

# Raymond Williams Now

## Panel One: Structures of Feeling

### Stuart Middleton (Cambridge), 'Raymond Williams' structure of feeling: an intellectual history, 1947-1961'

Among Raymond Williams' most distinctive theoretical innovations is the category of the 'structure of feeling', a term which has now passed into general usage in the humanities. Its ubiquity, however, frequently obscures the specific meaning that Williams imparted to it, and the particular intellectual and political problems that it was formulated to resolve. This paper will trace an intellectual history of the 'structure of feeling' from Williams' first published essays up to his coining of the category in 1954, and its subsequent deployment in his influential work among the 'New Left'. It will re-situate Williams' early work in wartime and post-war debates about the relationship between the economy and 'culture', and in closely-related controversies over the role of the State in the arts. Tracing his contribution to those debates in *Politics and Letters* and in his early writings on drama, the paper will demonstrate the political significance of Williams' attempt to develop a theory of collective artistic production, and highlight the diverse influences—including sociology, psychology, and cultural anthropology—that he drew upon to do so. This wide-ranging intellectual history will shed new light upon the origins of the 'structure of feeling', its deployment in Williams' own subsequent work, and its adoption and diffusion among other thinkers who followed in his wake from the early 1960s. ([sam41@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sam41@cam.ac.uk))

### Jacob Soule (Duke), 'From structures of feeling to structures of affect'

This paper will reassess the significance of Raymond Williams' central concept 'structures of feeling' in light of the contemporary turn to affect in cultural theory. The relevant chapter in *Marxism in Literature* is frequently cited as a precursor to this turn in several of its foundational texts. Certainly Williams' concept provides a key blueprint for recent thinking about affect in his insistence that feeling is distinctly social rather than private. These contemporary theorists, however, make less of Williams' imagining of feeling's structures as forming new hegemonic orders – 'pre-emergent' cultural formations that would then be capable of transforming the dominant. Where affect theory tends towards an analysis of those temporary sensations that escape the capture of consciousness, Williams' is more concerned to stress how such sensations and experiences are more than just fleeting: affect must meet its structure in cultural form. It is then the exciting case that literature and other modes of cultural expression are the first signals of an emerging cultural order due to their seemingly privileged capacity to express those affective murmurings that find themselves, to quote Williams, 'at the very edge of semantic availability.' The paper will turn to the benefits of revisiting this argument for literary studies. It will contend that a turn to affect, if it is to take Williams' work seriously, must include an assertion of literature's unique position in structuring emergent social experience that has yet to find expression. It will conclude by asking how reading contemporary fiction in this way might allow us to see would then be called the 'structures of affect' that are transforming cultural and political givens under the pressures of late capitalist life. ([jacob.soule@duke.edu](mailto:jacob.soule@duke.edu))

### **Toby Manning (Open University), ‘Williams and Orwell’**

“Orwell hated what he saw of the consequences of capitalism, but he was never able to see it, fully, as an economic and political *system*” (Raymond Williams, *Orwell*, 1971). Ironically, much the same failing was suggested of Williams himself by Terry Eagleton (*New Left Review*, 1976), while later Paul Thomas (*Theory & Society*, 1985) explicitly linked Williams’ empiricist attitudes and discourse with that of Orwell. This paper will examine Williams’ literary relationship with Orwell, an increasingly antipathetic attitude, revealed by the progress from *Culture and Society* (1958), through the more measuredly critical *Orwell* (1971), to the outright hostility of *Politics and Letters: interviews with New Left Review* (1981). Williams’ attitude to Orwell has been critiqued by Colin MacCabe and Christopher Hitchens as both inaccurate and mean-spirited. I will argue firstly, that Williams’ attitude needs to be seen in terms of *New Left Review*’s hostile, post-Eagleton questioning, and I will propose a solution to the Althusserian/Cultural Materialist standoff that both questions and answers represent. I will argue, secondly, that Williams was entirely *correct* about Orwell. Williams accurately pinpointed Orwell as a conservative force in left-wing thought, offering a veneer of radicalism to an analysis that not only ducked any challenge to the British economic or class system, but also prompted, via *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a pervasive anti-communism that has been used primarily to attack the left. Hitchens is a particularly pertinent pro-Orwell figure in this regard. Where, I shall argue, Williams *did* underestimate Orwell was in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s imaginative quality: a key facet of the novel’s impact and endurance. ([toby.manning@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:toby.manning@blueyonder.co.uk))

### **Matthew Chambers (Lodz), ‘The Significance of *The Critic*: Raymond Williams, Cultural Formations, and Literary Periodicals**

This paper proposes to place Raymond Williams’ conceptualization of “cultural formations” in the context of the developing field of periodical studies. In *Culture* (1981), Raymond Williams conceptualizes “cultural formations” as resulting from the interplay of hegemonic and developing forces. Williams names periodicals as one kind of “collective public manifestation,” or one possible form of a cultural formation’s internal organization. Contrary to periodical studies practitioners’ tendency to value a networks model to explain interrelationships between discreet publications in order to map a field of production, I foreground literary periodicals as “formations” with their own complex social character. By way of example, Williams’ co-edited *The Critic*’s (1947) disparagement of more metropolitan-minded contemporary literary periodicals such as *Horizon* (1940-1950) and *Poetry (London)* (1939-1949) will be analyzed in the context of the parallel developments of British Cultural Studies and the Movement in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. The focus on Williams as both method and diagnosis will demonstrate how his understanding of cultural formations arises out of a shifting emphasis in late modernist writing from aesthetics to culture. In Britain, this culturalist emphasis reflected the dominant mode of English particularism rooted in social maturation through education, yet harkened the more progressive politics of today’s cultural studies. This paper concludes by stressing that while the influence of *Scrutiny* (1932-1953) and F.R. Leavis were clearly formative for Williams, narrow attention on that influence has historically obscured a broader set of engagements of which Williams was a part. ([mjc6@buffalo.edu](mailto:mjc6@buffalo.edu))

## Panel 2: Prefigurations

### Andrew Milner (Monash), 'Williams and Science Fiction'

Raymond Williams had an enduring interest in science fiction, an interest attested to: first, by two articles specifically addressed to the genre, both of which were eventually published in the journal *Science Fiction Studies*; second, by a wide range of reference in more familiar texts, such as *Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution*, *George Orwell* and *The Country and the City*; and third, by his two 'future novels', *The Volunteers* and *The Fight for Manod*, the first clearly science fictional in character, the latter arguably so. The paper will summarise this work, but will also explore how some of Williams's more general key theoretical concepts - especially structure of feeling and selective tradition - might be applied to the genre. Finally, it will argue that the 'sociological' turn, by which Williams sought to substitute description and explanation for judgement and canonisation as the central purposes of analysis, represents a more productively 'neo-Marxist' approach to science fiction studies than the kind of prescriptive criticism deployed by other avowedly 'Marxist' works, such as Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* and Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future*. ([Andrew.Milner@monash.edu](mailto:Andrew.Milner@monash.edu))

### David Wilkinson (Reading), Hipsters Explained With Cultural Materialism

This paper aims to achieve two things: a cultural materialist analysis of the 'hipster', and, through this analysis, an indication of the way in which Williams' theoretical tools can address some limitations of dominant intellectual trends in present-day Cultural Studies. The title is a play on recent viral online comic strips with names such as 'Foucault Explained With Hipsters' and 'Post-Structuralism Explained With Beards'. Via a *Keywords*-style etymology of the term 'hipster', a formational analysis of hipster class composition and social formalist close readings of hipster cultural production, I show that this contemporary phenomenon not only teaches historical lessons concerning higher education policy, New Labour's investment in the culture industries and the fate of post-war youth countercultures in an era of neoliberal hegemony. It also condenses sharp and growing tensions of class, educational inequality and cultural capital. This helps account for the scorn, wariness and controversy that often greet mention of the hipster. Such volatility, however, alongside recent developments like the appeal to educated youth behind the election of left coalition Syriza in Greece, also allows for more hopeful speculation on the possible future direction of hipster culture. This reading contrasts with what the broadly postmodernist bent of contemporary Cultural Studies is capable of offering on the theme of the hipster. There are numerous reasons for this. Chief among them is the fact that, as I contend, postmodernist approaches are too closely bound to the structure of feeling associated with hipster culture to gain the necessary critical distance on it. (d.b.wilkinson@reading.ac.uk)

### Christian Fuchs (Westminster), 'Raymond Williams and Digital Labour'

The task of this presentation is to explore the feasibility of Raymond Williams' thought to critically understand digital labour. It presents parts of my 2015 book "Culture and economy in the age of social media" that is an application of Williams' approach of cultural materialism to social media.

I first point out foundations of cultural materialism and why it matters today. Second, I discuss the notion of cultural work and argue against narrow idealist notions that reduce

cultural work to content production. Third, I discuss based on cultural materialism aspects of digital labour: I give attention to the international division of digital labour that is based on agricultural, industrial and informational labour and labour organised by different modes of production (including e.g. slavery, patriarchy, and capitalism) as well as to the notion of productive labour that is understood based on Marx and Williams in such a way that it does not separate advertising from commodity production, but sees it as an inherent part of it. Advertising is the key capital accumulation model of contemporary social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or Weibo.

I conclude by pointing out why Raymond Williams' commitment to socialism matters in the struggle for alternative media, an alternative Internet, and an alternative society. ([c.fuchs@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:c.fuchs@westminster.ac.uk))

### **Ben Ware (Institute of English Studies, SAS), 'Back to the Bad Old Things: Living Wrong Life Rightly'**

Raymond Williams never wrote explicitly about ethics, though we might say that questions of value are in many respects the unspoken fourth dimension in his work as it criss-crosses back and forth between culture, language and politics. This paper foregrounds the ethical, but at the same time loops back to Williams's trio of concerns, casting them in a new light. In *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, Theodor Adorno writes: 'Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen' ('Wrong life cannot be lived rightly'). Whilst this statement should certainly be read as a piece of exaggerated late-Adornian rhetoric, designed to provoke contemplation of reality in 'its estranged form', it also leaves us with a pressing contemporary question: *How does one lead a right life – a good life – in a wrong world?* When thinking about this question the first set of problems we run up against are linguistic and political. On the one hand, ideas of the good life would appear to have been reduced to a set of consumer slogans embodying the superegoic injunction to 'enjoy' ('just do it'. 'because you're worth it', 'live better' and so on); on the other hand, the prevailing discourse of neoliberalism seems to all but preclude talk of the good life, presenting it as a kind of naïve and inefficient fantasy tied to a now outmoded economic and social form of life. In the present paper, I thus begin by looking at two different attempts to think through the good life, construed as both an individual and collective concern: first, Kant's notion of the good which, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, he says consists in the good will doing its duty for duty's sake; and second, contemporary late-capitalist duty, which entails a reconstruction of reason and various forms of working on the self. Demonstrating some of the philosophical, ethical and political limits of these approaches, as well as what might usefully be retrieved from them, I then move on to provide an alternative thesis. If we accept the premise of the original question – namely that the present world is a 'wrong' world -- then perhaps our aim should not be to live a fully good life (conceived in the traditional or contemporary sense), or indeed to live a happy life, but rather to live a life which attempts to reclaim those 'bad old things' which the present now seeks to consign to the trashcan of history. Among these bad old things is, I want to claim, Kant's Formula of Humanity: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.' However, taken by itself Kant's formula is overly formalistic and therefore vacuous. It thus needs to be supplemented by another (and perhaps more scandalous) bad old thing: namely, what I will here call *militant political love*.

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### Panel 3: Fiction, Space, Place

#### **Amy Rushton (Manchester), ‘The ‘tragic continent’ towards 2000: using Williams to re-read contemporary “Africa”’**

This presentation provides an account of Raymond Williams’ impact on my research concerning how narratives of tragedy are explored and contested in recent African fiction. Originally published in 1966, Williams’s *Modern Tragedy* offers an underused political understanding of tragedy. Whereas postcolonial criticism has a tendency to read tragedy as defeatist, Williams contends that such a rejection undermines the socially interrogative potential offered by ‘tragic ideas’. Thus it is vital to reengage with the form and narrative function of tragedy in the contemporary era: ‘Before, we could not recognise tragedy as social crisis; now, commonly, we cannot recognise social crisis as tragedy.’ (Williams 1966, p. 63)

Although a seemingly incongruous fit — an Oxbridge educated white man from working-class Wales — Williams’s work on tragedy has nonetheless proved pivotal in my discussion of the representation of sub-Saharan Africa within literary fiction and neoliberal global discourse. Throughout the 2000s, talk of development in sub-Saharan Africa was entrenched in notions of external over-dependency and political failure. Such discourse coincided with the publication of fiction concerned with ‘tragic’ subject matter suggested by events of late twentieth-century Africa. Consequently, novels such as *GraceLand* by Chris Abani (2004) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2006) were swiftly accused of reinforcing stereotypical assumptions about ‘Africa’. Yet by paying attention to their formally nuanced exploration of tragedy, as guided by Williams, the narrative strategies of such texts gesture toward alternative readings of sub-Saharan Africa as the supposed ‘tragic continent’. (amy.rushton@manchester.ac.uk)

#### **Clare Davis (Swansea), “‘The haunting was perpetual”: Raymond Williams’s *Border Country* and the Crisis of the Welsh Intellectual’**

The Welshness of Raymond Williams’s writings has become increasingly appreciated in the last ten years, and he is frequently quoted by Welsh politicians as the nation’s leading Left wing intellectual. Williams did return to Wales in his writings of the 1970s and 80s. But his views on Wales were fraught with ambiguity. Indeed, in many ways he does not easily occupy the role of ‘Welsh intellectual’. His first novel *Border Country* can be seen to dramatize the tenuous position of the Welsh intellectual. Matthew Price, protagonist of *Border Country*, is a man haunted; by his background, his unfinished research and, by the end of the novel, by the ghost of his father. His work on population movements in Wales is being done in England. Matthew, as a ‘Welsh intellectual’ is doubly alienated; by his class background and nationality in England, and by his status as an academic in Wales. *Border Country* presents us with the ‘crisis’ of the haunted intellectual returning home to a tragedy. But if Matthew, like Hamlet, is haunted by his father, his is a tragedy in the ‘ordinary’ sense; it is not ‘the death of princes’ that *Border Country* revolves around but the death of the signalman Harry Price. This paper will explore the crisis the Welsh intellectual faces in returning home to the community he has left. It explores the ways in which Matthew’s connection with the border country is articulated in relation to the novel’s rarely noticed themes of adultery and incest. This paper will also argue that *Border Country* is itself ‘haunted’ by its earlier versions, housed in the Richard Burton Archives at Swansea, in which these themes are more pronounced. By looking back at these, we might be able to take our

understanding of one of Wales's most significant intellectuals forward to the twenty-first century. ([c.davies.632589@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:c.davies.632589@swansea.ac.uk))

### **Alex Fyfe (Pennsylvania State), 'Raymond Williams and African Literature: Cultural Materialism and Animism'**

Scholars of modern African literature have often had to tackle the problem of how to locate texts that are written from a non-materialist perspective on the world. Given that animist cultures (which vary greatly, but can broadly be described as involving a worldview in which material objects have a spiritual essence) persist on the African continent, any materialist perspective on African literature must take into account the differing valence of the 'material'. In an influential article Harry Garuba (2001) coins the term 'animist materialism' and advocates a mode of reading which takes animism into account. However, despite the similarity of his terminology, Garuba's approach is far from a cultural materialist one — indeed, it tends towards a celebration of the animist worldview that obscures the role of other material forces in literary production, thus making it hard to establish the specificity of the interaction between the 'animist unconscious' and literary form.

This paper argues for a return to Williams in African literary studies. Despite the common critique of eurocentrism, Williams's writings on the materialist method do not define the material world in a way that precludes sensitivity to an animist worldview. Rather, I suggest, Williams's discussion of the potential pitfalls of materialism, his understanding of the role of nature in literature, and his sketching of the dynamics of dominant, emergent and residual cultures all demonstrate the kind of openness to the non-material and its potential interaction with modern capitalism that can be highly productive for African literary studies. Furthermore, I argue that the return to Williams is also a politically expedient move for African Literary studies at this juncture.

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### **Robert Spencer (Manchester), 'Africa's Long Revolution'**

Revolutions aren't revolutions for Raymond Williams unless they are thoroughgoing and unless they therefore succeed in disseminating rather than simply taking political power. Williams acknowledges that 'short revolutionaries' are right when they argue that the centres of established power need to be combated and overcome. But they are profoundly mistaken, he argues, in overlooking the painstaking work of preparation and then of extension and consolidation, 'the learning of the skills of popular organization and control', without which any revolution will simply be a change of masters. The capture of the state does not a revolution make; that has been an especially painful lesson for anti-colonial liberation movements to learn. Those movements too often devoted themselves to the conquest of the state and therefore contented themselves with what could only ever be a provisional and Pyrrhic accomplishment. In Africa the state was not a device that could easily be employed for new purposes. The state in Africa, imposed by violence and by alien powers and possessing therefore scarcely any of the official or unofficial checks and balances that constrain liberal states, was typically a carefully perfected mechanism for dominating the populace and for enriching a ruling class at their expense. Movements for emancipation that sought to capture this device were themselves usually captured by it. This paper asks whether Williams's *The Long Revolution* holds the key to understanding the ways in which African writers have explored democratic alternatives to authoritarian state power.

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#### **Panel 4: Materialism, Method**

##### **Roman Horak (University of Applied Arts, Vienna), ‘Raymond Williams: From a literary critique of culture to cultural materialism’**

This paper shall focus on Williams as a cultural theoretician in the stricter sense. On the one hand, I will discuss his role as a precursor and pioneer of Cultural Studies (which means concentrating on the relevant writings from the 1950s and early 1960s), while on the other hand looking more closely at his concept of ‘cultural materialism’ (developed above all in publications of the 1970s). Several studies (e.g. Milner, Jones) have divined a continuity in Williams’s work on the concept of culture that they consider more or less unbroken, and interpret as ‘Marxist’. In contrast, although I agree with this interpretation of Raymond Williams’s basic stance, I will take as my point of departure the idea that his approach to and methods of theorising underwent several shifts in the late 1960s/early 1970s, conditioned by the changing political context and the growing importance of ‘European’ thinkers. In the early 1970s Williams held the Lukacs of *History and Class Consciousness*, alongside Antonio Gramsci and the Sartre of the 1950s and 60s, to be the most important representative of an ‘alternative Marxist’ tradition.

Rather than seeking to establish a fixed category of ‘Western’ or ‘alternative’ Marxism that underlies all his work, however this may be defined, my thesis is that, as he grew older, Williams’s theoretical work (and not just that which deals specifically with ‘culture’) can be seen to move closer to Marxist thought and to resist the tide of post-structuralism that was rising to dominance in the 1970s and 80s. ([roman.horak@uni-ak.ac.at](mailto:roman.horak@uni-ak.ac.at))

##### **Daniel Hartley (Giessen), ‘The principle of immanence in Raymond Williams’ methodology’**

Whilst Raymond Williams remains a revered figure on the Left, his work has not always been treated with the systematic rigour it deserves. It is instead more often than not merely wheeled out as part of the décor to connote gravitas and moral integrity. In this paper I want to begin to undo this implicit condescension by setting out the key philosophical principle informing Williams’s methodology. Williams’s entire project is characterised by what I call a principle of immanence. This principle informs his work at all levels: at the level of ‘keywords’ it takes the form of an insistence that these words are *immanent and constitutive* factors of the very historical realities they purport merely to ‘denote’. At the level of literary form, it results in the claim that forms are not merely ‘reflections’ or ‘symbolic resolutions’ of specific historical contexts, but are in fact *informing* elements of them. Finally, at the level of politics, it is the insistence that there is no ‘outside’ from which to look at world events; the outside is already a constitutive element of the inside. By tracing in detail the philosophical premises of Williams’s work, I hope to show that he has just as much to offer contemporary thought and politics as currently more fashionable figures such as Badiou, Rancière, or Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi. His thought is not residual; it is still emergent.

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### **Mary Fairclough (York), ‘Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies’**

Stuart Hall declared of Raymond Williams that ‘he was the most formative intellectual influence on my life’. In this paper I plan to interrogate the nature of this ‘influence’ and to explore the intellectual and professional relationship between Williams and Hall. I want to think about how Hall describes his personal debt to Williams, but also the way in which Williams’s work informed the institutional practices of cultural studies, particularly at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham in the 1970s. Hall also offers searching critiques of Williams’s work, pointing out the limitations of certain forms of materialism, especially in the light of structuralist and linguistic approaches to culture. But I want to argue in this paper that Hall never simply moves beyond Williams’s work. Rather, Williams and Hall continue to influence and modify each other’s individual and disciplinary practice. I’ll end by suggesting the continued importance of a material approach to culture for Hall, by thinking about the institutionalization of cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s, and both men’s critique of the way in which cultural studies as a discipline seemed to move away from its extramural origins and the interdisciplinary and material practices that their work sought to develop. ([mary.fairclough@york.ac.uk](mailto:mary.fairclough@york.ac.uk))

### **Panel 5: Raymond Williams and Performance**

#### **Katharine Cockin (University of Hull), ‘Clubs, Cliques and Pioneers: Problems in Materialism and The ‘Free Theatre’ 1891-1919’**

This paper will reconsider Raymond Williams’s essay, ‘The Bloomsbury Fraction’ in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* in relation to the ‘free theatre’ movement in London inspired by Ibsen, the New Woman and the ‘play of ideas’ and leading to women’s suffrage theatre and the little theatre movement. The members-only theatre societies played an important role in promoting debate about politics as well as engaging in political activism by staging plays that were effectively censored and gathering together audiences with shared values. In the period from 1891, when J. T. Grein’s Independent Theatre Society produced Ibsen’s *Ghosts*, to 1919, when the British Drama League was founded to promote amateur theatre nationwide, the theatre societies occupied an ambiguous position. Often developing from cultural formations, they became institutions. This paper will examine the problems this raised and the ambiguous relationships this generated between theatrical entrepreneurs, dramatists, translators, actors, audiences, patrons, theatre managers and reviewers. The costs of the ‘free theatre’ movement often fell invisibly on those who could least afford it, although the wealthy were the widely publicized patrons under whose auspices such experiments in drama were encouraged to flourish.

#### **Dr Claire Warden (University of Lincoln), “‘Wide margins of history’”: finding performance in the borders and borders in performance**

If performance exists in the borders of modernism, then particular performance traditions reside in what Raymond Williams terms the ‘wide margins of history’, spaces overshadowed by dominant cultural narratives and agenda. This paper focuses on a collection of performance interventions from the British Workers’ Theatre Movement, events and happenings often overlooked even in narratives of modernist performance. Williams’ own admiration for these performances in *Politics of Modernism: against the new conformists* provides a way in to the discussion. Understanding these varied performances (namely

*Meerut, The First of May* and *Their Theatre and Our's* amongst others) as, borrowing Williams' term, 'emergent' despite their age enables us to resurrect them from the margins and discover what they have to say about context and how they might engender new performances in the future. These performance events do not simply reside on theoretical and generic borders but, in fact, investigate the border as a theatrical concept both scripturally (scripts constantly promote an overcoming of national borders in favour of transnational solidarity) and spatially, sets and performance spaces set up to consider, challenge, overcome or celebrate the border. Adapting and augmenting Williams' concept of the border enables a rereading of modernist performance and, particularly, performances often disregarded by the canon. It also initiates a re-examination of these performances as important artistic responses to the shifting, troublesome borders (in terms of class and nation) of the 1930s.

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### **Janelle Reinelt (University of Warwick)**

This paper will explore the ideas associated with the field of Performance Studies as it came to be understood during the 1980s and 90s. Richard Schechner posited performance as a 'broad spectrum' of human behaviours that are relational and self-conscious, and that are 'framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed'. This definition provided the foundation for a newly formed field entailing theatre, everyday life, ceremony and ritual, sport, and many other cultural practices. Although Raymond Williams died before these ideas circulated widely across the Atlantic, as early as his inaugural lecture as Cambridge Professor of Drama (1975), Williams demonstrated that his own thinking was moving along compatible lines. In 'Drama in a Dramatized Society', he writes: 'I have learned something from analyzing drama which seemed to me effective not only as a way of seeing certain aspects of society but as a way of getting through to some of the fundamental conventions which we group as society itself'. This is the germ of the possible linkage of Williams' sociology of culture to the nascent form of 'performance studies'. I will explore some of the affinities and tensions between William's work and what has come to be Performance Studies.

### **Panel 6: Communities, Communication**

#### **David JG Barnes, (South Wales), 'Raymond Williams and contemporary realist art practice'**

The imagined identity of Wales bypasses the cultural particularity of regions, communities, and individuals, and often results in representations that use a confusion of language drawn from a complex interplay of histories, memories, and myths. I argue that such forms are implicated in the processes of control and dominance characteristic of a paternalistic colonial experience, and that they are as pervasive as ever in relation to the experience of contemporary, capitalist Wales as they have been in its history. My long-term art practice is centred around my experience of community in the south Wales valleys and Gwent borderlands, and seeks to respond to the true complexity of the lived experience of individual and society through a mode of realist practice that I characterise as 'dialogical documentary' (Chesher, 2007) - a discursive and reflexive mode of realism, (Bakhtin, 1973) that consciously embraces the concept of 'Structures of feeling' that Raymond Williams developed in throughout his work (Williams, 1961). In this paper I reflect on the possibilities of contemporary modes of storytelling in response to the valleys and borders (Fraser, 2012) with particular attention to Raymond Williams' ideas on realism, power and nation/ Wales, and his own realist practice, in the form of his defining 'Welsh trilogy' novels (Williams, 1960,

1964, 1979) ([david.barnes@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:david.barnes@southwales.ac.uk))

### **Jen Morgan, 'Defining a Radical Archive: The Example of the Working Class Movement Library**

This paper will attempt to define the 'radical archive' as distinct from other forms, especially from its close relative in the 'community archive'. It takes the Working Class Movement Library in Salford as an example of a radical archive that is also a community archive, but which is also qualitatively different from other community archives in its radical ambitions. Recent literature on the concept of the 'community archive' provides us with a necessarily broad (sometimes irreconcilable) set of indicators, and uses the WCML as an example. It becomes clear, however, when thinking about the library and archive established by two activists (Ruth and Eddie Frow), that while a community archive may also be a radical one, this is not necessarily the case. Working-class community, as people like the Frows conceived it, had a local manifestation but was also international in scope; 'community', here, means something like 'solidarity'. The Frows' hopes for the WCML and its significance also had hegemonic and unashamedly teleological ambitions, which is not true of all community archives, even of all radical ones.

Raymond Williams' insights in various published works help us to think through such distinctions. They also help us to affirm the past victories and future potential of radicalism in what Williams called the 'Long Revolution', in a period and context in which there is no obvious class agent of emancipation or focus of struggle. 'Community', as Williams warned us repeatedly, is a curious political term in that everyone lays claim to it and no one presents themselves as being 'anti' community as such. To insist on the 'radical' aspect of 'community' is to embrace opposition as a necessary and fertile aspect of its structure of feeling.

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### **Derek Tatton (Raymond Williams Foundation), 'Adult Education – a radical past, present and future...'**

When Williams worked for fifteen years full-time in Adult Education, he could still see the 'adult education movement' as an important agent in 'the long revolution'.

A reviewer of the book (1961), however, headed his critique: 'The Optimistic Revolution'.

Raymond's prescience was a major strength and this gave him self-critical awareness that *The Long Revolution* (with his concurrent adult education trajectory) was narrowly English. Engagement with dramatic global changes from the late 1960s led to his 'Welsh European' perspective so that in *Towards 2000* (1983) he was able to predict the dystopian challenge which 'Plan X' (neo-liberalism) presented and which we now know has all but destroyed adult education (along with so much of 'The Spirit of 1945' welfare states).

Even so, there remain 'resources for a journey of hope' with re-groupings and new alliances

building upon earlier political and social movements and spawning a wide range of educational activities, many informal, sharing 'the practice that requires the distinction between active teacher and passive student to be broken down' (Williams and Freire). These, often using the 'new interactive technologies...from people's own homes (to achieve) full

social and cultural powers by civil society, as opposed to their marginalisation by the corporations and the state' (RW, 1983).

We will sign-post ways forward from RWF's residential education experience, developing stronger links with the OU/oD 'Participation Now' initiative, helping create that 'educated and participating democracy' which was Raymond's lifelong aim.

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### **Panel 7: Raymond Williams Now**

#### **Nick Stevenson (University of Nottingham), 'Raymond Williams, Socialism and the Politics of the Commons'**

The market crash of 2008 and the emergence of the alter-globalisation movement have revived ideas of a post-capitalist Left. Many of the ideas of the New Left that became neglected after the assault of neoliberalism and the politics of the third way are again making headway. The global impact of the Occupy movement, anti-austerity politics and environmentalism have all contributed to a changing landscape and new opportunities for radical forms of politics. Here I seek to relate the writing of Raymond Williams to the radical notion of the commons that has received a considerable amount of critical attention. The idea of the commons as a form of resistance to the politics of privatisation and hierarchical control from above readdress socialist concerns around co-operation and democracy. Returning to Williams I hope to demonstrate how ideas such as the long revolution, a culture in common, ecology and democratic forms of self-management were both central to his concerns and have a revived relevance today within academic and activist circles. However there remains a tension between Williams's ideas and more libertarian anarchist currents which are currently gaining in popularity. Here I seek to point to different tensions within the politics of the commons and the developing radical politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ([Nick.Stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Nick.Stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk))

#### **John T. Connor (Colgate), 'Raymond Williams, the Novel and the Limits of Community'**

In this paper I wish to revisit one of Williams' more difficult and distracting keywords as a problem of form for the novel. That communities police and patrol their limits, that they exist only insofar as they also silence and conform, is the necessary counter to the 'warmly persuasive word' Williams knew better than to fully trust. But I am interested also in the limits of community as a problem of knowledge and literary form. For as Williams famously argued, it was a 'crisis of knowable community' that produced in the nineteenth-century novel the 'split between knowable relationships and an unknown, unknowable, overwhelming society' that in the twentieth century solidified into the competing claims of the novel of interiority and of 'social analysis.' Williams attributed this crisis of representation to 'the very rapidly increasing size and scale and complexity of communities' in the nineteenth century and the 'increasing division and complexity of labour' within an imperial world system. In the Age of Empire, recourse to the Romantic cultural nation or to the dynamics of a national-industrial economy for a secure sense of meaning and identity became unsustainable. For this reason, Williams presents modernism as a literature of 'metropolitan perception', or of the meaning loss that follows the final separation of European consumption from its sites of production in the regional and colonial periphery. But if modernist narrative

is one articulation of the impulse to plot a hetero-chronic model of world-historical development, one that spans hyper-development in the metropolis and underdevelopment in the colony, what options does the socialist writer have once the chronotope of the nation is no longer true to the form of capitalism? For socialist realism, the solution does in fact lie in a rehabilitation of the nation as a horizon of collective aspiration in the anti-fascist and anti-colonial struggle. But for Williams, writing at the century's close, the challenge presents differently: how to move beyond 'the long and bitter impasse of a once liberating modernism' and the clear limitations of an unrevised realism; how, at the same time, to think and plan community in ways at once larger and smaller than the nation. The question, as posed differently by David Harvey, is how to combine militant particularism with a properly global critical and political ambition. I will offer Williams' unfinished historical novel trilogy, *People of the Black Mountains* as an attempt to do just this: to rethink the Long Revolution for our latest phase of globalization. ([jconnor@colgate.edu](mailto:jconnor@colgate.edu))

### **Elinor Taylor (Liverpool John Moores), 'Raymond Williams and the Politics of Criticism Now'**

Within a widely cited crisis in higher education, questions of the political significance and possibilities of literary criticism are regularly subsumed by more general discussions of a 'crisis' in the arts and humanities that registers at all levels in the education system. Drawing particularly on Raymond Williams's early work, in which his critical programme is formulated as part of a lifelong project of redefining the relationships between culture, literature and society, as well on a central insight of *Politics of Modernism*, that diversifying objects of study does not, in itself, diversify sites or modes of struggle, this paper argues for Williams as a central figure in a politically engaged project of criticism today. The paper considers how Williams's work can help us think through the contradictions in which contemporary critical practice occurs: contradictions emerging in a fraught nexus of institutional, disciplinary, educational, social, economic and political pressures. Williams offers ways to about the contemporary in politically vital ways, and on such a basis a critical project might be envisaged that resists the process of intellectual enclosure that seems to offer literary scholars a constrained choice between either the image of the privileged antiquarian whose work is licensed by other, more 'economically productive' disciplines, or that of an entrepreneurial producer fully participating in the logic of contemporary capitalism. To think through these conditions is crucial if a space is to be created in which to resist the deep conformism that existing with these contradictions generates, and the paper reads Williams against this conformism in both its nostalgic and ahistorical guises. ([elinor.m.taylor1@gmail.com](mailto:elinor.m.taylor1@gmail.com))