-recording experiment" in which they sought to record every conceivable sound in terms of tone, amplitude, and pitch - *except* the sound of speech.'⁽⁵³³⁾ In formal terms editing was to provide the gist and momentum of this sound-film, 'natural' sound would provide both an organising principle for the narrative and act as a substitute for a spoken commentary. However without the accompanying imagery the soundtrack itself becomes comparatively redundant.⁽⁵³⁴⁾ In an attempt to assign authorship Joe Mendoza concludes 'The visual ideas were Humphrey's . . . and I suppose the progression and musical ideas were Mac's if you've

got to try and sort it out'.⁽⁵³⁵⁾ Ken Cameron considers 'His [McAllister's] contribution to *Listen to Britain* was at least 50%. I mean, certainly, without Mac, it wouldn't have been the film it was. It's probably a trite thing to say that he made more contribution than Humphrey, but in a way he did'.⁽⁵³⁶⁾ What is more important to recognise is that the dynamism and meanings of the text derive from a combination of imagination and skill which through the aural and visual, take seemingly disparate and mundane events and through juxtaposition and collage turn them into something arresting and inspirational. Drazin encapsulates the poetic ideal that Jennings was striving to represent when he states that 'If so often in Jennings's films beauty seemed to come out of the accidental and unforeseen, then perhaps this was because he appreciated how the accidental and the unforeseen chimed in with the nature of life itself'.⁽⁵³⁷⁾

Dai Vaughan's recognition that the narrative structure of *Listen to Britain* is based upon a 'twenty-four hour cycle' beginning and finishing in late afternoon allows Winston to argue that the progress of social time was integral to both the dramatisation and narrative coherence of the film.⁽⁵³⁸⁾ This does seem to be the case as social time is signified through a series of overlapping sounds and images which identify moments of common social experiences associated with broadly distinct but meaningful periods in the twenty-four hour cycle of everyday life. Smith identifies these periods as 'evening, night, early morning, late morning, mid-day, early afternoon'.⁽⁵³⁹⁾ However they can be more specifically identified as particular moments within socially designated periods of time: late afternoon, evening, night, morning (dawn/breakfast and mid-morning), mid-day (lunchtime) and finally returning to early afternoon, each of which are usually recognised as periods or durations of relaxation and refreshment.

What the narrative actually depicts through reference to social time is how these periods are simultaneously sustained, elided or fundamentally transformed by the national emergency. Each time-sequence acts as an aural/visual snapshot of multiple and simultaneous popular wartime activity across the nation. Social time, signified by images and sounds, provides a framework on which further images of simultaneous activity are co-ordinated, thereby highlighting the extent to which the dynamism of the war effort was increasingly reliant upon the mass mobilisation of the British people. The film is a cinematic

form of 'mass' observation, an aural/visual 'day report', a panoramic recording of a progressively productive and spiritually healthy nation articulated through the sounds and sights occurring across the country during those twenty-four hours. In formal terms *Listen to Britain* is a highpoint in Jennings' poetic exercise of cinematic collage. It is an attempt to construct from the fragments of sound and celluloid a feeling for the complexity of the whole, to imagine an instance of Britain in late 1941 that fitted and captured the contingency of the moment:

The analytical historian's business is to disentangle shred by shred like plucking the strand out of a rope. The result is the length of the rope but only one strand's thickness, and although the strand may still be twisted from its position among the other strands it is presented nevertheless alone. The poet might be compared to a man who cuts a short section of the whole rope. The only thing is he must cut it where it will not fall to pieces.(540)

When the formal structure of *Listen to Britain* is set within its historic moment of production, a broader more radical interpretation of the film emerges than that available in existing accounts. Andrew Higson's analysis epitomises the tenor of much critical discussion of the film since the writing of Hillier in the early seventies:(541)

It is a complex, highly poetic montage of apparently discrete fragments of sounds and images of the home front at work and leisure, juxtaposed with images from the traditional iconography of pastoral England and the new iconography of the war period. .

. . .The image of the nation which emerges from this rich audio-visual tapestry is thus intended to promote a sense of variety and diversity rather than difference, tension and conflict. As Malcolm Smith has suggested, the nation is presented as 'timeless moments of communion between individual and group, between past and present; different individuals and different groups they certainly are, but they hold in common an almost exactly similar experience of their group identity' - or, at least this is how the film constructs relationships between these separate entities. The final effect of the film is of unity and harmony, the holding together of difference as variety. National identity is proposed as the sum of this productive variety: the contemporary coexists with tradition . . . the rural coexists with the industrial . . . popular culture coexists with high culture . . . and so on.(542)

This analysis fails to fully appreciate how the vignettes within each period represent part of a progressive and multifaceted time-space continuum and particularly how the simultaneous nature of time helps constitute the formal structure of the film. Critical analysis which privileges the nation and the poetic notions of 'timelessness' (for example symbolised in the images of the pastoral) overlook Jennings' representation of contemporary popular experience *in* time and space. The regions both urban and rural coexist and are interrelated through a dynamic relationship of production which has international social and military ramifications. The communion of the individual and group has deeper moral and political implications than harmony and national unity through variety and diversity.

Space and Place: A Narrative of the Sequential and Simultaneous

Without wanting to sound too pedantic, Nowell-Smith's remark that the film 'has no spoken words on the soundtrack at all' is incorrect.⁽⁵⁴³⁾ The voices of news-readers, entertainers and the people pepper the soundtrack. By reporting the sounds of the everyday and vernacular, the tonal and rhythmic qualities of natural, industrial and mechanised sound (including the voice), radio announcements, varying forms of expressive music (folk, contemporary popular and classical) and associated visual imagery, Jennings and McAllister allow the soundtrack to develop as a self-reflexive device to signifying distinct moments in the rhythm of life over the twenty-four hour cycle. In this sense we have in the interweaving of sound and image a linear narrative built out of the words, sounds, songs and images of the people/nation that provides a commentary for that people/nation and its allies. This is well illustrated by the brief opening sequence:

Britain in summer. The waving tops of the trees and corn. The sound of larks from above the corn drowned by the roar of the two Spitfires. Land army girls at work and Observer Corps men on duty. The sound of the squadrons flying overhead is interrupted by the busy clatter of a tractor drawing a reaper. A rich harvest landscape. Strong forces of RAF fighters in the evening sunlight.⁽⁵⁴⁴⁾

The trees and initial close-up of wheat swaying in the wind, the sound of approaching aircraft, followed by a cut to two spitfires and associative shots of bending wheat, farming and an air

observation post give no indication of time of day. It is later with a visual cut to the exterior of a cottage window, the drawing of the blackout curtains, the mixing of the BBC six o'clock time signal with the sound of the aircraft and a radio announcement for the BBC news, accompanied by the placing of a lighted oil lamp on the inside of a window-sill, that we can locate that period of transition period between late afternoon and early evening. With no concession to the audience we immediately plunge into the following evening sequence:

Now the blackout curtains are drawn in a house from which is heard the voice of Joseph McLeod as he reads the six o'clock news. News from overseas or from men in uniform? Some are on leave, contemplating the sunset, - others don steel helmets and prepare for night duty. The strains of a dance band are coming from the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool where HM Forces dance at half price to the tune of 'Roll out the Barrel - for the gang's all here!' Hundreds of them in uniform enjoying themselves with young ladies evacuated from Government Departments in London. Outside the fire-watchers are ready.(545)

Between and particularly within both sequences, time and space become compressed. Jennings and McAllister equate the progressive linear dimension of time with simultaneous dimensions of space and place.(546) As planes traverse the sky and geography of East Anglia, the drone of the spitfires 'linking little farmsteads miles apart in a momentary gust' connect the airmen with farmworkers, military observers and residents of the cottage. The familiar sounds of the pips for Greenwich followed by the voice of the six-o'clock news reader, Joseph

McLeod, bring the nation in its new social formations together. The strains of the dance band at first seem to emit from the radio in the cottage but in fact the music comes from a live dance band. This device connects the inhabitants of the cottage with the Lancashire fire watchers and men on leave with the relaxed and happy revellers who are ballroom dancing. These interrelations between sound and image help create a new conception of reality of simultaneous unity and difference.

This overlapping collage of sounds and images delineates a critical moment of transition in the British war effort and the general context of the world war. Embedded within this panoramic text we can identify how the spontaneity of individual action, voluntary team spirit and amateurism of the people is being transformed into a new set of social, economic and political relationships through mass mobilisation for a truly internationalised conflict. Nowell-Smith argues that the 'absence of commentary in *Listen to Britain* is crucial to the holding in place of the many facets of Jennings' "national popular" idea. A commentary would inevitably have fixed certain meanings and eliminated others, whereas it was essential that meaning be left open.'⁽⁵⁴⁷⁾ This "national popular" idea is not primarily concerned with eliding difference to promote national unity. *Listen to Britain* carries a number of competing and potentially conflicting messages: the need for national war effort while recognising the specific efforts of working class industrial labour and ordinary people; a celebration of international solidarity amongst working people as well as cross-class unity; the changing aesthetics and experience of

home front life; the role of Britain as the vital link between the capitalist United States (still the neutral arsenal of democracy); and the defensive war machines of Britain and Soviet Russia.

The People's War - Poetry, War and Science

The connection between the formal structure of the film and the themes of domestic and international propaganda lies in the idea of British mobilisation for total war on an international scale. A more comprehensive reading of *Listen to Britain* requires the recognition that the innovative editorial style was a means through which to capture these diverse and changing experiences of war in the last months of 1941. At this time home front organisation was effectively evolving from the spontaneous and voluntary activities (which Angus Calder calls 'the amateur war of individual efforts coalescing in desperate activities') that Jennings recorded in *Spring Offensive*, *Welfare of the Workers* and *Heart of Britain* into a nationally managed, regulated and internationally co-ordinated war machine.⁽⁵⁴⁸⁾ Although the threat of bombing was still present, the lull saw the excitement, fear and spontaneous response to raids replaced by what Jennings referred to as the 'cruel farce' of 'home organisation', an increasingly predictable routine of life with the petty frustrations of enforced regulation and bureaucratic control.⁽⁵⁴⁹⁾ Yet the imagination of the country had been captured by the spontaneous response of the Russian people to the Nazi invasion. When combined with the 'immensely cheering effect' of American aid and glimmers of success in October from (although temporary) British military gains in the Mediterranean

and North Africa, Jennings and McAllister present the British response as a dynamic, integrated, highly tuned fighting machine in preparation for the counter-attack. It was a war run on a twenty-four hour timetable with urgent targets of production. Yet this vast machine could only achieve its goals through the ideals, spirit, energy and productive capacity of its citizens.

Listen to Britain therefore creates an image of an integrated, rigorously planned economy galvanised by the moral imperative underpinning the war. Although Higson asserts that 'the disruption of the war [is] outside the text'(550) war is in fact integral to structuring the existence, experiences and morale of the participants we see on the screen. War has violently inserted a new space-time reality which permeates and reshapes the individual and national persona and creates, among other things, new friends and new patterns of work. Individual and social identity are redefined and infused with extremes of conflicting emotions as hope and anxiety, fear and courage, duty and commitment. What better way to encapsulate this expressive combination of the material and spiritual - the martial spirit - than to depict 'The *music* of a people at war - the *sound of life* in Britain by night and by day' outlined in the earlier treatment 'The Music of War'?(551)

Each sound/visual 'time sequence' illustrates some dimension of the productive capacity and/or morale of a tireless war economy. The twenty-four hour cycle begins in the late afternoon. This will help emphasise the tireless energy and increasing momentum accumulating within this (inter)national war machine. We begin in the countryside as afternoon gives way

to early evening. What can be read as a signifier of the successful defence of (pastoral) England in the Battle of Britain - Spitfires over the farmland of England, Observers watching for the Luftwaffe - can also be interpreted as evidence of the successful struggle to increase efficiency and productivity from a revitalised, mechanised agricultural economy: "Land army girls at work and Observer men on duty. The sounds of the squadrons flying overhead is interrupted by the busy clatter of a tractor drawing a reaper. A rich harvest landscape.'⁽⁵⁵²⁾ It is a landscape transformed by a new agricultural revolution stimulated by the planned devolution of power to the farming community depicted in *Spring Offensive*.

The geographical transition to Blackpool through the sounds of the spitfires and cottage radio announcing the six o'clock news followed by dance music, implies relaxation and pleasure. While observers keep watch for night raiders, the Tower Ballroom (as in *Spare Time*) plays host now to the new social formations of off-duty forces and evacuated civil service personnel. Here, amongst the mass of swirling dancers, we catch a fleeting glimpse of a new community released from the strictures of immediate duty, gaining freedom to be themselves. Strangers, new and old friends, often dressed in the anonymity of forces' uniforms, laugh, smile and engage in animated conversation. There is humanity and poetic beauty to be found in the dancers in suits, uniforms and evening dress, revolving en-masse around the dance floor as they sing and give themselves over to the music and in the irresolution of a young woman laughing with embarrassment while half-heartedly attempting to

hide a photograph from her friends. As the strains of the music intrude upon the nightwatch outside, we are brought back to the sober reality of why this brightly lit and happy event is occurring. While some relax or sleep others continue the relentless drive of the war effort through the night:

The clanging cage at a pit-head where the men are going on night shift is a sharp contrast. In the clear light of the moon the night traffic on the railway is shunted about - holding up a passenger train on which a bunch of Canadians are engaged in telling stories of the old days back home and singing 'Home on the Range'.

The line is cleared and the train puffs on into the night

A bomber factory. The whine of machinery and the clinks of metal as rows of aircraft are assembled.

The lights in the roof of this great factory are like stars in the night sky.

Outside another machine takes off.

The women on night duty in an ambulance station are listening to the 'Ashgrove' sung by one of their colleagues.

Her voice echoes through the big marble hall, one of the famous buildings put to new and strange uses.

Big Ben rings round the world as the BBC Overseas service gets into nightly activity. The British Grenadiers March plays triumphantly from London to the countries all around the globe. Dials and valves quiver with the voices in dozens of languages. A woman announcer in the Pacific service gives greetings to all serving in the armed forces and in the Merchant Navy.⁽⁵⁵³⁾

What emerges from this aural and pictorial sweep of fragments during the hours of darkness is that of a geographically isolated community, with tenuous connection to its allies, engaged in the feverish activity of preparation for war. Yet this activity is tinged with both happiness and sorrow. The country does not relax or sleep at this most vulnerable time under a 'bombers' moon. The expected rhythm of work and family life are denied by the urgency of industrial and military preparation: miners continue the vital extraction of coal, the trains transport the raw materials and troops, air-raid services are on alert as the B.B.C. broadcasts to the nation and the world. The folksy harmony of the Canadian soldiers, the women listening to the rendition of the 'Ashgrove', the female announcer of the B.B.C sending greetings to the armed forces stationed abroad express, through the incongruous nature of their surroundings, a lament for the peace of a lost community of family, friends and loved ones. Yet it is through the new communities and the desire to return to peace that the domestic war machine continues the military and ideological battle against the enemy.

To help boost home morale, thereby intensify industrial production, propaganda at the end of 1941 could emphasise the bombing of German industrial centres and the supply of military aid to Russia to constitute some form of 'second' front. Although the production of the majority of tanks at this time would have been primarily for North Africa and defensive purposes in the advent of invasion, the high propaganda profile and popular support for 'Tanks for Russia' week in September along with

Churchill's demand for a significant increase in bomber production could easily represent the new alliance hitting back. The climax of *The Heart of Britain* is reiterated. Here hitting back is represented by the productive skills of the people through an establishing shot of a bomber factory. Along with 'The whine of machinery and the clinks of metal' we see an assembly line of aircraft like cars emerging from a mass production system; 'Outside another machine takes off.'⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾ As in *Words For Battle*, this powerful mixture of science, technology, human imagination and will is motivated by the immediate national and broader international need to defend the democratic heritage. Britain, signified by the Houses of Parliament and the B.B.C, has become the democratic and military beacon of hope. The call to the broader international community, particularly the British Empire, British forces serving overseas and the oppressed nations of Europe, is expressed not through the words of Milton but the music of the 'British Grenadiers March'. The overlapping and diverse babble of foreign language messages and well-wishes from the solitary voice of the female announcer emits from an isolated British Isles surrounded in literal and metaphorical darkness.

Where previously Jennings has characterised momentum through nighttime activity and the overlapping of sound and visual dissolves, at this point the screen fades to darkness allowing a moment of silence, a pause which emphasises this isolation. Out of the darkness emerges the dawn of a new day. The morning sequence focusses on the hours associated with refreshment, breakfast and mid-morning 'elevenses'. Both sequences illustrate

a coinciding and coordination of activities associated with these social times which in themselves have taken on an unfamiliar dimension through the war effort: 'The most natural sound in Britain so early in the day is the sound of the birds, but not long after come the people to the factories.'⁽⁵⁵⁵⁾ The language of the post-production script cannot begin to capture the symbolism and artistry captured by the visual and aural dimensions of the text. The sequence based around breakfast-time hints at the seamless transition from night to morning and the continuous nature of production. We begin with close-up shots of the silhouette of branches and leaves in the early morning as the early light stirs the birds in the branches. A cut, then a pan along the silhouette of a tree lined ridge, is accompanied by the rising sound of the dawn chorus. The rising of the sun and awakening of the birds is overlain by the solitary but sharp echoing clop of hooves followed by a dissolve to horses being led along the cobbles of an industrial street. The slow progress of the horse is framed by a backdrop of belching factory chimneys with their huge plumes of smoke caught by the wind. The transition between rural and urban-industrial effectively communicates the simultaneous nature of natural time in differing locales and the shift in social time. The night-shift is coming to an end and a cut to factory gates is accompanied by the sights and sounds of workers of the next shift arriving. Immediately over an aerial shot of an urban centre we hear a radio transmitting to homes the instructions and accompanying music for physical exercise. 'Coleman Smith wakens up the others with his morning P.T. song and a new day is in full swing.'⁽⁵⁵⁶⁾ The national effort is

reinforced by the regulation and attuning of personal behaviour to the needs of the moment. As Coleman Smith recites his commands the camera tracks along a street recording the brisk walk of an office worker, complete with tin hat and gas mask, on his way to work. As he passes by the boarded windows of blitzed houses the vigorous walk of this anonymous commuter has an almost comical clockwork efficiency. Smart and punctilious this 'heroic' little (lower-middle class, suburban) man seemingly oblivious to the recent devastation turns the corner. Coleman Smith completes his commands as he walks in determined fashion away from the camera towards his work. As he does, the abruptness of the following cut supported with the screech and hissing of machinery, brings us to the world of industry and commerce. We are briefly in a train, perhaps as a commuter travelling past an urban landscape of smoking stacks and chimneys, to work.

To introduce a contrasting but parallel time frame we move from the often anonymous public world of the urban-industrial to the privacy of the family. As an introduction Jennings utilises his motif of a tree over which we hear the faint notes of a piano. Images of trees, like those of other rural signifiers in Jennings' films, may carry a particular symbolic weight but usually they tend to be associated by many commentators with references to the complex ideological formation known as pastoralism.⁽⁵⁵⁷⁾ But the images of farming and wheat inserted into *Listen to Britain* also carry contemporary notions such as production, productivity and self-sufficiency. Likewise the image of a tree can articulate relatively accessible abstractions of national

vitality and renewal - trees are for example caught bursting into leaf or flower in *Heart of Britain* and *Words for Battle*. It is possible to interpret this brief shot of a tree not just as some formal linking device but as a more personal and esoteric statement. The image of the tree may represent a derivative poetic signifier for the contemporary situation of Britain. The natural sound of leaves rustling in the wind and catching the sunlight as they flutter in the breeze, has strong resonances with the poetic imagery of Gerard Manley Hopkins which Jennings analysed in a pre-war radio broadcast - 'My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled/ Quelled, or quenched in leaves the leaping sun/ Are felled, felled, are all felled':

Airy cages! The trees, within five words of being trees, have become *cages* . . . made of leaves, cages inside which the sun is an animal jumping about ('the leaping sun'). The poplar trees, as the sunlight went through them, seemed to Hopkins to have a sort of movement like a jumping animal inside a cage . . . Hopkins presents the sunlight in poplar leaves as a battle between an animal and its cage.(558)

Jennings correlates the poetic image and ideological expression with the biological/poetic metaphor of Britain (the tree) confined by the siege from sea and air while the 'leaping sun' (the people's army) struggle to break free from their constraints. The immediate sequence following, although located in an urban environment, is associated with the tree. We cut to a domestic scene, a woman stands near a table littered with the remnants of breakfast, a piano can be heard playing on the soundtrack. She looks out of the window and we see from her point of view the

source of the music and gather the emotional meaning of her situation: 'A housewife watches her child dancing with the others in the school playground below and thinks of the man in a foreign land.' (559) The children perform a traditional dance. The cry of 'mummy' returns us to the children, and a series of associative shots of children, wife/mother and a photograph of a man in uniform conjure a picture of a family broken by war. Returning to the poem Jennings explains his interpretation:

What makes one talk about it as a battle? . . . it's because of the contrast between the life of the trees when they are standing and the blankness (the nothingness) of the landscape (and of his feelings) when they're all cut down: 'Are felled, felled, are all felled'. It's the contrast between life and death, and that really is a battle and worth making a fuss about. (560)

Although the family is (temporarily or perhaps permanently) incomplete its future and by implication the local community and nation are reliant upon the absent father (and men like him) along with the resolution of all mothers. The failure to break free of the cage will be the end of Britain.

The sequence is now reversed. Initially we hear the rumble of vehicles on the soundtrack followed by a cut to a mechanised army unit thundering its way through the epitome of pastoral England: 'Bren gun carriers come crashing through the village street - shaking the plaster and timbers of 'Ye Olde Tea Shoppe'. (561) A place of timeless tranquillity is shattered by the brief but disruptive passage of these vehicles down the high street. Over a sequence of intercut shots of half-tracks, Tudor gables, a point of view shot of the convoy through a paned

window to another ancient house across the street, a sign advertising 'Guest Teas' and reaction shots of children, the convoy passes through the village. Similar to the spitfires, the Bren gun carriers and their associated military power become accentuated by the mixing of Cameron's soundtrack. The drone of the three spitfires are deep and resonant, like some mass formation of aircraft. The noise from the half-tracks becomes distorted sounding more like a division of heavy tanks than lightweight armoured carriers. As the convoy rumbles out of the village in the bright sunlight of the morning a trumpet fanfare introduces the mid-morning sequence.

Both this sequence and the following lunchtime canteen concert are reminiscent of *Welfare of the Workers*: 'A bugle call - calling all workers - the BBC programme of 'Music while you Work' every morning in the factories the girls sing "Yes my darling Daughter".⁽⁵⁶²⁾ The brief opening contextualises and sets the tone for depicting the young women as they sing along while they work. A dissolve to an aerial shot reveals an industrial estate located somewhere in the countryside away from the blitzed regions. The signature trumpet call and cry 'Calling all Workers!' is announced. As the lively march of the signature tune for 'Music While You Work' explodes onto the soundtrack a dissolve locates the viewer in the cab of a vehicle following a truck along what may be a road near that estate. A striking image is provided by a train in mid-shot, belching smoke and hauling freight waggons as it passes over a bridge intersecting the road. The vibrancy of the music catches the energetic movement of vehicle and rhythm of the train. As the vehicle

travels under the bridge into shadow we cut to another 'point of view' shot, but this time from a train carriage emerging from a similar shadow cast by a bridge in an urban landscape of terraced housing and gas towers. The closing strains of the signature tune are accompanied by a dissolve to the close up of a rapidly spinning mechanism of factory machinery.

Once again we are presented with evidence of diverse but simultaneous economic activity on the roads, rail and in the factories. But this time it is the energy and dynamic rhythm of that 'animal', the nation, that is considered. Rhythm may imply a patterned and recurring cycle and here it is the associations between the regulated and progressive drive of rhythmic activity and war effort which is highlighted. The vibrancy of the introductory music is associated with speeding the transfer of people, resources and products across the nation to their destinations. Inside the factories in an attempt to forestall the danger of declining productivity between breakfast and lunch, the workforce are given extra impetus through the provision of music.⁽⁵⁶³⁾ A mass production system epitomised by Fordist systems of production which Guild Socialism had condemned as transforming labour into a mere appendage of the machine, seems to be momentarily in reverse with the moral and military imperative of the war economy. It seems for an instant in the history of modern manufacture that the human and material aspects of the work process have been integrated and invested with an individual and communal moral and spiritual value. The radio announcement 'Music While You Work will be played to you this morning on Rhythmic Records' is accompanied by an

establishing shot of the factory floor. The association between personal morale, effort and national productivity is achieved by a series of interrelated cuts between the three young women and the tannoy broadcasting the pertinent 'Yes My Darling Daughter'. Unlike *Spare Time* where work and creative expression are structurally divorced, here the humanity of production is valued as much as the finished product. This 'new humanity' and national spirit is expressed in the poetry and personal pleasure of the body language and glowing faces of these young women as they sing, smile and move in time to the music and sound of the machines. They exist as emotionally expressive human beings at the heart of the war drive.

The following shot focuses upon the intricate moving parts of a machine and the mechanical hiss of its rhythm which is in time with the music. With that mechanical rhythm, like the pistons of a train, in our ears a dissolve takes us back to the train continuing its journey across the urban landscape. This celebration of the role of industrial labour and particularly women in the war effort forms a central theme in the remainder of the film. The transition to the sequence of activity focussed around mid-morning and lunchtime is adeptly achieved by sound and visual links of 'Uniforms on a station platform. Canteens for rescue squads in a street.' (564) Dissolving from the train to the concourse of a main railway station (Waterloo) the competing sounds of train departure (the whistle of a guard) and general noise of the concourse is married with shots of service men and women waiting, smoking and drinking tea. Both the sequential and simultaneous nature of time and space are subtly

manipulated. We move in geographic and temporal terms from mid-morning towards midday arriving at lunchtime at a factory canteen. This transition is achieved by reminding the viewer of the persistent threat of air raids. A cut takes us to an A.R.P. van serving refreshments and food while faintly we hear the sound of singing. Yet again there is a cut to a 'Painter on a ladder covering a factory with camouflage' and the voices and music are louder and more distinguishable. Another cut takes us inside the building where the voices and music are loud and clear and off screen but we can distinguish yet more pertinent lyrics: "'And when the storm Clouds all Roll Over'". Inside Flanagan and Allen are singing 'Round the back of the Arches' to a thousand workers at their lunch.'⁽⁵⁶⁵⁾ The initial shot inside the canteen depicts female workers collecting hot meals through a service hatch, but the music and words are very familiar and their delivery probably instantly recognised by the cinema audience. As the song continues confirmation is provided by a sign advertising Bud Flanagan and Chesney Allen in concert in the canteen at 12:15.

What Jennings and McAllister catch by showing the radio broadcasts and musical lunchtime activity in *Listen to Britain* is not just the evidence of the B.B.C transmitting to the nation and the world or the policies of enlightened managements maintaining the morale of the workers, but a fundamental revolution in cultural politics. To win the war, the ruling social groups were forced to attend to and accommodate the needs of the workers. The worthy Christian and social democratic ideals of Reith which informed inter-war B.B.C. policy of culturally

'uplifting' and 'improving' broadcasting was seriously eroded. The B.B.C Home Service and Forces Programme delivered an increasingly popular diet of information, domestic and American music and entertainment. The starched formality of anonymous news readers gave way to a more humane and personal approach. Commentators such as J.B Priestley spoke to the radio audience in familiar vocabulary and regional accent. The cultural vernacular was given both a legitimacy and space to express itself in ways previously unheard. Regional programmes began to report on working class life and jazz and dance music were broadcast. Particularly home grown comedy and the talents of music hall entertainers such as Wilfred Pickles, Tommy Handley and the 'ITMA' team, 'Big hearted' Arthur Askey and 'Stinker' Murdoch brought working class vowels and irreverent surreal comedy onto the airwaves. This was the tradition from which Bud Flanagan and Chesney Allen and the 'Crazy Gang' came. Flanagan and Allen represent a very popular and public form of poetic commentary, with the words of 'Round the back of the Arches' having an immediate poignancy for the audience. Like many contemporary music hall entertainers, they would capture in their songs, jokes, double entendres and comical antics the trials and tribulations that ordinary people faced, with amongst other things during wartime, bureaucratic regulation and the existing formal and informal power structures of life. And here, because of war, they perform in the most unlikely locale of the workplace.

The morning shift gives way to a brief hour of relaxation and refreshment. From the advertisement we cut to a mid-shot of the

two performers on stage. After a close up of a substantial menu ('Scotch Broth, Fried Cod and chips, Grilled Sausages, Greens, Boiled Potatoes, Lemon Pudding, Jam Sauce, Damsons and Custard') and until the imaginative closure of the sequence, it is with the detached scrutiny of a voyeur, (through a series of establishing, point of view, reverse, individual medium and long shots), that we patrol the environs of the canteen and watch the growing emotional rapport between the audience and the artists. We begin with a close up of the relaxed but intense performance of the harmonising comic duo immediately followed by a medium shot including the band and some of the audience. An establishing shot emphasises the immense size of the canteen and the audience to which Flanagan and Allen are playing. Immediately we cut to the activity of an indifferent elderly male worker (from *Welfare of the Workers*) as he spits on the floor. We cut back to the menu. A young male worker half laughs and smokes his cigarette. We return to Flanagan and Allen in close up then cut to two women, as they smile at each other the audience begins to whistle in accompaniment. A reverse shot from the podium locates the mass of workers whistling. Bud Flanagan raises his arm as if in recognition of the audience participation and a medium shot shows several rows of women swaying to the music. Men standing packed together behind the seated audience watch and listen; a young woman leans against the menu board and smiles at the two performers. Again we return to the two comedians and the reverse shot is repeated as the song reaches its climax.

A breach has been made in the place of paid work - time sold

for wages - by the employers' need to recognise that productivity relies primarily upon labour. Leisure time, that is the time to be human (or as Jennings states in *Spare Time* 'to be ourselves',) has forced its way through the insularity and instrumentalism of existing relations of production into the industrial environment, thereby colouring the work process. The significance of the sing-along, with its emotional quality and expression of communal solidarity easily includes political sentiments. By listening to Britain we are asked to listen to these voices which, until this war, had been culturally, socially and economically marginalised from or subordinated to the existing power structures within society. J.B. Priestley, the popular voice of 'enlightened commonsense', recognised the broader significance of factory and forces entertainment:

J.B. Priestley . . . coined the slogan "Let The People Sing" which ENSA used as the title of its signature tune; new humanity, even new gaiety, emerged from the dourness and violence of war . . . "Let The People Sing", it might be said, was the spiritual essence of Bevinism.⁽⁵⁶⁶⁾

As Flanagan and Allen reach the end of the song a sound cut to the introduction of Mozart's Piano Concerto in G. Major (K.453) overlays the final image of the two comedians. It is as if Mozart's arpeggio catches their breath, whisking the sound upward ever higher as a dissolve takes us to Trafalgar Square and the frontage of the National Gallery. What occurs is an inspirational sound cut that combined with the visual dissolve opens up multiple aesthetic and symbolic meanings.⁽⁵⁶⁷⁾ Vaughan asks 'Why are we hearing orchestral music as we go to a long-

shot of the National Gallery and then mix to an orchestra?'(568)

The answer surely lies in the very notoriety of the wartime concerts in the building. The performances of Flanagan and Allen and Hess and their respective audiences, although geographically miles apart, share a moment of imaginative unity. Regardless of location, the social composition of the audience and the cultural specificity of each concert they share similarities: the prestige of the performer(s), the incongruous nature of the location and surroundings, the spontaneity in the popular response to each cultural event and, most importantly, the artistry and poetic message that each performance transmits. If one assumes that the overriding message of the film is to promote national unity one need look no further than the stress provided in Nowell-Smith's analysis of 'the union of popular and high culture and their possible divergence . . . held in the balance'. (569) But apart from creating a form of social or political unity, this cut to a simultaneous concert in the centre of London also reveals how differing forms of artistic expression can directly inform social action. Contemporary popular comedians and great music from the past connect with the general public to reveal a deeper relevance and worth.

Jennings and McAllister now rework elements from the earlier 'National Gallery' film:(570)

Another lunch time concert is in progress in the National Gallery. Here office workers and shop assistants listen to the RAF Orchestra playing Mozart's Piano Concerto in G, with Myra Hess at the piano. The ceiling and windows above are cracked by bombs like most buildings in London and the Galleries have been cleared of their treasures, yet

in one of them there is an exhibition: War Artist's Painting. A sailor on leave looks at one of Dunkirk. The place is thronged with lunch hour Londoners - mostly civil defence workers - the Queen is there listening with the others to Dame Myra Hess.⁽⁵⁷¹⁾

The complete sequence falls into three distinct sequences each coincides with discrete musical passages in Mozart's introductory movement. Like *Heart of Britain* and *Words For Battle*, as each passage progresses and the music becomes more urgent as it rises towards its climax, cuts are timed to coincide with the beat and tempo of the music. The first sequence is built around the introductory orchestration prior to the entry of the piano. Like the introduction to Flanagan and Allen, Jennings and McAllister contextualise what we are observing by including activity which is occurring in the building at the same time as the concert. A dissolve to a long shot of the orchestra and unidentified pianist is followed by a series of quick cuts timed to instrumental phrases of the music, to the musicians then an advertisement for the 1p.m. 'Lunchtime Concert' by Myra Hess and the RAF Orchestra. Rather than returning to the concert there is a cut to a high angled medium shot from behind of the extraordinary activity of two women eating sandwiches on the steps immediately inside the doors of the gallery. There follows three quick cuts to ripped blinds and cracked windows. The physical disrepair caused by bombing accompanied by such informal behaviour indicates a collapse of peace time social convention. We are drawn back to the concert first with shots of the audience and then a close-up of the musical programme and violinists. Yet again we are taken back to the entrance hall of the

Gallery as the concert continues. More people are entering through the revolving doors and another, this time low angled close up, frontal shot occurs of the same two women in forces uniform eating their lunch. We cut to a notice advertising an exhibition of war artists bringing to the people images of the conflict. The lunchtime crowd is a mixture of civilian, uniformed military and civil defence forces. People are chatting, perusing pictures and postcards while the women eat their lunch. A seaman closely scrutinises a painting of the evacuation from Dunkirk and we too see the detail of the picture. This is not the image of a traditional audience or the reserved behaviour associated with the precincts of an art gallery. What is implied is the stripping away of an aura associated with visiting such a prestigious institution as the National Gallery during peace time. The collapse of convention and the associated symbolic and aesthetic power of the institution, under the pressures of war, has momentarily loosened the grip of social and cultural elitism which usually defines the nature of relevant forms of expression found within the gallery precincts. It is transformed into a place of music, contemporary and relevant art, informality, relaxation and discussion; indeed a more open and democratic forum of expression where the signifiers of social distinction and education are cloaked by the anonymity of uniforms.

The second sequence begins as the solo piano is about to introduce a new melody. It is both this and the following passage which reinforce the propaganda message previously implied by the earlier 'National Gallery' treatment. A long-shot of the concert is followed by two close up shots of Myra Hess beginning

to play, which is followed by the 'attentive' Queen with Kenneth Clark and equerry. Jennings and McAllister repeat the initial long-shot as the solo reaches its close then as the piano is joined by the orchestra, from a high angle the camera pans across sand-bagged windows, fire buckets and empty picture frames, back to a close up of the firebuckets and sand container ready to extinguish incendiary bombs. A series of shots depict the diverse nature of the civilian and forces audience: old and young women, a child on its mother's knee, a man in uniform standing and listening, another with his head bandaged. Finally as the music moves towards the end of the passage we have another shot of young women before returning to Hess at the piano, the Queen and finally back to Hess.

The image of the damaged and vacated gallery, the impending threat of explosion and fire, the audience (including the Queen) in rapt attention drawing strength from the performance, provide a concise image and implied discourse for the American and domestic audience. The connotations of privilege are momentarily reconfigured into a broader representation of popular social cohesion. The chameleon-like property of the British monarchy to redefine its identity into the 'national-popular mascot - and emblem of conservative (indeed eternal nationhood)' is here on show.⁽⁵⁷²⁾ As Kevin Jackson suggests 'Instead of the full ceremonial pomp of the British monarchy, we see the Queen, in mufti, nodding along appreciatively with other members of the audience (which is to say she appears here, by a homely paradox of constitutional monarchy, as one of her own subjects)'⁽⁵⁷³⁾ allowing the equation of freedom of artistic

expression with tradition, democratic principles and national defiance.

As the music begins a new and increasingly dynamic phrase, the rhythmic beat like some centrifugal force propels the ensuing imagery of simultaneous association and symbolic representation into the surrounding metropolis. Jennings perfunctorily states 'Outside in Trafalgar Square where Nelson stands, the traffic of London moves on.' In fact what follows is the beginning of a bravura piece of sound and image editing to conclude the film:

Outside, girl on National gallery balcony stands reading in sunshine. Plane tree leaves in sunshine. View from Trafalgar Square shows National gallery balcony, leaves and girl. Closer view from street shows girl on sunlit balcony. Between pillars of National Gallery, a silvery barrage balloon in sky. High angled shot of traffic in Trafalgar Square outside South Africa House. High angle shot of bus stop outside National gallery. Bus stops, passengers alight. Coat of arms on pediment of National Gallery. Another high-angle view of traffic in Trafalgar Square. From National Gallery roof, dome in foreground, Nelson's Column in midground, Big Ben in background. Closer shot of Nelson on his column. MS (medium shot), back of sailor on National Gallery. General shot, National Gallery.(574)

The musical phrase now builds rapidly in tonal depth with the participation of the whole orchestra as the music moves towards a crescendo. Correspondingly in visual terms we move further out from Central London to the Docks of the East End with cranes, steaming funnels and a barrage balloon high in the sky

then into the manufacturing heartlands of Britain. We not only move geographically but also in time, it is now past the lunch-hour and the labour force of men and women are back at work refreshed and revitalised for the afternoon shift. The imaginative connection between art, war and science becomes increasingly explicit. With Mozart on the soundtrack we cut to a workshop of heavy industry. 'The factories are making tanks for this country to fight with. The noise of the factory drowns the Mozart and out of the din comes the thumping of the drums of the marines [sic] "A Life on the Ocean Wave". (575) An arpeggio coincides with a worker, cigarette in mouth, spinning the vertical handle on a vice. The images and 'music' of manufacture are overcoming the strains of the classical music and their instruments. A turret is positioned on the body of a tank, a female worker, in overalls and with hair tied back energetically operates a lathe. Similarly attired, another woman operates a fixed industrial drill as the sounds of hammering and engines finally drown out the orchestra. Tank tracks are being inspected as a train gets up steam and pulls flat-back carriages loaded with finished tanks out of the factory.

This industrial workforce is not represented as some abstract proletariat but, like the men and women of Russia, as a nation of committed people/humanity determined to succeed in the battle against Fascism. We cut to the Band of the Royal Marines marching through Chatham followed by troops in full service order. The beat of the military march resounding around the streets overwhelms the noise of the onlookers. 'The thump of the drums is taken up by the thud of the steam hammers, forging

arms from red-hot steel.':

In a steel mill, worker brings out molten ingot from furnace. Another shot of the ingot. CU (close-up) molten mass being shaped. Heavy pounding. Workers bring out another ingot. CU ingot being placed on an anvil. MS (mid-shot) workers manipulating it. CU ingot. Back to workers. Ingot being shaped. Masked workers with wielding equipment. (Mixed with the steel-mill sounds, a choir singing "Rule Britannia" begins to fade in, then takes over the soundtrack.) Steelworkers on balcony above furnace.(576)

Jennings provides images of symphonic detail which depict the terror and beauty of industrial activity. The raw materials of fire, molten metal, sparks, flame and smoke which surround and almost engulf the steel workers conjure up those imaginative furnaces depicted by Milton and the ancient gods of war whose names once adorned the steel works of the early industrial revolution.(577) We metaphorically regress through the historical and physical stages of the manufacturing process back to the physical and spiritual 'Heart' and 'Words' of the British: 'Listen to Britain. The fire in the heart of our people, the music in their voices, swells into the air, out of the factories, over the fields of grain, and up over the land.'(578) All those interrelated but formally disparate messages, concerning the essence of what *is* Britain and what has made and makes the British people, alluded to and bound up in the specific propaganda messages of each of film since *Spare Time*, become synthesised in this concluding moment.

Exterior, flat facade of factory surmounted by three smoking chimneys. Waving field of wheat, as at the

start of the film. Cooling towers and factory chimneys. Clouds drift across aerial shot of countryside (as in *Words for Battle*). ("Rule Britannia" comes to a triumphant end over these shots.)(579)

Such signifiers of social and political unity can also be read as a form of moral and ethical integration through the practice of labour and duty under the pressure of total war. It is community unified by shared ideals and spirit and fortified by its heritage and character. History and the contemporary are collapsed into a representation of the will and co-ordinated productive capacity unleashed through war. It is a combination of the exploitation and organisation of physical and human resources, manifested in the concluding imagery of the land and industry, that will provide the key not only to winning this war but to affirming the concluding line of the film that 'Britons never will be slaves.' Out of this conflict could emerge a new 'socialised' and liberated Britain infused by these formative experiences. It is a vision close to the ideals of his parents and many on the left; the desire to rid modern society of the debilitating psychological, social, cultural and economic relations of free-market capitalism which have corrupted and stultified the imagination of the many and the potential of the individual to strive for personal liberty.

The Spoken Introduction

The other day we came across a Canadian broadcaster called [Leonard] Brockington a pal or enemy or both of Grierson's; I wonder if you have come across him. Ex-lawyer and devotee of Whitman.(580)

Humphrey Jennings

Conceived without commentary, the carefully produced introductory title and sound mix would have given some indication to the audience of the forthcoming relationship between sound and image. The 'symbols representing music in war - the violin and bow with a few notes of 'Rule Britannia', the shadow and flash of a gun'(581) provide the background for the title and credits (the background again repeated at the conclusion of the film). The visual reference is accompanied by a sharp and prolonged bugle call, followed by a mixture of sounds including running feet, children's voices, a dog barking and the resonant and rhythmic beat of a distant base drum (probably all taken from the recording of the Royal Marine Band in Chatham). Originally from the titles the film would have proceeded to the opening shot of trees swaying in the wind and the sound of approaching aircraft, however as the screen darkens there follows a sharp and rapid roll of snare drum(s) with the title 'Foreward by Leonard Brockington K.C.' and a mid-shot of a mature, possibly ex-military, man. Wearing a dark three-piece suit, collar, tie and glasses his pose is rather stiff. Seated behind a table in a high-backed patterned chair with a background of plain curtains he stares directly to camera. He begins with a clipped self-conscious delivery rather like an

officer addressing his troops. Occasionally eye contact is broken as he averts his gaze to quickly reassure himself of the speech out of view on the table:

I am a Canadian. I have been listening to Britain. I have heard the sound of her life by day and by night.

(Dissolve to close up of a map depicting northern Scotland and the Hebrides) Many years ago (slow vertical pan begins down map as far as the North of England) a great American, speaking of Britain, said that in the storm of battle and conflict she had a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon.

(Dissolve back to Brockington) In the great sound picture that is here presented, you too will hear that heart beating. For blended together in one great symphony is the music of Britain at war.

(Dissolve to map, continue vertical pan from the North of England to the Midlands)
The evening hymn of the lark. The roar of spitfires. The dancers in the great ballroom at Blackpool. The clank of machinery and shunting of trains.

(Dissolve to Brockington) Soldiers of Canada, holding in memory - in proud memory - their home on the range.

(Dissolve to map vertical pan from Midlands to South Coast) The BBC sending truth, on its journey around the world. The trumpet call of freedom.

(Dissolve to Brockington) The war song of a great people. The first sure notes of the march of victory. As you and I listen to Britain.

(Quick fade) distant sound in the darkness of engines fade up to low angled shot of trees swaying in the wind as the sound increases with the approaching spitfires. (582)

The explanation for the introduction seems to rest on an assertion by Hodgkinson and Sheratsky: 'The film eschews commentary and dialogue [sic] - with the exception of Leonard Brockington's introduction, obviously added by a nervous civil servant and best eliminated from any screening. (Ken Cameron, in some notes written in 1957, records the film was rejected after completion because it had no commentary. This was "the only reason" for the unnecessary prologue. "The film is all the better for its removal", says Cameron)'.⁽⁵⁸³⁾ Vaughan turns Cameron's assertion into a critical comment on the consequences of such bureaucratic interference with the film:

Lord Brockington [sic] tells us exactly what we shall see and hear - thus denying the film's elements their linguistic primacy - and consigns it firmly to the realm of Art - 'Blended together in a great symphony is the music of Britain at war' - thus denying the immediacy of its relevance as an account of its audience's lives. It is the tone of this disclaimer which has been adopted and perpetuated by those who allude to *Listen to Britain* as Jennings's 'most personal film'.⁽⁵⁸⁴⁾

Smith suggests another reason: 'The implicit assumption is that the average audience was likely to be bewildered by the techniques about to be deployed. Certainly, the introduction sits heavily and didactically at the beginning of the film. On the other hand, it does at least play an important part in the initial positioning of the viewer as 'observer', negotiating the first few minutes of the film proper'.⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾ The pithy didacticism of the speech is reminiscent of Jennings' poetic style found in his letters, poetry and reports. As an admirer of Walt Whitman,

Brockington would have had both the sense and sensibility to understand the implicit celebration of the common people that *Listen to Britain* was offering and clearly expressing in the film. On the other hand the reason for the didacticism of the commentary may be more political and educational than condescending.

To be effective, all propaganda must be relevant and accessible to its target audience. The film was produced at a time when Britain was unsure if there would be time to persuade the United States to commit its armed forces while the domestic pressure of war work was increasingly intensified, due to a growing shortage of volunteer labour in all areas of industry and the civilian and military services. The pool of volunteers Jennings had recorded in previous films had virtually dried up and the Government needed to turn to conscription.⁽⁵⁸⁶⁾ Suddenly on the 7th December there was the surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour by the Japanese. This was quickly followed by a declaration of war on the United States by Hitler. The combined Axis powers went on to achieve striking military successes after Pearl Harbour with the invasion of South-East Asia, progress in the Mediterranean Theatre and on the Eastern Front.

There was now a significant possibility that the combined efforts of the Axis could eventually eliminate any successful Allied counter offensive.⁽⁵⁸⁷⁾ *Listen to Britain* had been rapidly overtaken by the escalation in international military events and by the time of the film's release in early 1942 the conscription programme was underway. Fortuitously the film provides in

domestic and international terms an appropriate and timely image which can be read as spirited and effective official mass mobilisation.⁽⁵⁸⁸⁾ Nowell-Smith states '[Jennings's] films of 1940, 1941 and even 1942 are premised on the danger of defeat. They aim to create an image of a diverse but united nation, whose multiple sources of energy are being harnessed to a single life and death struggle.'⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾ *Listen to Britain* required 'updating', not only to boost a domestic population that must work and fight but also to indicate to our new and vital ally that Britain was capable of holding the European frontier. While the United States came to terms with the Japanese surprise attack and began to mobilise and fortify its comparatively inadequate military forces, it still needed to provide Britain with aid.

The introduction not only highlights the formal qualities of the text, directing the audience primarily to the sound, it also offers through the map of the British Isles which punctuates the speech at moments of specific reference, an introduction for an American audience to the national geography of their military ally and the broad geographical locations alluded to in the film. Even though the image that the film presents does not accurately represent the reality of British mobilisation, what the spoken introduction does achieve is to communicate to the domestic and the American audience a positive and dynamic image of Britain at war. Smith is close to the truth when he states:

As outsider ('I am a Canadian') Leonard Brockington can play the familiar role of narrator/observer that friendly outsiders often played in early wartime documentary (cf Quentin Reynolds in *London Can Take It* or Robert Menzies in *Ordinary People*), of

congratulating the viewer/s 'you', as insider in relation both to the audience-nation and to the nation-on-film. It is typical of the articulating strategy of the film as a whole that it should begin by interpellating the viewer as individual, as group and as nation, in relation to the arguments about individuals, groups and nations about to be deployed on screen: I have been listening to Britain . .you too will hear that heart beat . . . as you and I (fade to black) listen to Britain.(590)

Brockington however is no outsider. Canada, as he makes clear and as we later see, has already committed troops to the battle. Brockington's nationality and accent accentuate the distinct transatlantic inflection and reinforces the new military association. A 'great American, speaking of Britain, said that in the storm of battle and conflict she had a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon.' The message is no longer as originally intended, an appeal for aid from a still neutral power, but an affirmation of the new powerful partnership between allies engaged in a truly global conflict and an assurance that Britain will continue to resist and fight back while the United States prepares.

On the other hand the introduction does curtail the interpretation of the film. For Jennings the narrative was as much about the people in a popular international alliance which could defeat Fascism. He admired what he saw as the independent character of the British and Russian people to fight this war for themselves, and by implication, organise their post-war future. Similar to the deletion of the passage by Shelley from *Words For Battle* the addition of the speech inflects the propaganda message towards the new transatlantic military

alliance of capitalist democracies and the key position held by Britain at this time. This emphasis tends to obscure an alternative and potentially more radical domestic political reading of the text and is compounded by ensuing film criticism which focussed upon the film's supposed romanticism.

Documentary News Letter did not review the film. But Edgar Anstey was particularly caustic:

an expensive Crown Film Unit production . . . which will not encourage anyone to do anything at all . . . It sets out to assemble a varied collection of characteristic British sounds ranging from the piano recital at the National Gallery lunchtime concert to the clatter of a falling railway signal, and to illustrate the skilfully constructed jigsaw with an appropriate (and beautifully photographed) set of visual images. This is an aesthetic enough conception in all conscience, but by the time Humphrey Jennings has done with it has become the rarest piece of fiddling since the days of Nero. It will be a disaster if this film is sent overseas. One shudders to imagine the effect upon our Allies should they learn that an official British film-making unit can find time these days to contemplate the current sights and sounds of Britain as if the country were some curious kind of museum exhibit, or a figment of the romantic imagination of Mass Observation. (591)

A similar tone is found in the American *Motion Picture Herald*: 'As an essay in modern documentary screencraft it will please the 1942 equivalent of the *avant garde* . . . the experimental manipulation of sound-track and picture, the cutting and the atmosphere of nostalgia are characteristic. .It is a pretty picture album of wartime Britain with a realistic

soundtrack, not without its moments, nor devoid of appeal outside these islands, but as propaganda obscure and scanty.'⁽⁵⁹²⁾ But Jennings (and McAllister) could take comfort from the popular response:

I met . . . Eric Knight - American film critic and his wife who were particularly enthusiastic about *Listen to Britain* (now on at the Gaumont Haymarket). *Listen* has had very violent notices one way and the other - three stars in the *Sunday Express* with tremendous popular boost - and of course Mr Anstey in the *Spectator* thinking of every gag to damn it. But in fact a success and very popular.⁽⁵⁹³⁾

Like the war, in 1942 Jennings' film career also came to a turning point. Hillier correctly regards *Listen to Britain* as 'the climax, both stylistically and thematically, of the first phase of Jennings' development in film' and Andrew Higson believes the film is 'perhaps the highpoint of [the] montage tradition in British documentary'.⁽⁵⁹⁴⁾ But the completion of *Listen to Britain* saw the end of that close partnership with McAllister which was concerned with contemporary reportage of the siege.⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾

By 1942 Jennings was one of the few senior directors left in the unit who had not gained any remarkable critical or popular recognition for his work in the commercial sector. Others such as Jack Holmes with *Merchant Seaman* (1941), Harry Watt's feature length docu-drama *Target for Tonight* (1941) with McAllister as editor on this and the earlier *Men of the Lightship* (1940), all of which became notable commercial successes. For Holmes the reward was a similar prestigious feature length

assignment, *Coastal Command* (1942) while Harry Watt made a successful transition to Ealing Studios and the commercial sector. Meanwhile Pat Jackson was to direct the 'featurette' *Ferry Pilot* (1942).⁽⁵⁹⁶⁾ The creative energy poured into *Heart of Britain*, *Words For Battle* and *Listen to Britain* did not gain the same acclaim from the industry or public. In comparison to these other directors Jennings was ensnared within non-commercial propaganda while they had moved forward into feature length commercially orientated drama-documentary.

Perhaps in part this explains why Harry Watt suggested to Dalrymple that Jennings be given a more adventurous and commercially orientated assignment.⁽⁵⁹⁷⁾ From late October 1941 he had begun a series of treatments that were to evolve into his drama-documentary *Fires Were Started*, which re-visited the 'amateur war' to depict the volunteer fire service prior to its reorganisation as a full-time professional unit.⁽⁵⁹⁸⁾ Once *Listen to Britain* was completed in early January he turned to the new challenge, and although his partnership with McAllister continued the nature of the subject matter became historical rather than contemporary, the style dramatic neo-realism rather than reportage. Jennings exchanged the poetic expression of the contemporary for the poetic evocation of the past.⁽⁵⁹⁹⁾

Conclusion

The Politics of Culture

Culture . . . comes to prominence intellectually when it becomes a force to be reckoned with politically.(600)

Terry Eagleton.

The opinion that Jennings was an intellectual with a 'magpie sensibility' has obscured the true nature of the interrelationship between his artistic and intellectual investigations and his film work. He was never primarily an 'artist', 'mass observer', 'historian, or 'film-maker' but simultaneously all of these things and more. If an artistic term must be used in an attempt to define his diverse cultural and artistic activities it should be that of poet. His investigation of the modern condition was fundamentally concerned with the poetics of sensibility and a desire to reintegrate the divorced spiritual and material dimensions of society. He was in other words attempting to re-imagine life. That desire was central to his aim of reinstating what he saw as the true meaning, status and role of the poet and poetry in contemporary society. This quest took him across many academic disciplines, areas of artistic expression and research.

From his family, then his education he acquired a blend of contemporary and traditional ideas, stemming from the philosophical, artistic and social debates of the present and preceding eras. They allowed him to make theoretical and artistic connections between past and present. From this he learned about poetic technique and particularly the application of technique as technique to produce a distinct form of

modernist expression infused with a particular anti-authoritarian ethos. From his school and university life, Jennings became a 'Cambridge man' immersed in that comparatively cloistered but vibrant cultural, artistic and intellectual inter-war world. Here he engaged in a series of closely related extra-curricular activities. What at first were comparatively personal and esoteric investigations had become by the mid-thirties an engagement with contemporary art and politics within the public sphere. Significantly the debates of Cambridge were to re-emerge and find expression in the disputes over the formal and political principles of the documentary movement.

Jennings is often regarded as an individual who championed a vision of the world that few of his friends or Cambridge associates really understood. In fact in his desire to reintegrate aesthetic and physical experience we can identify a long and honourable tradition of radical thought and poetic expression in British society. The example of his parents, the literature available in the household and his educational experiences provided a grounding and a framework from which to develop his own intellectual and political progressivism. His experience of northern industrial life in the thirties and the rise of Fascism recontextualised his concerns bringing him both intellectually and politically into the contemporary world. The concern to bridge the social and cultural gap between himself and the mass of society became more urgent and fitted well into the milieu of an intellectual left faced by the growing threat of war.

He was at once a traditionalist and a modernist. He deliberately borrowed and 'plagiarised' what he felt was

necessary to illustrate and argue his case, articulating his understanding through the images and words of the past and present. He studied the imaginative response of the poet, artist and playwright and how they attempted to communicate their vision to the populace. It is from such sources that we have an indication of his understanding of the relationship between past, present and the future. They also indicate how he understood the position and role of the intellectual and artist in society and the methods required to explore the social world. He engaged with contemporary artistic and intellectual debate on his own terms while attempting to represent and reveal the people to themselves in such a way as to free them from preconceived notions and illuminate a new way of looking at the world.

The variety and disparate nature of his activities fall into a pattern when considered from this perspective. Any apparent incoherence in his activities is probably more the product of an impulsive character and circumstance rather than the activities of a dilettante. In the second-half of the thirties the collation of data for *Pandaemonium*, his exploration of the poetic and the popular imagination with Mass Observation, and his engagement with Surrealism and non-theatrical film, were primarily on his own terms. He understood these forms of investigation and expression as techniques through which to attempt communication of the poetic. Like Magritte all these were 'lamentable expedients' not ends in themselves. Strands of eclectic activity therefore are part of the same broad project, an interrogation of the qualities of the medium and facets of the same intellectual quest, 'the apprehension of the imagination by

the imagination'.

He was a poet (and artist) who approached intellectual maturity during the inter-war period. He reflected upon and attempted to offer some form of answer to the fundamental and universal question of the relationship between the individual and society in a time of increasing and dramatic upheaval, particularly when Britain was to face a unique and fundamental threat to its national existence. By 1939 he was equipped with a philosophy, an aesthetic and a mode of poetic expression which provided him with ways not only of interpreting evidence from history and contemporary society, but also with a distinctive artistic style to express moments of that unique period of the British space-time continuum. In numerical and artistic terms his most popular achievements emerge as the war films where both he and his audience were acutely sensitised to the contingency and uncertainty of existence. That existence generated a desire for a new social and political settlement after the war. The medium of film allowed his artistic and political philosophy to emerge in one of the most democratic mediums of his age, one in which his vision could literally be projected to the masses in an immediate and accessible form.

Apart from *Spare Time*, critical reference to his early propaganda films tends to accentuate his use of history and heritage at the expense of the contemporary nature of the messages which inform his propaganda texts. Those films are as much an expression of Jennings' experience of the war and his beliefs as they are of the war itself. Unfortunately the epithet 'film-poet' has tended to obscure the role of Jennings the

political propagandist. This early cycle of films can be understood as representing a long tradition of political and poetic expression concerned with the notion of social and individual liberty. This radical dimension of his politics has been overlooked by critics and analysts who have tended to concentrate on evaluating the films as artistic and aesthetic representations of communality and national unity. Although these interpretations/evaluations are relevant, we can also identify distinctive, multiple, often contending messages embedded within the propaganda imperative of each film. A central message was his belief in the capacity of the poetic imagination to transform popular consciousness through emotional response. It was a dialectic of the material, intellectual and spiritual which, as a form of poetic expression, had the potential to harness imaginative insight and thereby question existing notions of psychological, social and political existence.

The poetic nature of his propaganda films accentuated the contingent and relative notion of experience and the resilience and spontaneity of the people. The representation of these aspects of life were technically enhanced by his partnership with Stewart McAllister. In the trilogy starting with *The Heart of Britain* we see a technical and corresponding artistic progression in the integration of his poetic and political ideas on the screen. Crystallised within the imagery and content of those films are a series of philosophical, aesthetic and ethical ideas which are both conservative and radical. Jennings articulated the romance of radical English utopianism but wished to temper

future action by insisting we take into account the values of tradition and heritage. His politics and art were inextricably linked through his belief in the true role of the poet in contemporary society as being both visionary and bringer of news. The poet had a subversive role to play, as a challenger of established forces which proclaim the superior knowledge and the moral authority of leadership. As an intellectual, Jennings understood that the problem he faced was not just communicating and convincing a sceptical populace but also defeating the guile of an establishment wishing to maintain the status-quo. Like Edward W. Said he understood that:

The problem for the intellectual is not so much . . . mass society as a whole, but rather the insiders, experts, coteries, professionals who in the modes defined earlier this century by the pundit Walter Lippmann mould public opinion, make it conformist, encourage a reliance on a superior little band of all-knowing men in power. Insiders promote special interests, but intellectuals should be the ones to question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or gender privilege.(601)

In the field of documentary cinema the formal and narrative properties of each film embody elements of a modernist sensibility that contest those dominant forms of expression associated with Griersonianism. The opposition within the documentary film movement to Jennings' films reflected a fundamental division over the meaning and form of that genre. Underlying the criticisms was a deep unease about the premises upon which his films were constructed: upon a philosophy, aesthetic and ethic which was inimical to the corporate and

technocratic elitism implied by the Griersonian documentary style. This unease manifested itself in disagreements over the nature of authenticity and truth and found focus in the debate over the appropriate form of cinematic realism and the documentary expression of the British life.

'The very word 'culture' Eagleton asserts, 'contains a tension between making and being made, rationality and spontaneity'(602) and it is here that we can identify the schism between Grierson and Jennings. Grierson wished to ensure the masses were securely integrated within the principles and parameters of the progressively modern social democratic state. For him documentary held both a civilising and prophetic role: "Civilisation' . . . has a ring of agency and awareness about it, an aura of rational projection and urban planning, as a collective project by which cities are wrested from swamps and cathedrals raised to the skies'.(603) He wished to promote through documentary a modern meritocratic society legitimised and shaped by the 'making' and 'rationality' of an enlightened, technocratic socio-cultural elite. Jennings on the other hand, sceptical of elitism and manufacture, wished to recoup an intuitive popular aesthetic which he believed had been lost since the advent of the Enlightenment and modernity. He held a more pragmatic and relative understanding of culture as 'made' and 'spontaneous'. Cultural expression was a sign of a deeper more authentic form of human life, liberty and expression. In this sense he may be tentatively characterised as belonging to the 'Romantic-humanist tradition' a tradition in which: 'Culture is . . . the antidote to politics, tempering the fanatical tunnel vision in

its appeal to equipoise, to keeping the mind serenely untainted by whatever is tendentious, unbalanced, sectarian . . . Culture . . . may be a critique of capitalism, but it is as much a critique of the commitments which oppose it . . . For the radical Romantics, art, folk culture or 'primitive' communities are signs of a creative energy which must spread to political society as a whole.'⁽⁶⁰⁴⁾ Jennings offers a radical and subversive alternative to the constrained and constraining conception of society and culture offered by Grierson. What Jennings identified as the creative energy and imagination of the musicians in *Spare Time* and later in the volunteer civilian army, Grierson regarded as evidence of the expression of a self-indulgent romantic idealism: 'An assault on Reason in the name of intuition or the wisdom of the body was a charter for mindless prejudice. Imagination was a sickness of the mind which prevented us from seeing the world as it was, and so of acting to transform it'.⁽⁶⁰⁵⁾ Jennings' modernist aesthetic and cultural politics mapped out in *Spare Time* (1939) and *Listen to Britain* (1942), offer a multi-dimensional and kaleidoscopic image of daily life. In the closing words of *Spare Time*, 'as things are', there exists a world of struggle between work and leisure - between routinisation and creativity. But those closing words suggest an impermanence of the prevailing condition and the promise of a different future. *Listen to Britain* also represents another potential form of the future expressed through the contingency of the moment; a new reality and morality where work, leisure, social and individual morality and happiness become integrated.

Grierson and Jennings therefore held opposing values

concerning democratic expression, civilisation and culture expressed through differing forms of modernist discourse and specifically cinematic technique and expression. This is metaphorically encapsulated in Grierson's caricature of Jennings:

Jennings was a minor poet, a very stilted person. He was not a very co-ordinated person physically, and his films reflect that . . . he hasn't got this inner feeling for movement . . . He was fearfully sorry for the working class, safely, safely sorry for the working class, which did credit not just for his liberal spirit but to his lack of relationship with the living thing, sometimes . . . he didn't have a sense of smell . . . he had good taste, visual good taste.(606)

The events, the social and physical landscapes depicted in Jennings' films are not confined to romantic notions of heritage, class and patriotism. At the core of his work is a sensibility which attempts to register and express the passionate struggle of human survival. These films have more to do with catching what he felt was the spiritual and material wholeness of life at that particular historic moment of film making than any crude idealism or nationalism.

Although located on the political left, Jennings did not overtly express his political sympathies by committing himself to a political party. He avoided the materialism of Marxism and the paternalism of social democracy for an idea of individual liberty identified and drawn from the past which fell outside institutional politics. This brief cycle of reportage style films with their subversive cinematic technique registers his attempt to record what he saw as the universal human passion for life in

an uncertain and dangerous world. It is diverse and democratic, a way of life that is organic, open and of value, responding and adapting to the environmental conditions in which it finds itself at any one time. In this sense it was more contingent and relative, leaving the possibilities of a pragmatic response to the future. What form that response would take could not be determined by an elite but would be given meaning by the people themselves with reference to tradition, the recent past and an intense recognition that the desire to achieve well-being and reform could only be won through sacrifice and loss.

Basil Wright believed that Jennings 'found in the circumstances of war an inspiration which exactly matched his own personal feelings about his country'.⁽⁶⁰⁷⁾ Although he believed his films were warmly received by the general audience they did not in style and sentiment find unconditional support within the documentary film movement. Unfortunately the political expression in his early wartime documentary propaganda was at odds with the values of the established propaganda movement and the general direction of wartime British cinema. Apart from the critique of Grierson the politics of this early cycle of films became incorporated within a more general political trend towards reform in the compromise of liberal-social democracy.⁽⁶⁰⁸⁾ In cinematic terms that compromise was promoted by producers such as Michael Balcon who understood the need for an appropriate 'mild revolution' in post-war class relations.⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾

Although with hindsight Jennings is now recognised in film circles as one of the greatest documentary filmmakers this

country has produced, his contribution to the art and politics of film has yet to be fully recognised. That recognition will only be possible by rethinking the existing critique of his life and his art.

Footnotes:

Introduction

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- 3 Adair, G. 'Too fey for the fast-forward future: Twentieth-Century Classics That Won't Last No 4: Humphrey Jennings', *Independent on Sunday*, 7th February 1999. 'Culture' p2
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- 5 Anderson, L. 'Only Connect: Some Aspects of the Work of Humphrey Jennings' in Jennings, M-L. (editor) *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet*. British Film Institute, 1982. p53
- 6 Pitman, G. (Allen Hutt), 'Humphrey Jennings: Men in Our Time' No 8, *Our Time*, vol. 3, No.12 July 1944. p13
- 7 Higson, A. *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*. Clarendon Press, 1997. p191
- 8 Adair, G. 7th February 1999. 'Culture' p2
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- 32 Tillyard, S.K. 1988, pp.37-40 Naylor, G. 'Design and Industry', in Ford, B. (editor), *Early Twentieth Century Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Ch8
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- 42 Hughes, S. 1946.
- 43 Hodgkinson A. and Sheratsky R. *Humphrey Jennings more than a maker of Films*, Hanover, 1982. p5 See 'Appendix B' pp174-175 Also Mitchell, S.J.D. 1976. p.228.

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- 45 Between 1926 and 1934 Jennings was closely involved in dramatic productions for at least 3 university societies - The Amateur Dramatic Club, England's oldest and most famous amateur theatrical group, Cambridge University Musical Society and the Marlowe Society. Hodgkinson, A.W. and Sheratsky, R. 1982. pp7-9 and 'Appendix B' 'Some of Jennings's Theatrical Activities' p175 provides an incomplete list of theatrical activities.
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therefore not a line in these pages has been written by any but degreeless students or young graduates. It has been our object to to gather all and none but the not yet too ripe fruits of art, science and philosophy in the University. We do not wish so much that our articles should be sober and guarded as that they should be stimulating and lively and take up a strong line." Editorial, *Experiment* No.1. November 1928.

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96 "The probability function, introduced into physics by quantum

theory, does not in itself represent a course of events in the course of time: it merely represents a tendency for events and for our knowledge of them. The so-called 'quantum jump' registers the transition from the 'possible' to the 'actual', since observation selects of all possible events the actual one that has taken place. According to Heisenberg, the probability function introduced something standing between the idea of an event and the actual event - just in the middle between possibility and reality." Gablik, S. *Magritte*, Thames and Hudson, 1985. p170

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249 Macnaghten, P., Urry, J. 1998. pp120-121

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250 Constructed out of archive material with a post-synchronised soundtrack *Penny Journey* (6 minutes) narrates the efficiency of the postal service between Manchester and rural Sussex. *Speaking from America* (10 minutes) explaining the technical and scientific problems in maintaining the trans-atlantic phone link.

251 The film concludes with newsreel footage of President Roosevelt urging the United States to recognise its critical role in maintaining world peace.

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263 Basil Wright cited in Vaughan, D. 1983. p37

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- 273 Nowell-Smith, G. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p326
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- 275 Nowell-Smith, G. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p326
- 276 Vaughan, D. 1983. Ch14
- 277 Vaughan, D. 1983. p44
- 278 See earlier discussion
- 279 Robson, K. J. 'Humphrey Jennings: The Legacy of Feeling' in *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Vol.7 No.1, Winter 1982. pp38-52.
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- 281 Basil Wright cited in Vaughan, D. 1983. p37
- 282 Nowell-Smith, G. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. pp.325-326
- 283 Nowell-Smith, G. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p.326
- 284 "*Spare Time* stands, however, as a signpost to a path which was not to be followed. The war was to bypass it." Vaughan, D. 1983. p45
- 285 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. *Humphrey Jennings: More than a Maker of Films*, Hanover, 1982. pp45-46. Rhode, E. 'Humphrey Jennings' in *Tower of Babel Speculations on the Cinema*, Chilton Books, 1966. p76 Hillier, A. 'Humphrey Jennings' in Lovell, J., Hillier, A. *Studies in Documentary*, Secker and Warburg, 1972. p74
- 286 G.P.O. Film Unit Programme, 'Item 20' in 'The Humphrey Jennings Special Collection', B.F.I. Archive. See also footnote 7. The 'Pact of Friendship and Mutual Aid with Italy' was signed on the 22nd May 1939.
- 287 See Ziegler, P. *London at War 1939 - 1945*. Mandarin, 1995. Chs 2 and 3 and Calder, A. *The People's War: Britain 1939 - 1945*. Granada, 1982. Ch.1
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Jackson, K. (editor),1993. pp236-243
 292 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. pp45 -46
 293 All references to the commentary are taken directly from the soundtrack and abridged version in Hodgkinson, A.W., Sharatsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' pp121-122
 294 Jennings, H. 'The English', Times Literary Supplement, 7 August 1948 reprinted in Jackson, K. (editor),1993. p240
 295 Soundtrack and abridged commentary.
 296 Soundtrack and abridged commentary.
 297 Cull, Nicholas John,*Selling War*, Oxford University Press,1995. pp 92-93.

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298 Hewison, R. *Under Siege: Literary Life In London 1939-45*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson,1978. pp 9-11 and 18-20
 299 Calder, A. *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*. Granada,1982.
 300 Cull, N.J. *Selling the War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American "Neutrality" in World War II*. Oxford University Press,1995. p68
 301 See Calder, A.1971. pp161-178
 302 See Swann, P. *The British Documentary Movement 1926-1946*. Cambridge University Press,1989. pp153-154. Chapman, J. *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939-1945*. I.B. Tauris,1998. pp18-40 Dickenson, M., Street, S. *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the British Government 1927-1984*. B.F.I. Books,1985. pp112-113
 303 Watt, H. *Don't Look at the Camera*. Paul Elek,1974. pp128-129
 This description has been queried by Chapman, J. 1998. pp117-119
 304 Hodgkinson and Sheratsky are convinced that "The recurrent images of people listening to radios are unmistakably his, as are the evening silhouettes shots of barrage balloons over the Thames" Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. *Humphrey Jennings: More Than a Maker of Films*. Hanover 1982. p47 See Armes, R. A *Critical History of British Cinema*. Oxford University Press,1978. p153 and Hillier J. 'Humphrey Jennings' in Hillier, J., Lovell, A.*Studies in Documentary*. Viking Press,1972. p77
 305 Chapman, J. 1998. pp117-119
 306 See later discussion concerning propaganda policy and *Spring Offensive*.
 307 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A'

308 Calder, A. 1982. pp38-39

309 Quoted in Ziegler, P. *London at War 1939 - 1945*. Mandarin, 1995. p.39

310 Sussex, E. *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*, University of California Press, 1975. pp53 and 110

311 *Documentary News Letter* mistakenly describes the film under its original title as *An Unrecorded Victory* stating the name had changed from *Spring Offensive*. "There are two unrecorded victories here; one is the subject of the film, and the other is the fact that the film has at last, after many months of delay, been allowed to reach the public screens." *Documentary News Letter* (December) 1940, Vol.1 No.12, p7

312 See Chapman, J. 1998. pp24-29

313 Calder, A. 1982. p491

314 Calder, A. 1982. p491

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316 Higson, A. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986.

317 Calder, A. 1982. p485

318 Calder, A. 1982. pp487-488

319 All references to the commentary are taken directly from the film soundtrack and the transcript in Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982 'Appendix A' p125

320 Calder, A. 1982. pp70-71

321 Higson, A. 'Addressing the Nation', in Hurd, G. (editor), *National Fictions: World War Two in British Films and Television*. B.F.I Books, 1984. pp22-26

322 Higson, A. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p87

323 Higson, A. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p85

324 Higson, A. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p85

325 See Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p49 for an account of how and why individuals were assigned roles in the film.

326 Higson, A. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p84

327 Higson, A. in Barr, C. (editor), 1986. p84

328 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p49

329 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p49

330 Cameramen attributed to working on the film include Henry (Chick) Fowle, Jonah Jones and Eric Cross. The film review in *Documentary News Letter*, under its original title *An Unrecorded Victory*, names Chick Fowle and Jonah Jones as photographers. *Documentary News Letter* (December) 1940, Vol.1 No.12. Hodgkinson and Sheratsky attribute the photography to three

cameramen; Fowle, Jones and Cross. 'Appendix A' p125 while the Filmography of *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet*, attributes camera work only to Fowle and Cross. See Jennings, M-L. (editor), *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet*. B.F.I.,1982. p73

331 See Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R.1982. pp48-49 and Hillier in Hillier, J., Lovell, A.1972. p75

332 Robson, K.J. 'Humphrey Jennings: The Legacy of Feeling', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Winter,1982. p38

333 Robson, K.J. 1982. p39

334 See Robson, K.J. 1982. p39

335 Robson, K.J. 1982. p40

336 Reprinted in Jackson, K. (editor), *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcanet,1993. p295

337 Robson, K.J.1982. p40

338 For the patronising nature of the commentary see Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R.1982. pp49-50 and 'Appendix A' p126

339 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. pp49-50 and 'Appendix A' p126

340 Robson, K.J. 1982. p40

341 Robson, K.J. 1982. p40

342 Robson, K.J. 1982. p40

343 Robson, K.J. 1982. pp40-41

344 Chick Fowle had previously worked with Jennings on *Penny Journey* (1938) and *Spare Time* (1939). Ken Cameron on *Speaking From America* (1938) and *S.S. Ionian* (1939)

345 See the selection of the talks Jennings produced for the B.B.C in 1938 entitled 'The Poet and The Public' reprinted in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993.

346 Richards, J. *Films and British national identity From Dickens to Dad's Army*. Manchester University Press,1997. p1

347 See Wiener, M.J. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*. Cambridge University Press,1981. It is to Wiener Richards turns for his discussion of the rural myth.

348 Richards, J. 1997. p289

349 Ellis, J. 'Human Like Oneself' in 'Art, Culture and Quality', *Screen*,19 Autumn,1978. pp20-21

350 Ellis, J. 'The Spirit of Reality' in Art, Culture and Quality', *Screen*, 19 Autumn,1978. p32

351 For a discussion on the ideological and historical meaning of landscape and national identity see Macnacghten, P. and Urry, J.

Contested Natures. Sage, 1998. pp174-185

352 See Simon, R. *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1982. p42

353 See Vaughan, D. *Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor*. B.F.I. 1983 pp57-58.

Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p57 'Humphrey Jennings: Biographical Material and Private Correspondence', Item 19. 'Humphrey Jennings Collection', B.F.I Archive.

354 For descriptions of production see Watt, H. 1974. pp138-142, Vaughan, D. 1983 pp. 63-64 and Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. pp.52-54

355 *Documentary News Letter*, November 1940, Vol.1 No.11 p.15

356 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. 1982 p50

357 See 'The Documentary Film. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.

358 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p50

359 All references to the commentary are taken directly from the film soundtrack and transcript in Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' p.127

360 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sharatsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' p127

361 *Documentary News Letter*, November 1940, Vol.1 No.11 p.15

362 *Documentary News Letter*, November 1940, Vol.1 No.11 p.15

363 Calder, A. 1971. p118

364 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' p127

365 Calder, A. 1971. p278

September 1940 - May 1941: The Blitz

- 366 Jackson, K. quote from the transcript of 'Cinema 100: War Poet', broadcast Saturday 23 December 1995, B.B.C. Radio 3
- 367 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcenet, 1993. p7
- 368 Ziegler, P. *London At War 1939-1945*. Mandarin, 1996. pp113-115 and Calder, A. *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*. Granada, 1971. pp178-182.
- 369 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p7
- 370 Letters 20th October 1940 to December 25th 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp7-9
- 371 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p7
- 372 Calder, A. 1971. p181
- 373 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p8 Jennings italics.
- 374 Raine, K. *Autobiographies*. Skoob Books, 1991. p229.
- 375 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p8
- 376 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p8 Jennings italics.
- 377 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p8 Jennings italics.
- 378 Letter Christmas Day, 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p10

October 1940 - January 1941: The Heart of Britain

- 379 Transcript of 'A Tribute to Humphrey Jennings and the Crown Film Unit' British Academy of Film and Television Arts. Item 21, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive. p.8
- 380 Vaughan, D. *Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor*. B.F.I., 1983. p64
- 381 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
- 382 Chapman, J. *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939-1945*. I.B. Tauris, 1998. p167
- 383 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
- 384 Letter 20 October 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p7
- 385 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item

- 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
- 386 Vaughan, D. 1983. p72
- 387 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
- 388 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
- 389 Vaughan, D. 1983. p73
- 390 Vaughan, D. 1983. p73
- 391 Vaughan, D. 1983. p72
- 392 Letter 3 November 1940 reprinted in Jackson, Kevin, (ed.) *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcanet, 1993. p9
- 393 Vaughan, D. 1983. p72
- 394 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
- 395 Letters 3rd and 12th November 1940 in Jackson, Kevin, (ed.) *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcanet, 1993, pp8-9
- 396 Calder, Angus, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*. Granada, 1971. pp234-235
- 397 Letter 12 November 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p9
- 398 Calder, A. 1971. p235
- 399 See Cull, N. J. *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American "Neutrality" in World War II*. Oxford University Press, 1995. pp134-135
- 400 Calder, A. 1971. pp235-236 Calder's italics.
- 401 Calder, A. 1971. p235
- 402 Letter 14 December 1940 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p10
- 403 Calder, A. 1971. p236
- 404 Vaughan, D, 1983. p72
- 405 Cull, N.J. 1995. pp103-104
- 406 See Richards, J. 1997. p97 and 'Filmography' in Jennings, M-L. (editor), *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet*. B.F.I, 1982. p74
- 407 Letter 25 January 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p11
- 408 Ziegler, P. 1995. p144
- 409 Cull, N.J. 1995. p125
- 410 Cull, N.J. 1995. pp125-127
- 411 Cull, N.J. 1995. p137
- 412 Forman, H. 'The non-theatrical distribution of films by the Ministry of Information', in Pronay, N., Spring D.W., (editors), *Propaganda, Politics and Film 1918-45*. Macmillan Press, 1982.

p223 Cull, N.J. 1995. p137
 413 Cull, N.J. 1995. p138
 414 Richards, J. 1997. p17
 415 Richards, J. 1997. pp12-13
 416 For George Orwell and J.B. Priestley see Richards, J. 1997.
 pp14-15
 417 Quoted in Richards, J. 1997. p17
 418 Richards, J. 1997. p16
 419 Calder, A. 1971. pp104-107 and pp126-128.
 420 Calder, A. 1971. pp106-107
 421 Calder, A. 1971. p106
 422 Richards, J. 1997. pp97-99
 423 All the following quotations are taken directly from the film
 soundtrack and Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A'
 pp131-132
 424 Vaughan, D. 1983. p74
 425 Vaughan, D. 1983. p73
 426 Forman, D. taken from the transcript of 'A Tribute to
 Humphrey Jennings and the Crown Film Unit' British Academy of
 Film and Television Arts. Item 21, Humphrey Jennings Collection,
 B.F.I Archive. p.10
 427 Vaughan, D. 1983. p73
 428 Vaughan, D. 1983. p73
 429 Vaughan, D. 1983. p73
 430 Richards, J. 1997. p.6
 431 'The Documentary Film'. Transcript of a discussion between
 Jennings and J.B.Holmes with Ian Dalrymple in the chair.' Item
 16, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.
 432 Richards, J. 1997. p110
 433 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p57
 434 Vaughan has lucidly illustrated how McAllister's earlier
 editorial expertise enhanced the emotional dimension of *Men of
 the Lightship*, *London Can Take It* and *Target For Tonight*. See
 Vaughan, D. 1983. pp 49-53 and pp77-81
 435 Denis Forman. Taken from the transcript of 'A Tribute to
 Humphrey Jennings and the Crown Film Unit' British Academy of
 Film and Television Arts. Item 21, 'Humphrey Jennings
 Collection', B.F.I Archive. p.10
 436 Transcript of 'A Tribute to Humphrey Jennings and the Crown
 Film Unit' British Academy of Film and Television Arts. Item 21,
 'Humphrey Jennings Collection', B.F.I Archive. p.9 See Reisz, K.
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- 437 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. *Humphrey Jennings: More Than A Maker Of Films*. Hanover, 1982. p57
- 438 See script outline in Jackson, K. (editor), *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcanet, 1993. pp17-23
- 439 Letter 25 January 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p11
- 440 Calder, A. *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*. Granada, 1982. pp589-592 See also Ziegler., P. *London At War 1939-1945*. Mandarin, 1996. pp187-200
- 441 Ziegler, P. 1996. Ch11
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- 443 Grierson, J. 'The Documentary Idea' in Aitken, I. (editor), *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*. 1998. pp103-115
- 444 *Documentary News Letter*. Vol.2, No.5., May, 1941. p89
- 445 See for example Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. *Humphrey Jennings: More Than A Maker Of Films*. Hanover, 1982 pp55-57
- Robson, K.J. 'Humphrey Jennings: The Legacy of Feeling', in *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Winter, 1982. pp44-45.
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- Winston, B. *Claiming the Real: the documentary film revisited*. B.F.I., 1995. pp111-112 and 118. Cull, N.J. *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American "Neutrality" in World War II*. Oxford University Press, 1995. pp138-139.
- Chapman, J. 1998. pp239-240
- 446 Robson, K.J. *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*. Winter, 1982. p.44
- 447 Vaughan, D. 1983 p.76 and Winston, B. 1995. pp112 and 111
- 448 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. pp55 and 57
- 449 Cull, N.J. 1995. p.138 Nowell-Smith, G. 'Humphrey Jennings Surrealist Observer' in Barr, C. (editor), *All Our Yesterdays*. B.F.I. Publications, 1986. p329 Vaughan, D. 1983. pp75 and 74 respectively.
- 450 Rorty, R. 'Introduction: Relativism: Finding and Making' in *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Penguin, 1999. pxxiii

- 451 Abbs, P. 'Aesthetic Education: A Manifesto' in *The Polemics of Imagination: Selected Essays on Art, Culture and Society*. Skoob Books, 1996. pp51-52 See also Jennings, H. 'Plagiarism and Poetry' in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p247
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- 453 Jennings, H. 'Plagiarism and Poetry' in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p250
- 454 Jennings, H. 'Poetry and National Life' in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p277
- 455 Jennings, H. in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p277
- 456 Jennings, H. 'The Theatre Today' in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p217
- 457 Letter 13 September 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p31
- 458 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p55
- 459 Sorensen, B. 1986. pp55-56 Sorensen's italics.
- 460 Sorensen, B. 1986. pp53-54
- 461 Sorensen, B. 1986. p51
- 462 Sorensen, B. 1986. pp51-53 See also Eagleton, T. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Basil Blackwell, 1990. pp102-103.
- 463 Jennings, H. in Jackson, K. 1993. p282
- 464 Phillips, A. *Darwins Worms*. Faber and Faber, 1999. pp116-117
- 465 Vaughan, D. 1983. p74
- 466 For a general presentation of the texts and associated imagery See Hodgkinson, A.W., Sharatsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' pp132-135
- 467 Sorensen, B. 1986. p.51
- 468 See Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp17 and 20
- 469 See Sorensen, B. 1986. p52
- 470 See Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p55
- 471 Vaughan, D. 1983. p74
- 472 'still quite a bunch of 'intellectuals' here who are afraid of becoming 'patriots'. This may very well be alluding to the critical reception of the film. Letter 10 May in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p29
- 473 Robson, K.J. 1982. p45
- 474 Cull, N.J. 1995. pp125-142
- 475 For the propaganda value of American volunteers and the later Eagle Squadron see Cull, N.J. 1995. p181 and footnote 90 p221 See Calder for a description of the effort required to maintain R.A.F. combat operations. Calder, A. 1982. pp164-169
- 476 Sorensen, B. 1986. p52

- 477 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p55
 478 Vaughan, D. 1983. pp81-82
 479 Vaughan, D. 1983 p82
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 482 Robson, K.J. 1982. p44
 483 Vaughan, D. 1983. p82 See also Robson, K.J. 1982. p44
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 491 See 'Report' 19-25 April 1941 and letter 10th May 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp16-17 and pp28-29 Also Calder, A. 1982 p279
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 497 Robson, K.J. 1982. p44
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 499 Nowell-Smith, G. 'Humphrey Jennings Surrealist Observer' in Barr, C. (editor), *All Our Yesterdays*, B.F.I. Publications, 1986. p329
 500 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p56
 501 Vaughan, D. 1983. p76
 502 Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp18-20
 503 Letter 13 September 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p31
 504 Vaughan, D. 1983. pp76-77

April 1941 - February 1942: Turning of the Tide

- 505 Film Treatment 'National Gallery 1941' 28 April, Item 7,

Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.

506 Ziegler, P. *London At War 1939-1945*. Mandarin,1996. pp51

See also Calder, A. *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*. Granada,1982. p431

507 Film Treatment 'National Gallery 1941' 28 April, Item 7, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive. See 'National Gallery: Rough Shooting Script' reprinted in Jackson, K. (editor),*The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcanet,1993. pp24-28

508 Film Treatment 'National Gallery 1941' 28 April, Item 7, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive.

509 Vaughan, D. *Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor*. B.F.I,1983. p85

510 Film Treatment 'The Music of War' 23rd May 1941, Item 7, Humphrey Jennings Collection, B.F.I Archive. See also Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. *Humphrey Jennings: More Than a Maker of Films*. Hanover 1982. p58

511 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p58

512 Vaughan, D. 1983. pp74 and 88

513 Calder, A. 1982. p300

514 Overy, R. *Why The Allies Won*. Pimlico,1996. p285

515 Vaughan, D. 1983. pp85-86

516 Vaughan, D. 1983. p88

517 Letter 2 August 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor),*The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader*. Carcanet,1993. p31

518 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. p58

519 Vaughan, D. 1983. p86

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521 Letter 2 August 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor),1993 pp30-31 Jennings's italics.

522 'Tin Hat Concerto' in Jennings, M-L. (editor.), *Humphrey Jennings:Film-Maker, Painter, Poet*. B.F.I,1982. p30

523 Vaughan, D. 1983. p87

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p148

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Jennings's italics. See also Letter 3rd December 1941 p36

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535 Mendoza, J. quoted by Drazin, C. *The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s*. Andre Deutsch, 1998. p155

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Cameron's comment p83

537 Drazin, C. 1998. p157

538 Winston, B. *Claiming the Real: the documentary film revisited*. B.F.I., 1995. pp105-106

539 Smith, M. 'Narrative and Ideology in *Listen to Britain*' in Hawthorn, J. (editor), *From Malory to Motion Pictures*. Edward Arnold, 1985. p148

540 Jennings, H.J. in Jennings, M-L., Madge, C. (editors), *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine as seen by Contemporary Observers*. Picador, 1985. pxxxvi

541 See Hillier, J. 'Humphrey Jennings' in Hillier, J., Lovell, A. *Studies in Documentary*. Viking Press, 1972. p89 Robson, K.J.

'Humphrey Jennings: The Legacy of Feeling', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Winter, 1982. p.46 Vaughan, D. 1983 pp.89-99

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542 Higson, A. *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*. Clarendon Press, 1997. pp202-203

543 Nowell-Smith, G. 1986. p329

544 Jennings, H. 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p33 Apart from the analysis of the introduction all the following descriptions are drawn from the post-production script.

545 Jennings, Humphrey in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp33-34

546 Letter 3 December 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p37

547 Nowell-Smith, G. 1986. p331 See also Vaughan, D. 1983. p90

548 Calder, A. 1982. p264

549 Letter 15th June 1941 in Jackson, K. 1993. p30 Also see Calder, A. 1982. p264

550 Higson, A. 1997. p203

551 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script reprinted in

Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p33 *My Italics*.

552 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p33

553 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

554 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

555 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

556 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

557 For example see Smith, M. 1985. pp150-151

558 Jennings, H. 'Understanding Modern Poetry' in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp268-269 Jennings italics.

559 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

560 Jennings, H. 'Understanding Modern Poetry' in Jackson, K. 1993. pp268-269 Jennings italics.

561 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

562 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p35

563 Calder, A, 1982 pp252-453

564 'Listen to Britain' 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p35

565 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p34

566 Calder, A. 1982. pp252-453

567 This notable piece of editing was as much a product of artistic chance than any intentionality: 'John Krish was in the cutting room when this particular bit of magic took place. He made the join, made it over again for Jennings and McAllister to check. 'They just fell about with delight because it had come off.'

Drazin, C. 1998. p156

568 Vaughan, D. 1983. p94

569 Nowell-Smith, G. 1986. p331

570 See 'National Gallery: Rough Shooting Script' in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp24-28

571 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p35

572 See Nairn, T. *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland*. Granta, 2000 p131

573 Jackson, K. 'Humphrey Jennings: The Poet and the Public', in

Contemporary Record, Vol.7, No.3, Winter 1993. p667
 574 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982 'Appendix A' p139
 575 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p35
 576 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sheratsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' p140
 577 See Jennings, H. 'Science Review No.10' Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp283-284 similarly Jennings opens *Pandaemonium* with an extract taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost* which depicts a similar scene.
 578 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p35
 579 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sharatsky, R. 1982. 'Appendix A' p140
 580 Letter 11 January 1942 in Jackson, K. 1993. p56
 581 'Listen to Britain' Post-production script in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p33
 582 Taken from the film.
 583 Hodgkinson, A.W., Sharatsky, R. 1982. p59
 584 Vaughan, D. B.F.I., 1983. p100
 585 Smith, M. 1985 p149
 586 See Calder, A. 1982. pp296-300, 450-452 and 514
 587 Overy, R. 1996. p15
 588 Letter 3 December 1941 in Jackson, K. 1993. p36 Calder, A. Granada, 1982 pp308-311
 589 Nowell-Smith, G. 1986. p330
 590 Smith, M. 1985 p149
 591 Anstey, E. in Sussex, E. *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary*. University of California Press, 1975, pp144 -145
 592 *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol.146, No.11 14th March 1942. Their italics.
 593 Letter 12 April 1942 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p58 Also letter of 29th May 1942 "I hear *Listen* was well thought of in Hollywood - also among the troops in the Middle East." p59 and the description by Helen Forman of a non-theatrical showings of *Listen to Britain* "All sorts of audiences felt it to be a distillation and also a magnification of their own experience of the home front. This was especially true of factory audiences. I remember one show in a factory in the Midlands where about 800 workers clapped and stamped approval. Films got very short shift if they touched any area of people's experience and did not ring true." Forman, H. 'The non-theatrical distribution of films by the Ministry of Information' in Pronay, N., Spring, D.W. (editors), *Propaganda, Politics and Film 1918-45*. MacMillan Press, 1982. p230

594 Hillier, J., Lovell, A. 1982 p.82 Higson, A. 1997. p.201
 595 They were both separately involved in the production of *The 80 days* (1944) only as part of an operation to save an assignment undertaken by an inexperienced film unit. See Vaughan, D. 1983. p139
 596 In the middle of 1941 while working hard on *Listen to Britain* Jennings noted: "Harry Watt has deserted us (permanently I think) & is working at a vast salary for Walter Wanger on an Eagle Squadron picture . . . Cav. still at Ealing. In the meantime Jack Holmes has suddenly blossomed: Has *Merchant Seaman* running in London: voted best war short & since has finished *Ordinary People* of which Grierson has a copy: he & Stuart (Legg) & others sent raving telegrams about it . . . So Jack Holmes steps up into Harry's place as the old maestro of the unit." Letter 15 June 1941 in Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. p29
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 598 See Jackson, K. (editor), 1993. pp38-55
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