



Key Words

A JOURNAL OF CULTURAL MATERIALISM

11
(2013)



edited by
Elizabeth Allen
Catherine Clay
Tony Crowley
Sarah Davison
Simon Dentith
Kristin Ewins
Ben Harker
Angela Kershaw
Stan Smith



Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism

Editors: Elizabeth Allen (Regent's College, London), Catherine Clay (Nottingham Trent University), Tony Crowley (Scripps College, CA), Sarah Davison (University of Nottingham), Simon Dentith (University of Reading), Kristin Ewins (University of Salford), Ben Harker (University of Salford), Angela Kershaw (University of Birmingham), Stan Smith (Nottingham Trent University).

Guest Editor for this issue: Kate Lacey (University of Sussex).

Editorial Advisory Board: John Brannigan (University College Dublin), Peter Brooker (University of Sussex), John Connor (US East Coast Representative, Colgate University, NY), Terry Eagleton (National University of Ireland Galway and Lancaster University), John Higgins (University of Cape Town), Andreas Huyssen (Columbia University, New York), Peter Marks (University of Sydney), Sean Matthews (University of Nottingham), Jim McGuigan (Loughborough University), Andrew Milner (Australasian Representative, Monash University), Meaghan Morris (Lingnan University), Morag Shiach (Queen Mary, University of London), Dai Smith (Swansea University), Nick Stevenson (University of Nottingham), John Storey (University of Sunderland), Will Straw (McGill University), Jenny Bourne Taylor (University of Sussex), John Tomlinson (Nottingham Trent University), Jeff Wallace (Cardiff Metropolitan University), Imelda Whelehan (De Montfort University), Vicki Whittaker (Publishing Advisor).

Contributions for prospective inclusion in *Key Words* should comply with the style notes printed on pp. 144–46 of this issue, and should be sent in electronic form to Catherine Clay, School of Arts and Humanities, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Campus, Nottingham NG11 8NS, UK (catherine.clay@ntu.ac.uk).

Books and other items for review should be sent to Angela Kershaw, Department of French Studies, College of Arts and Law, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK. The Reviews Editor, Stan Smith, can be contacted at stanwsmith1@gmail.com.

Key Words is a publication of The Raymond Williams Society
(website: www.raymondwilliams.co.uk).

Contributions copyright © The Raymond Williams Society 2013.

All rights reserved.

Cover design by Andrew Dawson.

Printed by Russell Press, Nottingham.
Distributed by Central Books Ltd, London.

ISSN 1369-9725

ISBN 978-0-9531503-9-7

Contents

Editors' Preface	5
Guest Editor's Introduction: Media Technology and Cultural Form Kate Lacey	7
Communications Policy and Social Change: Raymond Williams, the Left and Thinking about the Media Tom O'Malley	12
The Continuity of 'Continuity': Flow and the Changing Experience of Watching Broadcast Television Catherine Johnson	27
TV Times: Archive, Mood, Media Ben Highmore	44
'An Ugly Phrase for an Unprecedented Condition': Mobile Privatisation, 1974–83 Stephen Groening	58
Mobile Privatisation and the Neoliberal Self Jim McGuigan	75
Cultural Materialism, Media and the Environment Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller	90
Grace Paley and the Tenement Pastoral Chris Witter	107
Keywords Tony Crowley	120
Recoveries Elinor Taylor	123
Reviews	126

	Contents
Notes on Contributors	139
Raymond Williams Foundation (RWF)	142
Style Notes for Contributors	144

Editors' Preface

'Many people seem to assume as a matter of course that there is, first, reality, and then, second, communication about it', wrote Raymond Williams fifty years ago, at the start of his 1962 Penguin Special, *Communications*. Williams's lifelong project was devoted to the cultural-materialist premise that the separation of base and superstructure was a fallacy not just of vulgar Marxist analysis but also of other, more traditional modes of what he called, in his 1983 essay on 'Culture and Technology', 'the habitual technological determinism' which assumes that a new technology "emerges", changes the society or sector in which it has "emerged" and "we" then passively 'adapt to it, because it is the new modern way' (*Towards 2000*, 129; the scare quotes are Williams's). In contrast, imagining the coming century, the essay concluded with a prescient prefiguring of 'new kinds of active social and cultural relations in what is going to be [...] an exceptionally complex technological world' (152). The new modes of global communication had hardly 'emerged' to daylight when he died in 1988. But in the great transformative events of the decades that followed, in which it has seemed at times that 'all that is solid melts into air', from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the unending banking and Euro crises, through the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements to the electronically articulated modes of popular organisation and resistance thrown up by them, the new social media have been powerful material agencies in the remaking of reality, and not simply reflective communications about it. It is fitting, then, that the present number of *Key Words*, guest-edited by Kate Lacey, should address some of the major developments in contemporary communications, in an analytical tradition initiated by such pioneering work of Williams's as *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974).

The present issue sees one departure and three newcomers to the Editorial Board. The Board would like to thank Vicki Whittaker for her editorial work over the last four issues, and looks forward to her continuing involvement as the journal's adviser on publishing matters. Elizabeth Allen, a guest editor on the last issue, now joins us permanently. Tony Crowley, who holds a Chair in Humanities at Scripps College, Claremont CA, and is an Honorary Research Fellow at Liverpool University's Institute of Irish Studies, gave the Raymond Williams Annual Lecture at the Society's AGM in Liverpool in 2012. He inaugurates his editorial presence by taking on the journal's revived 'Keywords' feature, initiated in the first issue of the journal by Deborah Cameron. We would welcome future contributions to or ideas for this feature. Finally, the Board is joined by Sarah Davison, a modernism specialist, who continues the journal's historic link with the University of Nottingham.

The Society's annual Postgraduate Essay Prize elicited an outstanding batch of contributions. The judges therefore recommended that, in addition to the first prize, awarded to Chris Witter, whose revised article appears in the present issue, prizes should also go to Michael Malay and Elinor Taylor. We hope to publish revised versions of their essays in future issues. Elinor, a postgraduate teaching assistant at Salford University, whose account of 1930s working-class fiction in *Key Words* 10 inaugurated 'Recoveries', a new feature of the journal, has now taken on regular responsibility for the feature, with a reassessment in the present issue of Ethel Carnie Holdsworth's 1925 novel, *This Slavery*.

The 2012 AGM, held jointly with the Raymond Williams Foundation as part of the latter's weekend conference in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, was a great success, and Tony's scholarly and witty lecture on 'Scouse' drew a large and enthusiastic audience. We should like to thank Liverpool University Press for sponsoring the reception, and the RWF for sharing facilities with us, an arrangement made practical by the fact that currently both bodies are chaired by the same inveterate and indefatigable impresario, Derek Tatton.

Production and distribution costs for *Key Words* continue to rise. The most recent, widely well-received issue was half as long again as all but one previous issues, reflecting the volume of high quality contributions the journal now attracts. We would like to sustain this expanded output, but Society affiliation fees and general subscriptions do not cover the costs of production, which can only be sustained by support from the Raymond Williams Society's general funds. The journal continues to gain new readers both nationally and internationally, but if every current member of the Society recruited one new member/subscriber, the production shortfall would be remedied, and the Society would be able to expand its programme of support for conferences, public events, and new and postgraduate scholars working in the Williams tradition. Please do your best.

Guest Editor's Introduction: Media Technology and Cultural Form

Kate Lacey

The theme of this issue of *Key Words* is a play on the subtitle of Williams's most influential work on the media, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. Almost forty years after its publication, Williams's analysis of television continues to inform and inspire cultural materialist critiques of the media, including forms of new media that were still on the distant horizon in the 1970s, but about which Williams wrote with great prescience. This slim volume included an astonishing number of ideas that continue to resonate in contemporary media and cultural studies – the powerful critique of crude technological determinism, the identification of 'mobile privatisation' as the paradoxical condition underlying modern forms of communication, the analysis of 'flow' as a way to understand the meeting of text, institution and experience and, above all, the way in which the emergence of new media forms has to be understood as the social application of technology, requiring attention to the interplay between technology, society, history, culture, institution, text, distribution, politics and experience.

The essays that make up this special issue demonstrate how Williams's critical framework continues to provoke critical scholarship of great variety and passionate purpose. In some cases, the span of forty years allows for those central ideas of 'flow' and 'mobile privatisation' to be tested as analytical concepts that can focus a sharper light on some of the continuities as well as the changes in the broadcasting landscape. In others, it is Williams's cultural materialism more broadly that inspires the critique not only of contemporary media culture with its neoliberal imprint, but also of some strands of contemporary media critique that have lost the sense of political urgency and engagement that characterised the early pioneers of media and cultural studies.

Williams's own work on the media has to be understood in the context of his experience of and contribution to the wider debates about communications policy among the Left in the mid-twentieth century. This is the argument that Tom O'Malley pursues in the opening essay of this collection: 'Communications Policy and Social Change: Raymond Williams, the Left and Thinking about the Media.' O'Malley places Williams's conviction that communications has to be thought through as part of a holistic approach to culture, education, everyday life and democratic practice in the context of socialist thought about the media in the mid-twentieth century, and traces the ways this conviction played out in debates about the role and regulation of the media in the UK in subsequent

decades. Central to the discussion is how these ideas translated into arguments pressing for a role for communities and creative practitioners in the ownership and oversight of media and the arts. Williams's stature as a scholar ensured his ideas were taken seriously and, although his interventions into specific policy debates were rarely taken up directly in a political climate that was not receptive to his more radical ideas, O'Malley insists the example Williams set as a public intellectual continually engaged in ongoing public debates remains a valuable and inspiring one. There is, however, a sting in the tale – while Williams's ideas resonated productively with media activists on the Left, O'Malley suggests that at the same time his reformist agenda for independent forms of cultural production unwittingly fed strands of libertarian media strategies in the Labour movement which proved unfit to challenge the neoliberal free-enterprise agenda which emerged from the political right in the 1980s.

This new political agenda coincided with the emergence of a set of new communications technologies that would come to radically alter the landscape of television and other media. At the time Williams was writing *Television*, it was cable, satellite and video that were on the immediate horizon, with online and mobile technologies yet to come. His discussion of these emergent media parallels the analysis of broadcasting as an emergent media form with which the book begins. In other words, there is a careful critique that understands how technological affordances are shaped by material and historical conditions while also allowing for the counterforce of deliberate judgement and human action in the form of creative experimentation and critique. As Roger Silverstone puts it in his preface to the Routledge Classics edition, Williams was certainly not naïve about the realities of power relations that give new media their form, but his 'writing refuses capitulation' (xii).

The remaining essays in this special issue all navigate this terrain where new media technologies meet neoliberal politics in various ways, either by revisiting Williams's critical vocabulary in relation to contemporary media texts and practices, or by pressing for a re-invigorated cultural materialist critique.

'Flow' is one of the terms from *Television* that has resonated most persistently in studies of broadcasting, providing a touchstone in debates about the changing experience of television as channels and platforms have proliferated and converged. However, the fascination with the new can often overshadow the continuing presence of more established media forms, and Catherine Johnson's essay, 'The Continuity of "Continuity": Flow and the Changing Experience of Watching Broadcast Television' offers a more nuanced account of how the textual manifestation and organisation of 'flow' has gradually changed *within* mainstream broadcast television, as evidenced by the changes in how discrete parts of a channel's schedule are linked together in the junctions between programmes. Ben Highmore, too, reflects on 'flow' in his essay, 'TV

Guest Editor's Introduction

Times: Archive, Mood, Media'. Here, the everyday experience of televisual flow is connected to the question of how we experience the flow of historical time televisually. Television does not simply represent the past to us, it is part of our past: it draws extensively on its own past to create its daily flow of 'now-ness', and its now-ness is self-consciously produced as testimony for the future or for timeless re-run on demand. Once again, as Highmore demonstrates, television's nostalgic texts and the patterns of their consumption are shaped by a complex configuration of the technological, the political and the experiential.

'Mobile Privatisation' is the other key word that has enjoyed an influential after-life in media and cultural studies, and there are two essays here that examine its application in relation to contemporary developments. In the first of these, "An Ugly Phrase for an Unprecedented Condition": Mobile Privatisation, 1974–83', Stephen Groening examines the renewed salience of the concept in a society characterised by pervasive mobile media devices. However, he argues against the widespread tendency to take the term simply as a descriptive label, and makes the case rather for mobile privatisation as an exemplary instance of Williams's mode of cultural, social and political analysis. Groening goes back to Williams's use of the term as a way of understanding a 'unique modern condition' rather than understanding a particular medium or even a particular mode of privacy. Key to this re-reading is an understanding of the shifting connotations of the word 'mobile', from the kind of 'virtual mobility' that Williams describes in *Television* to the contemporary corporate definition of 'mobile' as an adjective for personal, portable digital media, and an understanding of the 'private' that is not bound to place. Grounding his essay in a 'Sociology of Culture' approach, Groening explores the term in relation to the ideas of automobility, 'transport' and the 'commute', all rich and hybrid terms that feed back into an analysis of new media communication practices as both retreat from and integration into a capitalist consumer society. The retreat is 'sold' to consumers with the rhetoric of 'choice' and 'freedom' and 'individuality'. Groening's essay is a reminder that Williams's term should be invoked not simply to describe these processes but to critique them in the hope of changing them.

Jim McGuigan is similarly critical of the uses to which the term has been put in recent academic work, and critical too of its surprising omission from studies that fall under the particular rubric of 'mobilities' prevalent in contemporary sociology. Turning to Williams's own expansion on the term beyond the *Television* book, again the connection is drawn between the different meanings and modes of communication, mediated and transportational. What brings them together is what they say about the experiential aspect of social relations under commodity capitalism. McGuigan then goes on to connect all this with the economic principle of privatisation under neoliberalism,

arguing that all too often academic critics are almost as caught up in the hyperbole of technology-enabled progress, mobility and emancipation as the marketing men. For McGuigan, mobile privatisation is an integral feature of 'cool capitalism' with its neoliberal emphasis on individualisation, self-reliance and self-gratification – a capitalism that produces a new selfhood caught between the promise of consumer sovereignty and the perils of a competitive marketplace unbridled by social conscience or community allegiances. Like O'Malley, McGuigan critiques the co-option of radical ideas about autonomous production and decentralisation by the neoliberal agenda, bringing in its wake precarity and atomisation for many workers in the cultural industries. And yet, like Williams at the end of *Television*, McGuigan reaches in the end for a more optimistic note, recognising that, however unlikely it can seem at times, new forms of communication are not predetermined or set on an inevitable neoliberal trajectory, but can be sites of struggle and 'resources of hope'.

The final piece, 'Cultural Materialism, Media and the Environment' by Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, does not at first seem to connect very closely with the theme of media technologies. The essay begins with a vignette about a Spanish coal miners' strike, about a local way of life disrupted by a globalised political economy, and a commentary on the ecological blind spot of much conventional cultural materialism. But the apparent disconnect is precisely where Maxwell and Miller target their blistering critique of a brand of media and cultural studies that, once again, is judged to be in thrall to the novelty of 'new media', and fascinated by its textual and experiential innovations at the expense of a holistic cultural materialism that would connect these technologies back into a political economy, back into a 'whole way of life', back into a longer historical perspective, and back into the environment as 'biosphere'. While it has long been fashionable to talk about 'the media ecology' or the 'media environment' in a metaphorical sense, Maxwell and Miller draw on Williams's cultural materialism and on his interest in landscape to argue that critiques of the media should not forget the physical 'by-products' of communications media – the masts and wires, the quarries and waste products – that appear in the landscape and have an ecological impact. These misnamed 'by-products' are not simply elements of the story that can be added to the dominant historical narratives; their omission is rather constitutive of a particular set of ideological stories that we tell ourselves about the evolution of ever more sophisticated and democratic means of communication. Maxwell and Miller are just as disparaging of the way in which labour in the new media economies gets described as 'immaterial', and again argue for a critical perspective that would recognise the full extent of the material and environmental conditions of all forms of work that lie behind the shiny surface of new media wares, both hard and soft.

Guest Editor's Introduction

Perhaps it is not surprising that through these often very different essays, inspired as they are by an engagement with Williams's work, beyond the specific terms of 'flow' and 'mobile privatisation' there are many threads that appear and re-appear through these essays in different guises – among them, the problematic fascination with the new that obscures a properly historical understanding of the contemporary; the continuing power of the 'magic system' of advertising and promotional culture that sustains the neoliberal façade; the methodological challenge of combining detailed textual and sociological analysis with a holistic and critical contextualisation of their material and ideological conditions. These are all questions that go right to the heart of any discussion of the media as cultural form, now as forty years ago. In a world where it is not unthinkable – albeit inadvisable – to talk about the 'end' of broadcasting, Williams's critique of television continues to provide a set of analytical tools with which to think through past, present and future incarnations of the media as cultural form.

Reference

Silverstone, Roger, 'Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition', in Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 2003), vii–xiii.

Communications Policy and Social Change: Raymond Williams, the Left and Thinking about the Media

Tom O'Malley

Abstract: This article discusses Raymond Williams's contribution to communications policy, particularly press and broadcasting reform, in the context of the history of socialist engagement with the media and communications. It outlines his involvement with Labour movement thinking about the media and critically examines his proposals for reform. It argues that his policy proposals were not novel and were weakened by insufficient economic analysis and the stress placed on the importance of producer controlled media. Nonetheless, the framework within which he discussed policy was important because it linked the media with wider cultural and political processes. His interventions gave importance to questions of policy, influencing educationalists, media workers and activists; and his lifelong engagement with the issues testified to the need to think about how to change the media in order to create a more just, integrated, balanced, socialist society.

*

In twentieth-century Britain the mass media of film, radio and television became all-pervasive. Their impact was felt across social, cultural and political life in complex ways, provoking mixed responses which ranged from anxiety and rejection to wholehearted celebration. The Labour, trades union and socialist movement responded by creating their own media, criticising the established media and developing proposals for reform.¹ From the 1950s until the 1980s Raymond Williams (1921–88) thought about how best to reform and transform communications. This article considers Williams's contribution to communications policy, in particular his approach to press and broadcasting. Williams used the term 'communications policy' to cover the arts, education, advertising, cinema and press and broadcasting. Here the focus is on his thinking about press and broadcasting and so uses the term 'media policy' where appropriate; but no hard and fast distinction is intended in this context. The engagement of Williams and the New Left with media policy has been commented on, but not explored in any great depth.² This contribution adds to existing work by making the case for viewing his thought in the context of the history of socialist engagement with the media and of Williams's lifelong commitment to thinking about the issues raised by the way communications operate in a capitalist society.

The first part outlines his involvement with the Labour movement; the second places his thought in the context of movement thinking about press and broadcasting. Part 3 surveys the proposals for reform he made and the conclusion examines the strengths, weaknesses and influence of his thought in the context within which it operated. It argues that Williams's policy recommendations were not novel and were weakened by a lack of detailed economic analysis and the stress he placed on the importance of producer controlled media. Nonetheless, the intellectual framework within which he discussed communications policy was important because of the way it linked the media with wider cultural and political processes; his high profile and consistency gave importance to questions of policy and change and influenced educationalists, media workers and activists; and his lifelong engagement with the issues testified to the need to think about how to change the media in order to create a more just, integrated, balanced, socialist society.

Williams, the Labour Movement and Communications Policy

Raymond Williams was brought up with a strong sense of the power of local community and the creative dimensions of working-class self-activity.³ His father was a trade unionist and Labour Party supporter who was active in the 1926 General Strike. Raymond worked for the Labour candidate in the 1935 General Election and a 1939 by-election. When he arrived at Cambridge University in 1939 he joined the University Socialist Club and, shortly afterwards, the Communist Party. After World War II (1939–45), in which he saw active service, he returned to Cambridge, graduated and, from 1946 until he was appointed to a lectureship at Cambridge in 1961, taught for the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). By 1957 he was involved with the Universities and Left Review Club and canvassed for Labour in the 1959 General Election, by which time he was a contributor to Left journals like *New Left Review*, *New Statesman* and *Tribune*.⁴

From 1961 until 1966 he was active in the Cambridge Constituency Labour Party, working for the candidate in the 1964 General Election. He supported the first Labour government of the 1960s, albeit critically, and in 1965 joined the Cambridge Left Forum and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. His growing disillusionment with the actions of Labour in power was the background to his resignation from the Party in July 1966, the final straw being his powerful objections to the way the Labour government (1966–70) treated striking seamen. Thereafter he continued to intervene in movement politics, convening the group that produced the *May Day Manifesto* in 1967 and chairing the National Convention of the Left in 1969. He worked for

Labour in the 1974 General Election, became involved with the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, spoke at the founding conference of the Socialist Society in 1982 and actively supported the miners during the 1984–85 Coal Dispute.⁵ His commitment to socialist change, using resources inside and outside of the Labour movement, was constant. To the end of his life he was sensitive to the power and importance of the Labour and trades union movement, but knew just how conservative it was in its relation to the capitalist system and how much it needed to draw on, but not incorporate, inspiration from wider social movements. His thinking about communications policy was therefore rooted in a creative commitment to a humane, open and culturally rich socialism.⁶

His thinking about policy flowed from his analysis of the importance of culture and communications. Through communications people connected with each other and made sense of complex societies. The connections made, in what way, in whose interests and with what consequences were matters of consistent concern to him. In his maiden speech to the Cambridge Union in 1940, he attacked the way advertising finance, ownership and the fear of the libel laws threatened press freedom – themes he returned to that year in an address to working men in Wales. The following year, he helped produce an edition of the Communist *Daily Worker* after it had been banned by the Home Secretary.⁷ In 1948 he wrote about the state and popular culture, arguing that the Labour government's policy towards the arts and culture should pay more attention to values rather than structure.

His thinking about culture and communications developed in the 1950s, so that by the time of *The Long Revolution* (1961) he had a set of proposals about how to reform the communications system in Britain, reforms he considered central to social change. There, and in a series of other publications between 1960 and 1962, he articulated proposals which remained central to his thinking for the rest of his life.⁸ After Labour was elected in 1964, he contributed to debates about government cultural policy, and in 1965 to discussions about its White Paper, 'A Policy for the Arts'; in 1966, he raised his voice against plans to introduce commercial local radio. In 1969, he supported the Free Communications Group, a pressure group led by journalists and programme makers who wanted reform of broadcasting. In the early 1970s, he was invited to join the Labour Party's communications policy group, although he never attended any of its meetings; and in 1973, he became associated with another reform group, the Standing Committee on Broadcasting. The Labour Arts Minister, Hugh Jenkins, appointed him to the Arts Council (1976–78), and in 1979 he became one of the founding sponsors of the Campaign for Press Freedom, a broad-based campaign for press reform initiated by the media trades unions, academics and activists.⁹ His engagement with policy therefore

grew organically out of his involvement in the Labour movement, his interest in culture and his lifelong commitment to socialist politics.

Ideas in Context

The 1930s witnessed a great deal of debate about the media. There were discussions 'involving Britain's cultural elite, concerning the significance of film and radio, in the context of the emergence of "mass society", for traditional social and cultural structures', which were conducted frequently in literary and political journals.¹⁰ In addition, strands of writing and educational practice emerged which treated the mass media and popular culture as worthy of serious critical attention. The critics F.R. and Q.D. Leavis stressed the importance of evaluating literature in the context of history and society. In spite of their emphasis on the role of minority culture, it was their concern with the social and historical context of culture that influenced many writers, including Williams. Debates about the relationship between literary and sociological approaches to the study of popular culture, plus the growth of serious interest in film education, helped to foster these developments. Socialists of all hues took part, contributing much to critical thought about popular culture and mass communications.¹¹

In the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s the Labour movement was committed to dealing with the mass media by producing its own publications, such as the *Daily Herald*, educating its members about the role of the media and supporting the voluntary reform of standards; it was wary of state intervention in the press, though willing to use it in film and broadcasting.¹² There was a strong Marxist critique of the press, associated with the British Communist Party, which characterised it as an agent of the ruling class that fostered false consciousness among workers. This influenced the way non-Marxists understood the industry, but did not persuade the leadership to support state control and the suppression of private ownership.¹³ Williams, however, was convinced that state control was necessary if reforms were to work.

In 1920, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, two of the most influential thinkers in the early history of the Labour Party, attacked the press for 'playing incessantly on the minds of electors with a stream of selected news' thereby distorting the democratic process. Their solution was to turn the big newspapers into cooperatives run by journalists, thus promoting both 'the utmost variety in independent journalism' and the highest professional standards.¹⁴ The concentration of ownership in the press and its dependence on advertising were dissected by Labour Research in 1922; it concluded that the industry was 'controlled in the interests of the capitalist class'.¹⁵ In the same year, Norman

Angell's *The Press and the Organisation of Society*, while upholding the principle of a free press, attacked its power over the electorate. He recommended leaving it in private ownership, turning journalism into a chartered profession, like medicine or the law, creating a government-funded but independent newspaper and encouraging the Labour and trades union movement to set up cooperatively-owned papers.¹⁶ In 1928, Kingsley Martin, a future editor of the *New Statesman*, suggested that there should be more education about the press and endorsed Angell's ideas about cooperative publications.¹⁷ With the exception of the Webb's idea about the main newspapers being taken over and run as cooperatives, this mixture of education, supporting movement publications and promoting the voluntary reform of journalistic standards influenced thinking and policy into the 1960s. It echoed contemporary non-Labour movement approaches to press reform and can be detected in the recommendation by the 1947–49 Royal Commission on the Press for the establishment of a General Council of the Press.¹⁸ In the decades after the war, criticisms of concentration of ownership, political distortion, bias, sensationalism, low standards and profit chasing were consistent themes in movement and non-movement discussion of the press.¹⁹

Broadcasting was different. In the 1930s, the Labour Party and the trades unions remembered the way the BBC had sided with the government in the General Strike of 1926 and, in addition, had difficulty persuading the BBC to give them air time. But the movement was committed to the medium as an instrument of public service and so pushed hard for equality of access with the Tories. In November 1932, the National Joint Council of the Labour Party and the TUC complained to the BBC that its power to select the topics of broadcast talks 'places in the hands of the Corporation the power to determine the electoral issues on which the public are invited to make up their minds'. In 1935, the National Council of Labour proposed widening the social composition of the BBC's Board of Governors and taking steps to prevent future governments commandeering the Corporation as had happened in 1926. The tensions between the movement and the BBC abated in the late 1930s and after Labour became part of the wartime coalition.²⁰ The post-war Labour governments (1945–51) supported the BBC's monopoly in radio. Labour opposed the Tory's introduction of commercial television in 1954. There was deep disquiet across society about the spread of commercial values into broadcasting, and this fed movement critiques of the way broadcasting was organised and of the influence of advertising. These concerns were rooted in an awareness of the social power of broadcasting and the widely supported desire to make it work for society as a whole and not just to benefit the profits of a few.²¹

In 1949, the Labour government appointed the Beveridge Committee (1949–51) to inquire into the future of broadcasting, and in 1960 the Conservative government set up the Pilkington Committee to review the industry after five years of commercial television. Organisations and individuals from the movement presented evidence to both committees which demonstrated a wide ranging set of concerns and proposals.²² The WEA impressed on both committees its sense of broadcasting's power over public opinion and the importance of considering the values that broadcasters brought to their work.²³ The Fabians and the actors' union Equity criticised the BBC's monopoly.²⁴ The Labour MP Christopher Mayhew submitted evidence to Pilkington, arguing that ITV had failed to provide genuine choice, a view shared by the TUC and the WEA.²⁵ The Labour Party and the TUC drew Beveridge's attention to anti-socialist and class bias in BBC radio, a problem rooted in the narrow social base from which its staff was drawn.²⁶ The Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians, the Labour Party, the TUC and the WEA argued that the BBC was far too timid when dealing with matters of industrial and political controversy.²⁷ The Labour Party and the TUC called for decentralisation of the Corporation, so that it could respond more adequately to the needs of the nations and regions.²⁸ The Labour movement therefore engaged seriously with issues relating to the press and broadcasting and Williams drew on these approaches in his writings on policy.

Communications and Change

Williams was no longer a member of the Communist Party when he returned to Cambridge after the war, but he continued to draw on its critique of the media. During the 1950s he took the view that the communications system acted as a form of continuous, informal education, telling people about the world and their place in it. It needed to be critically evaluated, and to do so he drew on the tradition of critical engagement with the mass media which had emerged since the 1930s, touched on earlier in this article. He did this in the context of the New Left's attempts to adapt socialist and Marxist thinking to the changing conditions of post-war British society.

As *The Long Revolution* illustrates, he saw communications as central to the gradual, contradictory, but positive evolution of a more democratic society, grounded in a proper appreciation of the variety and richness of human experience and the need to dispense with divisive and damaging distinctions between minority and mass culture. A proper analysis of society had to see communications as part of, not separate from, all the other building blocks of society:

Communication is the process of making unique experience into common experience and it is, above all, the claim to live ... Thus our descriptions of experience into common experience come to compose a network of relationships, and all our communication systems, including the arts, are literally parts of our social organisation ... It is of utmost importance to realise this sense of communication as a whole social process.²⁹

What, however, were his thoughts on policy? Writing in 1948, he praised the Labour government for its initiatives in assisting the arts through local taxation, and for the support it gave to the British film industry. He stressed, however, that simply dealing with organisation was insufficient; policy needed to take on board questions of value and discrimination – a position which owed more to Leavis than to Marx.³⁰ He included proposals on communications policy in *The Long Revolution* (1961) and rearticulated them in *Britain in the Sixties: Communications* (1962). Some of these also appeared in the *New Left Review*'s submission to the Pilkington Committee.³¹ The views expressed in these publications changed very little in later years. In addition, his approach to communications was holistic: it incorporated the press, broadcasting, theatre, cinema and the arts – all parts of a whole social process. Here the focus is on the press and broadcasting, but the approach he applied to these industries was also employed in the other areas.³²

In writing on these topics he always stressed the importance of education. As the communication system was a form of continuing education, so it was essential that people thought about it critically. This meant teaching children how to communicate through speech, writing, creative expression and the arts. It involved teaching the history and social organisation of the institutions of communications such as the press, cinema and broadcasting, and extending and critically evaluating the material they produced. He also argued for a Communications Centre to supply teaching resources and a university Institution of Communications Research.³³

Williams wanted to create cultural organisations based on democratic control. This meant changing institutions and the people who worked in them, in parallel: 'The changes I propose are in terms of growth ... The individuals and the institutions will have, essentially, to change together or they will not change at all.'³⁴ He wanted to use state intervention to create a framework to enable freedom of expression and creativity:

Where the means of communication can be personally owned, it is the duty of society to guarantee this ownership and to ensure that distribution facilities are adequate, on terms comparable with the original freedom. Where the means of communication cannot be personally owned, because

of their expense and size, it is the duty of society to hold these means in trust for the actual contributors, who for all practical purposes will control their use.³⁵

How did these principles translate into practice? His interest in values found expression in his views on advertising. In 1960, he argued that it had 'passed the frontier of selling goods and services and has become involved with the teaching of social and personal values'. It operated like 'magical systems in simpler societies' and as a device for organising the market for goods, focusing attention on individual consumption, rather than wider social needs'. He praised the work of the Consumer Association and argued for a British Quality Trust with regional and local centres designed to educate and help consumers. He hoped to see advertisements replaced by 'an informative and critical service' that might also be included in the BBC and ITV.³⁶ He was willing to deal with advertising by a combination of voluntary and statutory reform rather than state control. In 1962, he advocated a voluntary Advertising Council modelled on the recommendation of the 1947–49 Royal Commission for a General Council of the Press. It would deal with complaints about advertising, report on the industry and conduct research. By 1976, while still supporting a voluntary Council, he thought that the fair trading and trades description legislation which was then on the statute books had, or would have, a positive effect on advertising standards. But he still thought advertising permeated 'the whole communications system' and was an 'irresponsible social force'; a judgement which remains as pertinent in the second decade of the twenty-first century as it did in the 1970s, especially given the influence of advertising and its associated effects on the internet.³⁷

His proposals for reform of the press were not novel, mixing a reliance on voluntary reform with state intervention and cooperative control of production. In 1962, he supported the idea that the press should regulate its own standards. The Press Council, established by newspaper owners in 1953, was not the wide-ranging professional body recommended by the 1947–49 Royal Commission, and had been attacked from all quarters for its failure to uphold standards and to intervene to prevent newspaper closures.³⁸ Williams concurred with these views, but argued for reform rather than replacement by a statutory body. This would mean giving lay people a prominent role, appointing an independent Chair and strengthening its powers to make papers correct 'a publicly disproved misstatement of fact'. The Council should also inquire into threatened newspaper closures.³⁹

In 1962, and again in 1976, he called for a public inquiry into how government and local authority advertising was distributed, so that expenditure could be used to support minority publications. By 1976, a range of radical proposals

had been developed, most closely associated with the Labour Party document, *The People and The Media* (1974), many of which he supported.⁴⁰ These included measures to promote diversity through control of newsprint costs, levies on advertising, subsidies for small papers and the creation of a National Printing Corporation. He thought these initiatives should be led by journalists in order to allay any fears that they would undermine press freedom.⁴¹ Although controversial, these proposals were mildly reformist compared with his view, stated in 1962, and restated in both subsequent editions of *Communications*, that ownership of all the production facilities should be held in trust by the state and leased to journalists, so that the press was 'restored to the only people capable of guaranteeing its freedom: the working journalists'.⁴²

This uneasy mix of piecemeal and major reform characterised his thinking about broadcasting. In 1962, he advocated a Broadcasting and Television Council, consisting of lay and industry representatives, to discuss broadcasting policy; the proposal rested on his belief in the power of public debate: 'I think we shall only get responsible institutions when policies have to be justified in open, equal and regular discussions, which has a real chance of making some change.'⁴³ Pilkington reported in 1962. The second edition of *Communications* (1966) repeated the *New Left Review's* argument to the Committee that the collection and distribution of advertising revenue in television should be separated from programme-making decisions. He wanted commercial television abolished and proposed four or five regionally dispersed independent public corporations, which would hold facilities in trust and lease them to independent companies owned by producers, writers, and journalists. As he had argued in 1962, he wanted to free television producers from the restrictive influence of administrators at BBC and of advertisers in ITV. Proposals put by academics and broadcasters to the Annan Committee on the future of broadcasting (1974–77) echoed many of his themes, and in the 1976 edition of *Communications* he gave them his support.⁴⁴ In the early 1980s, Williams recognised that the new cable and satellite technologies could easily 'be dominated by financial institutions, mail-order marketeers, travel agencies and general advertisers' but nonetheless insisted there were 'readily available alternative uses'. They could be taken into public ownership, provide a wide variety of channels, be an outlet for independent production companies and draw revenues from, amongst other sources, pay-per-view. His response to the new technologies was to recognise the forces acting to shape them while insisting that imagination and political will could produce something different.⁴⁵

Towards an Assessment

Williams's thinking about communications policy was based on ideas in circulation in and around the Labour movement but they took their distinctive hue from being allied with his broader insistence on a holistic approach to culture and social change. It was the high profile that he gave to these ideas, in books which linked culture, communications and social change, and which sold very well, that was of particular importance. The success of *Culture and Society* (1958) had catapulted him into the public eye, giving him a form of left celebrity, shared with others like Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall and Edward Thompson, which allowed him access to a wide public and an expanding audience in higher education. That he used this celebrity to press for major changes in communications policy was to his enduring credit.⁴⁶ *Britain in the Sixties: Communications* was first published in 1962, revised in 1966 and reprinted in 1968 and 1970. A third edition in 1976 was reprinted in 1977 and 1979. By 1979 it had sold 150,000 copies in the UK alone.⁴⁷ Along with other academics, teachers and activists, he brought developments in critical thought about culture and the media into schools, higher education and the mainstream of public discourse.⁴⁸ His stress on keeping issues of policy on the agenda of cultural and media studies was carried forward in the work of other academics who were also policy activists such as James Curran and Nicholas Garnham.⁴⁹

His recommendations, however, had no influence on the policies of Labour governments. He characterised the proposals in *Britain in the Sixties: Communications* (1962) as 'transitional reforms people felt a Labour government could undertake'; but the Wilson governments (1964–70) 'contemptuously put aside' most of the serious proposals for reform. During the 1960s he was never consulted on policy by the leadership and the proposals developed during opposition after 1970 which he supported were 'pushed aside' on Labour's return to power (1974–79). He did, however, influence activists. The cohort of young producers that entered the BBC in the early 1960s and went on to form the nucleus of the Free Communications Group engaged with his work and ideas about controlling advertising, subsidising publications and promoting accountability which shaped Labour movement debates in the early 1970s owed much to his arguments and the profile his standing gave to them.⁵⁰

The reasons why the radical proposals Williams and others proposed failed to influence government policy were complex. They were to do with the conservatism of the movement's political and industrial leadership; the lack of priority given to communications reform relative to other issues such as the economy, health and education; divisions of analysis and approach within the movement; the entrenched political influence of the broadcasting and press industries and a resistance in the movement and beyond to overt state

intervention in the press and, to a lesser extent, broadcasting.⁵¹ The radical nature of many of the proposals needed a much more politically favourable climate in which to flourish than was in place in the 1960s and 1970s.

There were weaknesses too in Williams's proposals and in those circulating in the movement. Firstly, many were based on principle and not on detailed research. This was expressed most clearly in the absence, and it has to be said from those of writers on which he drew, of any detailed economic analysis of the media industries. Secondly, he inherited a faith in workers' control. What this might mean in practice and whether the rights of producers and journalists should trump those of other interests was unexplored. An interest in giving more power to producers dominated thinking inside and outside the movement between the 1960s and the 1980s. This led to the creation of some genuinely radical initiatives in film and television production.⁵² But it also encouraged many in the movement to welcome the expansion of independent television production companies in the 1980s, even though the Conservative governments (1979–97) that introduced this policy did so because they saw independents as a way of promoting more free enterprise and commercial competition in broadcasting.⁵³ Thirdly, his proposals were not based on any developed theory of the state; they implied it was a neutral instrument, there to be used by any properly elected government. They do not seem to have been influenced by contemporary socialist critics of the state who viewed the state as partisan and tied to the interests of capital.⁵⁴ Finally, the proposals gave no consideration to the potentially hostile reaction of owners, broadcasters, the state, workers in the industry and members of the public to the plans to take major production facilities into public control. In his defence, there was no tradition of highly detailed Left policy thinking on which he could have drawn; that was to come later. Nonetheless, his approach to policy was at best schematic and as such may have undermined its credibility and broader influence.

But this should not detract from what was a major achievement. He articulated connections between culture, media, social change and policy with an insistence and critical acuity that stood out among his generation of cultural thinkers. He used his very high profile to press the case for reform, opening up issues for discussion in the movement and beyond; he never let his audiences lose sight of the crucial importance of media and communications reform. He carried forward earlier traditions of thought about reform, gave them a contemporary significance and passed the torch on to the next generation of socialists and reformers. In an age when the communications system in the UK and globally is even more commercialised than it was in the 1950s, when the new possibilities for communications offered by the internet seem challenged by commercial exploitation and subservience to the imperatives of advertising

and state surveillance, Williams's consistent and principled insistence on the importance of getting our communications system right if we are to build a more humane society resonates more than ever.⁵⁵

Notes

- 1 A sense of the range and complexity of this engagement and of the context out of which Williams's thought developed can be gleaned from: Trevor Ryan, 'Labour and the Media in Britain 1929–1939: A Study of the Attitudes of the Labour Movement towards the New Media, Film and Radio and of its Attempts to use them for Political Purposes' (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 1986); Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995); Tom O'Malley, 'Labour and the 1947–9 Royal Commission on the Press', in *A Journalism Reader*, ed. Michael Bromley and Tom O'Malley (London: Routledge, 1997), 126–58; Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left* (London: Pluto, 1997); Bert Hokenkamp, *Film, Television and the Left 1950–1970* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000); Lawrence Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Britain, 1951–64: Old Labour, New Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Des Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party 1951–2001* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Sean Tunney, *Labour's Relationship with the Press: From New Left to New Labour* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007); Laura Beers, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).
- 2 Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Britain*, 85, 107; Kenny, *The First New Left*; Nick Tiratsoo, 'Labour and its Critics: The Case of the May Day Manifesto Group', in *The Wilson Governments 1964–1970*, ed. Richard Coopey, Steven Fielding and Nick Tiratsoo (London: Pinter, 1995), 163–83; Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams* (London: Routledge, 1995), 197–99.
- 3 Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2008).
- 4 Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso 1981), 11, 12, 14; Alan O'Connor, *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 6, 7, 14; Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, 192.
- 5 Williams, *Politics*, 14–16; O'Connor, *Raymond Williams*, 14, 17, 21; Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, 192–3, 199, 271, 289.
- 6 Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1983), 172–3, 250–2.
- 7 Smith, *Raymond Williams*, 104, 118, 120–1.
- 8 These proposals, based on his understanding of the role of communications in culture, centred on the democratisation of the media, media education, the critique of advertising, the need for state intervention and the importance of workers' or producer control and are outlined in Part 3 below. They can be tracked in: Michael Pope (i.e. Williams), 'The State and Popular Culture', *Politics and Letters* 4, no. 1 (1948): 71–2; Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (1961, London: Pelican, 1973), 367–73; Raymond Williams, 'The Magic System', *New Left Review* 1, no. 4 (1960): 27–32; Kit Coppard, Paddy Whannel, Raymond Williams and Tony Higgins, 'Which Frame of Mind', *New Left Review* 1, no. 7 (1961): 28–48; Raymond Williams, *The Existing Alternatives in Communications* (London: Fabian Society, 1962); Raymond Williams, *Britain in the Sixties: Communications* (London: Penguin, 1962).
- 9 O'Connor, *Raymond Williams*, 19, 27; Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*, 54, 86, 98; Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, 207; Campaign for Press Freedom, *Towards Press Freedom* (London: CPF, 1979).
- 10 Ryan, 'Labour and the Media in Britain 1929–1939', 25–6.

- 11 Tom Steele, *The Emergence of Cultural Studies 1945–65: Adult Education, Cultural Politics, and the English Question* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), 2–3; Terry Bolas, *Screen Education: From Film Appreciation to Media Studies* (London: Intellect Press, 2009); Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 66; Peter Simonson, Janice Peck, Robert T. Craig and John P. Jackson, Jr, ‘The History of Communication History’, in *The Handbook of Communication History* ed. Peter Simonson, Janice Peck and Robert T. Craig (London: Routledge, 2013), 23–34; Keith Williams, *British Writers and the Media 1930–1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Philip Bounds, ‘Orwell and Mass Communication: The Dialogue with British Marxism’, in *Recharting Media Studies: Essays on Neglected Critics*, ed. Philip Bounds and Mala Jagmohan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 141–71.
- 12 O’Malley, ‘Labour and the 1947–9 Royal Commission on the Press’; Richards, *The Bloody Circus*; Beers, *Your Britain*.
- 13 Ryan, ‘Labour and the Media in Britain 1929–1939’, 32–4.
- 14 Sydney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1920), 71, 80–1, 270–1.
- 15 Labour Research Department, *The Press* (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 4–6, 7–11, 13, 21, 41, 45, 47.
- 16 Norman Angell, *The Press and the Organisation of Society* (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 11–13, 15, 17, 21, 121–3.
- 17 Kingsley Martin, ‘The Press’, in *The Encyclopaedia of the Labour Movement Volume III*, ed. Hastings B. Lees-Smith (London: Caxton Publishing, n.d. [1928]), 58–61; educating people in the movement about the media was a theme in George Douglas Howard Cole, *A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, 1789–1947*, 3rd edn revised (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), 474–5.
- 18 Henry Wickham Steed, *The Press* (London: Penguin, 1938); Political and Economic Planning, *Report on the British Press* (London: PEP, 1938); O’Malley, ‘Labour and the 1947–9 Royal Commission on the Press’.
- 19 Tom O’Malley and Clive Soley, *Regulating the Press* (London: Pluto, 2000); Martin Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin: Democratic Government and the Media in Britain, 1945–51* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Tunney, *Labour’s Relationship with the Press*. Williams used Angell, Orwell, Kingsley Martin and the Political and Economic Planning report in his WEA teaching in the 1950s, see Steele, *The Emergence of Cultural Studies 1945–65*, 194.
- 20 Ryan, ‘Labour and the Media in Britain 1929–1939’, 6, 108, 115–18, 126, 512; Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott, ‘The Struggle for Balance’, in *The Media in British Politics*, ed. Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987), 133–53.
- 21 Kenny, *The First New Left*; Black; Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume IV: Sound and Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- 22 *Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1949: Memoranda Submitted to the Committee* (London, HMSO, 1951, cmdn 8117), hereafter *Beveridge*; *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting: Volume II Appendix E. Memoranda Submitted to the Committee* (London: HMSO, 1962, cmdn 1819–1, 1974 reprint), hereafter, *Pilkington*.
- 23 *Beveridge*, 400; *Pilkington*, 846–7.
- 24 *Beveridge*, 316, 498–9.
- 25 *Beveridge*, 852–3, 1136, 1255.
- 26 *Beveridge*, 348, 350.
- 27 *Beveridge*, 347, 349–50, 410, 482–3. Similar points were made to Pilkington; including a critique by the WEA of the way balance operated in broadcasting, see *Pilkington*, 835.
- 28 *Beveridge*, 346, 351, 353. Both committees published a great deal of evidence from the movement and the richness of this engagement in the 1950s and 1960s is apparent from a reading of Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*.

Tom O'Malley

- 29 Williams, *Long Revolution*, 55; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1958, London: Penguin, 1975), 250; Kenny, *The First New Left*.
- 30 Pope, 'The State and Popular Culture'.
- 31 See note 8 above.
- 32 For his thinking on publishing, theatre, support for the arts and cinema, see Williams, *Britain*, 114–16, 119–20, 123–4, 126. His reengagement with Marxist theory and culture from the late 1960s does not seem to have made any impact on his thinking about policy.
- 33 Williams, *Britain*, 100–11; Williams, *Culture and Society*, 250.
- 34 Raymond Williams, *Communications* (1966, 2nd edn, London: Pelican, 1970), 13.
- 35 Williams, *Britain*, 166.
- 36 Williams, 'Magic System'.
- 37 Williams, *Britain*, 117–18; Raymond Williams, *Communications* (1976, 3rd edn, London: Pelican, 1979), 163–4. On the dominance of advertising on the internet and its negative social, political and cultural consequences see: Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You* (London: Penguin, 2012).
- 38 O'Malley and Soley, *Regulating the Press*, 56–63.
- 39 Williams, *Britain*, 113–14.
- 40 Tunney, *Labour's Relationship with the Press*; Labour Party, *The People and the Media* (London: Labour Party, 1974).
- 41 Williams, *Communications*, 3rd ed., 151–3.
- 42 Williams, *Britain*, 127–8.
- 43 Williams, *Britain*, 118–19.
- 44 Williams, *Britain*, 127; Williams, *Communications*, 2nd edn, 146–9; Williams, *Communications*, 3rd edn, 166–8; O'Connor, *Raymond Williams*, 28, 38; Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*.
- 45 Williams, *Towards*, 146–7.
- 46 Stefan Collini, *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125.
- 47 Williams, *Communications*, 3rd edn; Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 7.
- 48 Bolas, *Screen Education*; Steele, *The Emergence of Cultural Studies 1945–65*; Michael Bailey, Ben Clarke and John K. Walton, *Understanding Richard Hoggart: A Pedagogy of Hope* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 134–80.
- 49 Curran not only edited *New Socialist* to which Williams contributed, but was a founding member of the CPF and played a key role in thinking about media policy in the Labour movement from the 1970s onwards. Garnham was associated with Williams as an activist and as a TV producer. He went on to play a key role in cultural policy at the radical Greater London Council during the 1980s and developed a strong interest in policy around new technologies. See Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, 235–6, 267, 287; Campaign for Press Freedom, *Towards Press Freedom*; Nicholas Garnham, *Capitalism and Communication* (London: Sage, 1990); Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*; Tunney, *Labour's Relationship with the Press*.
- 50 Alan O'Connor (ed.), *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings* (London: Routledge, 1989), 208; Williams, *Communications*, 182; Michael Darlow, *Independents Struggle: The Programme Makers who Took on the TV Establishment* (London: Quartet, 2004), 11, 23; Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*; Tunney, *Labour's Relationship with the Press*.
- 51 Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*; Tunney, *Labour's Relationship with the Press*; O'Malley and Soley, *Regulating the Press*; James Curran, 'Press Reformism 1918–98: A Study in Failure', in *Media Power, Professionals and Politics*, ed. Howard Tumber (London: Routledge, 2000), 35–55.

Communications Policy and Social Change

- 52 Darlow, *Independents Struggle*; for a discussion of the way ideas about workers control related to radical, independent film making between the 1960s and 1980s, and the progressive initiatives around the early years of Channel 4 TV (1982) in the UK, see Margaret Dickinson (ed.), *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945–90* (London: BFI, 1999).
- 53 Tom O'Malley, *Closedown? The BBC and Government Policy 1979–92* (London, Pluto, 1994); Janet Jones and Tom O'Malley (eds), *The Peacock Committee and UK Broadcasting Policy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- 54 Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969, London: Quartet, 1973).
- 55 Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*; Simon Davies, 'Spies on the Line', *Free Press*, 188 (London: Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, July/August 2012): 4–5.

The Continuity of ‘Continuity’: Flow and the Changing Experience of Watching Broadcast Television

Catherine Johnson

Abstract: It has been widely argued that the experience of watching television has altered significantly since Raymond Williams’s theorisation of flow in the mid-1970s. Yet despite the rise of new technologies such as personal video recorders and on-demand services, broadcast television remains the primary way in which television is viewed in the West. This article, therefore, asks whether Williams’s theorisation of flow has continued significance in understanding the nature of broadcast television in the digital era. Focusing on the broadcast junctions, identified by Williams as a fundamental part of the broadcast flow, it examines the changing ways in which broadcasters have constructed and explained the value and experience of television from the 1980s to the 2000s. In doing so, it argues that we need to be as attuned to the continuities and similarities as the differences if we are to understand the changes to television wrought by digital.

*

What is the nature of the experience of watching television? Perhaps the most famous answer to this question is Raymond Williams’s theorisation of ‘flow’, in which he argued that broadcasting introduced a fundamentally different experience to the discrete activities of reading a book or watching a play by unifying different forms of communication into a singular continuous flow.¹ Yet, when Williams was writing in 1974, the landscape of television broadcasting was quite different from the one in which I am writing. In the UK there were only three television channels, all of which were regulated as public service broadcasters. In 2013, the number of channels has vastly increased with the rise of non-public service commercial subscription services, and viewers can access programmes beyond the broadcasters’ planned sequence of flow through on-demand services.

The debates about the continued significance of flow in television and media studies have largely concerned the extent to which a concept developed in relation to linear broadcasting can be adapted to the digital era. Brooker notes that the experience of engaging with television frequently ‘overflows’ the bounds of broadcast flow onto other platforms and media, while Mittell and Bennett point to television’s transformation from linear flow to files selected by viewers through an interface.² Indeed, Oswald and Packer argue that with

the rise of cable, satellite, internet and mobile devices for viewing television it is hard to argue for Williams's notion of flow or his approach to analysing it as adequate tools for media studies.³

However, while it is important to recognise the new texts, practices and experiences generated by the uptake of digital technologies for distributing and receiving television, we need to be wary of suggesting that broadcast television is dead, or that there is no continued significance in understanding or examining *broadcasting* as a cultural form. As Evans argues, 'the development of the internet and mobile phone as television platforms does not make television redundant. Instead they are integrated into a complex and shifting media landscape that includes both television and earlier media forms'.⁴ Indeed, while scholars may be particularly attuned to new developments and changes in the media, research suggests that for most viewers in the West broadcast television still forms the primary means through which television is watched.⁵ As Max Dawson has persuasively argued, in the attempts to understand the changes that have taken place to television, television studies itself has tended to privilege 'change over continuity, emergence over residuality, and the technological proclivities of the limited number of statistical outliers who have embraced digital platforms over the many millions who have not'.⁶

Arguing that broadcasting remains the primary means of viewing television, does not, however, mean that the experience of watching broadcast television remains unchanged. Broadcasters have adopted new scheduling strategies in response to the increasingly competitive marketplace that emerged over the 1990s.⁷ Meanwhile, new strategies in the structuring of the broadcast flow have been designed to retain audiences amidst the increasingly numerous calls on their attention.⁸ If broadcasting is still the principal way in which television is viewed in the digital era, television broadcasters now have to function within a landscape in which the potential experiences of television have changed and multiplied.

I want to argue, therefore, that in addition to examining the new technologies, cultural practices and textual forms that are emerging in the digital era, to understand fully the changes that are taking place to contemporary television, we also need to examine the changes to broadcast television itself. To demonstrate the ways in which broadcasters have adapted linear television flow to respond to the changes of the digital era, I want to focus on one specific aspect of broadcasting, the junctions or interstitials between the programmes. Although in Williams's analysis the interstitials (defined as internal publicity and commercials) accounted for around 1 per cent of the output of non-commercial UK broadcasters and around 13 per cent for commercial broadcasters, he maintained that they formed a fundamental part of the experience of broadcasting, stemming from the 'decisive innovation' in

the development of broadcasting as flow, namely the emergence of commercial television.⁹ Previous to this both radio and television broadcasting in the UK had included intervals between programme units, such as ‘the sounds of bells or the sight of waves’, and the BBC avoided continuity in order to encourage discriminating listening and viewing.¹⁰ The arrival of commercial television (ITV) in the UK challenged this emphasis on selective listening and viewing in public service broadcasting. Although the intervals between programmes were the obvious site for the placement of advertising, they also emerged as a problematic site where viewers might be lost to the competition. In an attempt to retain viewers for a whole evening, broadcasters constructed the experience of television as a continuous sequence of flow in which the ‘interruptions’ between programmes (such as adverts, trailers and idents¹¹) were experienced not as ‘a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real “broadcasting”’.¹²

Programme trailers and other promotional material produced by the broadcasters themselves are designed to encourage viewers to remain tuned in to a particular channel or, to quote Williams, ‘to sustain that evening flow’.¹³ These elements of the broadcast flow became a particularly important site after the uptake of the remote control in the 1980s. For William Uricchio the remote control ‘signalled a shift from Williams’ idea of flow to flow as a set of choices and actions initiated by the viewer’.¹⁴ The junctions served as the battleground within which this shift in control over flow from television programmer to viewer was enacted, emerging as a central site through which to examine the changes to flow from the broadcast to the digital eras.¹⁵

Yet, Williams stressed that flow cannot be explained simply as a means through which broadcasters attempted to retain viewers, arguing that ‘the flow offered can also ... be related to the television experience itself’.¹⁶ In this sense, the interstitials could be said to contribute to what the media scholar Paddy Scannell has termed the ‘communicative ethos’ of broadcasting. Scannell argues that because broadcasters cannot control the context within which their broadcasts are viewed or listened to, ‘the burden of responsibility is ... on the broadcasters to understand the conditions of reception, and to express that understanding in language intended to be recognized as oriented to those conditions’.¹⁷ This ‘communicative ethos’ is made up of both ‘a series of structuring temporal arrangements’, such as the creation of schedules attuned to the perceived daily rhythms and yearly rituals of private and public life, and ‘a communicative style’ adapted to the perceived audience for particular times of day or genres of programming.¹⁸ While Scannell focuses

primarily on 'talk' and the verbal ways in which the viewer is addressed by the broadcaster,¹⁹ the junctions between programmes are also key to television's communicative ethos. The junctions act as the site where the broadcaster has the opportunity to communicate directly with the viewer, shaping the tone of address for a particular broadcaster and/or channel as well as communicating the structuring patterns of broadcasting to viewers.²⁰ As such, the junctions play a central role in constructing and explaining the value and experience of television to the public and to key decision-makers (such as regulators and politicians).²¹

While I have analysed the broader shifts in the function of the interstitials from the 1980s to the present day elsewhere, this largely focused on explaining the differences in the communicative ethos of UK and US television and the role of the junctions in the branding strategies of broadcasters. In this article I want to undertake a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the junctions, focusing less on branding and more on the role that they play in structuring, shaping and communicating the broadcast flow. If, as Williams argues, analysis of broadcast flow allows us to understand the characteristics of the experience of television viewing, then I want to suggest that focusing on the junctions allows us to identify the ways in which broadcasters have altered the communicative ethos of broadcasting in response to the new experiences of television in the digital era.

Borrowing from the methodology used by Williams in the 1970s, I want to focus here on two moments from the broadcast flow from one channel (BBC One), one from 14 February 1985 and one from 15 June 2010. Williams argues that this kind of detailed close-range analysis of the succession of words and images is necessary in order to see the real character of television flow. While this addresses Corner's criticism that academic uses of flow tend to pull towards the macro at the expense of the specific, it also runs the risk of taking one broadcaster as paradigmatic of broader change.²² Although I will be focusing on two specific examples they are drawn from a broader analysis of whole evenings of UK public service television taken at five-yearly intervals from the mid-1980s to 2010 and have been chosen as indicative of the broader communicative ethos in UK broadcast television.²³ However, comparison will be made throughout to research from other countries in order to broaden out the relevance of this analysis.

Thursday 14 February 1985, BBC One, 11.15pm (1 minute and 46 seconds):

- 1 *Question Time* studio with presenter, panellists and studio audience. Presenter mentions who will be on the next episode and when it will be broadcast. End credits and title music.

Catherine Johnson

- 2 Fade to black.
- 3 Fade up to still image: BBC One logo with the text *This Week Next Week* and close-up of David Dimbleby. Male voiceover describes the programme, ending with title, day, time and channel of broadcast (Sunday at 1pm on BBC One).
- 4 Fade to black.
- 5 Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1', brief burst of electronic score and upbeat male voice (used across 5 to 11 and different to 3) introducing the 'new look to Monday evening entertainment on BBC One'.
- 6 Chequerboard wipe to a short montage of Terry Wogan on the set of *Wogan* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (7pm). Brief description by the male voiceover with *Wogan's* title music behind.
- 7 Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in. Chequerboard wipe to clip from *Fame* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (7.40pm). Brief description by the male voiceover with *Fame's* title music behind.
- 8 Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in. Chequerboard wipe to clip from *Are You Being Served?* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (8.30pm). Brief introduction by the male voiceover with the title music behind before cut to a brief clip from the series.
- 9 Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in. Male voiceover mentions the news at 9pm.
- 10 Chequerboard wipe to clip from *Panorama* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (9.25pm). Description of the topic of investigation by male voiceover with the *Panorama* title music behind.
- 11 Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in as orchestral music fades up. The male voiceover states that the Monday film *Dirty Harry* will round off the evening as the screen wipes to reveal a graphic of the schedule for the evening with times and programmes. The male voiceover ends by proclaiming 'this is the new look for Monday evenings on BBC One'.
- 12 Fade to black.
- 13 Fade up to BBC One ident (rotating globe) with BBC One logo from 3 underneath. Male voiceover from 3 states 'now on BBC One the first of eight programmes on making rock music: *Rock School*'.
- 14 Cut to programme titles and theme tune.

As with Williams's analysis of flow on US and UK television in the mid-1970s, here we can see the characteristics of speed, variety and miscellaneity. A range of different genres is represented, from serious current affairs, to comedy,

to chat shows, alongside graphics related to the channel and programmes being broadcast, all within 1 minute and 46 seconds. Despite the variety of texts the organising feature of the flow is based on two elements: time and information. The junction exists to give us information about the temporal flow of broadcast television, telling us which programmes are on when. In doing so, the junction communicates the temporal as the major organising feature of television flow, exemplifying Mary Ann Doane's argument that 'The major category of television is time'.²⁴ Time, Doane argued, only exists because something happens and so television fills time by organising it around happenings or events. Writing in 1990, Doane claimed that television offered three different modes of apprehending these events, the most common of which was information – the daily stream of newsworthy events characterised by regularity or even predictability. As such, we can understand information and time to be inextricably linked in the communicative ethos of broadcast television and this is evident throughout this junction. Each element of the flow of the junction combines descriptions of *what* will be on with information about *when* it will be on: the still image promotes a programme that will be on at 1pm the following Sunday, the trailer indicates the temporal flow of Monday evening's broadcast ending with a still image of the schedule, and the continuity announcer concludes the junction by stating 'and now ...'. The junction, as well as filling the time between programmes, also communicates and illustrates to the viewer the *ways* in which television itself fills time. As Ytreberg argues in relation to Nordic television, the temporal flow of information supports a public service remit by constructing television viewing as a 'balanced diet' of demanding and entertaining content.²⁵



Figure 1 Graphic of the schedule for Monday nights on BBC One, 14 February 1985

The emphasis on temporality is reinforced by the direct address of the continuity announcer so that this interstitial serves as a reminder or insistence of television's presence, both at the moment of broadcast and (in terms of the trailers for forthcoming programmes) in the future. Indeed, Van Den Bulck and Enli argue that across Europe continuity announcers ensured the semblance of broadcast flow and stressed the 'here and now' of television.²⁶ Even on the UK public service commercial channels, where the adverts could be understood as an interruption, the structure of the junctions functioned to integrate them into the informational flow by inserting them into the middle of the junction, surrounded by promotion and continuity. In this way the viewer was encouraged to experience the adverts as a continuation of the promotional texts within the junctions.²⁷

These junctions, then, communicate to the viewer a conception of broadcast television as a medium that exists, and can be experienced, as a continuous flow, demonstrating the 'always on' way in which television fills time. The emphasis here on the continuity of broadcast flow is perhaps unsurprising given that 'continuity' is an industry term used to describe the announcers and texts that emerge within the junctions. By 2010 the interstitials on BBC One had changed significantly, according more with another industry term used for the work of the junctions – 'presentation'.

Tuesday 15 June 2010, BBC One, 9pm (2 minutes 20 seconds):

- 1 End credits for *Holby City* with theme music over.
- 2 The theme music fades down and the *Holby* credits are squeezed to a box in the bottom centre of the screen against a red background. In sequence, three boxes fade up above the *Holby* credits, each described by a male voiceover; the first a red box with 'Next *Crimewatch*' and the BBC One logo, the second a turquoise box with 'Now *Tribal Wives*' and the BBC Two logo, and the third a black box with 'Now *Rude Britannia*' and the BBC Four logo. The *Holby* credits then zoom out to fill the screen as the theme music fades up and the credits come to an end.
- 3 Cut to the image of a man's shadow with the BBC One logo bottom centre. An instrumental version of the Kaiser Chief's *Underdog* plays as the sequence rapidly cuts between a number of different images: an anxious couple sitting next to a pool of water, Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) smiling, a man shouting 'anybody' in a dark corridor, a woman's face in close-up turning and pulling the hair from over her ears, and so on, as snippets of dialogue are cut together. As the music continues we cut to a series of montages of a number of different dramas (*The Silence*, *The Deep* and *Sherlock*) each signalled by a graphic of the programme's title

- in the top left hand corner. We then cut to a final montage of a woman looking through a car window and two people walking through a dark corridor as the voice of Watson (Martin Freeman) asks, 'What are we dealing with?' Fade to black and then fade up to a close-up of Holmes exclaiming 'Something new'. Wipe to a red background with the BBC One logo in the centre with the text 'New Drama Coming Soon' underneath.
- 4 Cut to a blue screen as a graphic 'World of Wonder. Science on the BBC' slowly zooms towards the camera. Lines and circles grow out of the title graphics as a hypnotic electronic score cuts in. Cut between a slow pan away from a woman's face describing a scientist watching oil travel through a maze, and close-ups of a gold globule travelling through a clear perspex maze. Bottom left is the BBC Radio 4 logo. The sequence ends as the globule travels out of the maze across the text 'the best stories are real' and turns into the BBC Radio 4 logo as the programme title (*Material World*) and time of broadcast (every Thursday at 4.30pm) fade up to its right with the BBC Radio 4 URL underneath. A female voiceover states 'Science on BBC Radio 4' and gives the programme title and time of broadcast.
 - 5 Cut to a close-up of a woman blowing a kiss to the camera. Over a montage of different female opera singers a female voiceover exclaims, 'BBC Two invites you to meet the greatest sopranos in the world'. The montage continues, intercutting short excerpts of interviews explaining what makes a great soprano with the female voiceover describing the programme, ending by providing the programme title (*What Makes a Great Soprano?*) and time of broadcast (Saturday 9pm). Cut to a black screen with a graphic of the season title (Opera on the BBC), the programme title and time of broadcast, a URL for the season and the BBC Two logo.
 - 6 Cut to a long shot of a lighthouse in the middle of the sea as a helicopter flies into shot with an electronic musical refrain under. Cut to a series of close-ups of the helicopter ending on an overhead shot as the helicopter comes to land on a circular heliport at the top of the lighthouse. The BBC One logo fades up centre screen as a red line traces the circle of the heliport. A male voiceover briefly describes the next programme, ending 'now on BBC One, *Crimewatch*'.
 - 7 Cut to *Crimewatch* opening titles.

If the junction from 1985 emphasised temporality as the key experience of television flow, this junction from 2010 presents the experience of watching television spatially as well as temporally. This is perhaps most apparent in the change to the BBC One ident. The simple graphic representation of the spinning globe has been replaced by a series of idents that depict the

channel as a space of magical transformation where the familiar world distorts and is unified through the visual symbol of the circle; from the heliport transformed into a circle, to a forest scene in which branches bend to create a circle circumvented by fairies, or an underwater shot of hippos swimming in a synchronised circle. Although the extent to which channel design has been prioritised in European broadcasting varies, this is not unique to BBC One or public service broadcasting and can be seen in the idents for the UK commercial broadcaster Sky One and the commercial Italian digital channel La7.²⁸ Ytreberg notes a similar shift in Nordic broadcasting where there has been a ‘turn from scheduling for continuity towards designing environments’ as competition has increased the need for the construction of a distinctive brand environment for television channels.²⁹



Figure 2 BBC One's heliport ident

The spatialisation of the experience of television viewing is also apparent in the replacement of still images providing information about the trailed programmes with what is referred to in the industry as an ‘end credit squeeze’. This functions to visually represent the parallel journeys that the viewer could take to watch television programmes across different channels or platforms, and has become a common feature of broadcast television in the digital era.³⁰ The rhetorical address to embarking on a journey is also apparent (albeit more implicitly) within the trailers that invite the viewer ‘to meet the greatest soprano in the world’ or offer to transport the viewer to a ‘World of Wonder’. The temporal is not absent here, but increasingly the experience of television is being framed through a set of spatial, as well as temporal, metaphors. The emphasis on television's perpetual presence remains, but it is a presence that is now articulated more overtly in both space and time.



Figure 3 BBC One's use of an 'end credit squeeze' from 15 June 2010

Daniel Chamberlain has noted that digital television has heralded the rise of new screen interfaces that act as intermediaries between individuals and content, such as the menus associated with electronic programme guides, personal video recorders, online databases like YouTube and portable media devices.³¹ While Chamberlain argues that these new screen interfaces offer personalisation and control as a challenge to the liveness and flow of broadcast television, across this junction an attempt is made to create a sense of control through an explicit address to viewer agency. The end credit squeeze, for example, displays an array of choices to the viewer and invites them to decide where and what to view next. Meanwhile, the voiceover for the opera trailer appeals to agency in 'inviting' the viewer to meet the greatest sopranos in the world. This is quite different to the junction from 1985 which did not include any explicit address to viewer agency. Although it offered a menu of choice in the guise of the Monday evening schedule, this was presented as a linear sequential experience rather than as a list of alternative options. If the junctions are concerned with communicating the experience of television viewing, then in 2010 part of the value and pleasure of television presented here is agency and choice, albeit choice specifically limited to BBC brands.

There is something paradoxical at work in this appeal to viewer control within a sequential flow created by broadcasters. The flow of broadcasting has particular ideological importance to the BBC, and BBC One in particular, because of the significance of the mixed programme schedule to public service broadcasting. Much of the ideal behind the mixed programme schedule – that it might help viewers to encounter programmes that they would not usually encounter – is undermined in the digital era's focus on the values of individual choice. The junction, taken as a whole, has the potential to act as a microcosm

of the mixed programme schedule, offering choice while simultaneously acting as an invitation to try something new. The junction in 1985 presented the mixed programme schedule in a linear form, demonstrating the way in which one evening of viewing could include a chat show, US musical drama series, comedy, current affairs programme, Hollywood film and news. In 2010 there are trailers for a range of media (television and radio) and programmes (drama, documentary, science, opera), across a number of channels and services, all presented to us after a soap opera. As such, while there is an emphasis here on agency and choice, there remains an appeal to the values of the mixed programme schedule. Indeed, arguably the range and variety of programmes trailed in 2010 is broader than in 1985.³²

The appeal to viewer agency also has to be balanced against the need for the junctions to capture and retain viewer attention. In 1985 this was most evident in the inclusion of a trailer for the current affairs show *This Week Next Week* immediately after a programme within the same genre, *Question Time*. Generically linking the trailer to the programme that preceded it and trailing a sequence of programmes together as a whole evening both function to retain viewer interest by linking apparently disparate elements into a coherent whole, reinforced through the consistent use of the same voiceover. The voiceover both unifies and humanises the channel, addressing the viewer as a representative of the broadcaster itself and contributing to the construction of an identity and personality for the channel. In line with Scannell's analysis of broadcasting's communicative ethos and Van Den Bulck and Enli's analysis of Flemish and Norwegian in-vision continuity announcers, the voiceover is polite but also 'relaxed, natural and spontaneous', creating a sociable and accessible experience.³³ By 2010, the strategies to capture and retain viewer attention have changed. This is perhaps most evident in the end credit squeeze where the attempt to retain viewer engagement has blurred into the programme itself. However, it is also evident in the increased televisuality of the junctions.³⁴ The BBC drama trailer, for example, overtly draws attention to the sophistication of its editing in both the use of music and the intercutting between and within each drama. The trailer corresponds with Lisa Kernan's observation that the selection and combination of images in US movie trailers function to 'privilege the spectator's attention over sustaining narrative coherence'.³⁵ The trailer invites us to see links between these different dramas without offering any clear story and playfully encourages us to guess which images come from which programme. However, beyond this it also functions to construct an aura of complexity and sophistication around BBC drama in general. This is a far cry from the BBC One Monday night trailer in 1985, where a single clip or still image was used to illustrate each programme, clearly separated by graphics. As Caldwell argues of televisuality more broadly, the texts within



Figure 4 BBC One's drama trailer from 15 June 2010

the 2010 junction invite attentive viewing in a way that was not so evident in the junction from the mid-1980s. Indeed, the lack of voice-over in the BBC drama trailer demands that it be watched. The interstitials in 2010 need to be more entertaining because they can be more easily avoided. As Charlie Mawer (Executive Creative Director, Red Bee Media) claims of his work creating idents and trailers: 'our job is to reach them [audiences] in different ways and to be more engaging when they are watching so that they don't flick'.³⁶

These two elements point to two potentially divergent aspects of the interstitial; that it is both communicating something about the experience of watching television while also attempting to persuade or control the behaviour of viewers. While Lisa Kernan notes that US film trailers are explicit in their promotional intent and actively work to keep the viewer aware of the promotional message, UK television junctions attempt to obscure their purpose or provenance as promotional texts.³⁷ If in 1985 the promotional purpose of the junction was obscured through 'continuity' or an emphasis on informing the viewer, in 2010 it is obscured through 'presentation' or attempts to construct these promotional texts as pieces of entertainment in themselves. This differs from Van Den Bulck and Enli's analysis of continuity in Flemish and Norwegian television, which they argue has become more overtly promotional, particularly in the increased presence of cross-promotions for sister television channels and radio stations.³⁸

These two junctions, therefore, illustrate a number of changes in the communicative ethos of UK broadcast television from 1985 to 2010. As the sites for television viewing have increased, the experience of television is communicated through spatial, as well as temporal, metaphors. With the development of new interfaces that offer audiences control over their

viewing experience, there is an increased appeal towards agency as part of the pleasures of television viewing, albeit limited to BBC brands. And with more calls on viewer attention, the junctions themselves are constructed not just as informational texts, but as pieces of entertainment in their own right. However, while the junctions have altered in response to the challenges of the digital era, flow remains a fundamental element of broadcast television. Indeed, it could be argued that the movement of promotional texts into the ends of programmes heightens the experience of flow by further reducing clear distinctions between programme and interstitial. This is also apparent on commercial channels, where advertisers are adopting new strategies to respond to the ease with which viewers can avoid advertising. For example, in 2009 Max Factor produced three 90 second adverts shown over consecutive junctions featuring a competition winner being given a makeover, effectively aping the episodic structure of serialised television narratives in an attempt to encourage viewers to watch through the ad breaks. This is not to argue, however, that adverts, trailers and interstitials are not experienced as interruptions, as Williams concedes.³⁹ But it is to argue (as Williams does) that to see these texts only as interruptions is to fail to recognise and explore the ways in which broadcasting is planned and experienced as a flow.

The extent to which these changes are characteristic of broadcast television beyond the UK is difficult to judge, given the methodological difficulties of gaining access to archive records of broadcast television junctions. As I have argued elsewhere, the communicative ethos of US broadcast television is quite different from the UK, prioritising the maintenance of viewer attention over channel design.⁴⁰ Yet as in the UK, these strategies only serve to further blur the distinction between programme and interstitial. The primary studies of European continuity tend to focus on the north of the continent and reveal many of the same changes as in the UK, particularly the increased emphasis on environment design in channel branding and cross-promotion in response to commercial competition since the 1980s.⁴¹ Certainly more detailed research is needed if we are to understand more fully the ways in which the junctions shape the experience of television viewing beyond the UK context.

The need for such detailed research becomes even more important when considering the continuities and similarities between the television junctions from 1985 and 2010. These reveal a surprising consistency in the way in which broadcast flow is structured and organised. While the number and type of texts within the junctions have changed, the overall structure is largely the same. At the end of each programme information is given about forthcoming programmes by a continuity announcer, accompanied by a graphic. This is followed by trailers before ending with an ident as the continuity announcer returns to introduce the next programme. And this structure is broadly

consistent across all channels in the UK. There is an emphasis here on repetition which exists not just in the consistency of this structure over time (and the way in which it is repeated for each junction) but also in the repetition of trailers and idents across an evening and over the subsequent days, weeks and even (in the case of idents) years of television viewing. Roger Silverstone argued that television functions as a transitional object providing ontological security by being constantly available, invulnerable and dependable. He pointed to 'the place of television in the invisible and hidden ordering of everyday life; in its spatial and temporal patterns, as a contributor to our security'.⁴² Similarly, Scannell argues that in their dailiness radio and television 'help to constitute the meaningful background of everyday existence which they themselves have foregrounded'.⁴³ Although the centrality of television to the experience of everyday life is threatened (but not, as yet, undermined) by the emergence of new forms of media, the interstitials act as potential reassurance of television's invulnerability. The continuities and similarities in the structure and organisation of the interstitials over the past twenty-five years make the experience of UK television familiar and predictable, reminding the audience that television is constantly available both spatially and temporally.

Such continuities are apparent not only in the junctions between programmes in linear broadcast television but also in the new interfaces for on-demand television. William Uricchio argues that 'we have seen a shift in the form of the viewer-television interface – particularly in the notion of flow – that has slowly transformed from being centred on programming to active audience to adaptive agent' as our experience of television is increasingly shaped by automated recommendation services based on metadata and algorithms.⁴⁴ However, in practice these developments are cumulative, rather than sequential. For example, in the redesign of its on-demand service iPlayer, the BBC is placing particular emphasis on the way in which the content is 'curated' in order to 'recreate the environment for serendipitous discovery'.⁴⁵ These 'new junctions' for the digital era draw on the skills of media planning, scheduling and channel curation developed for linear broadcast television. While other broadcasters may rely more on the automated recommendation technologies highlighted by Uricchio, it is important for the BBC to retain curatorial control, not only to prevent poor automated recommendations but also to support the values of public service broadcasting.⁴⁶ The example of the BBC, however, does point to the ways in which competing paradigms of flow continue to co-exist. Here flow is *simultaneously* programmed by broadcasters, controllable by viewers and shaped by metadata and filtering technologies. These new junctions continue to communicate television as a medium that is 'always on'. While the flow here may demand more viewer interaction (I need to decide and select a programme to move through the flow) in many ways this

call to agency is simply an extension of the rhetorical work of the broadcast junctions in presenting choice and control as key pleasures in television viewing.

It is clear, therefore, that Williams's theorisation of flow, formed as it was in an era of linear broadcasting, cannot fully account for the contemporary experiences of television in the digital era. At the same time, however, we cannot argue that linear flow is no longer a significant aspect of the experience of broadcast television or that Williams's notion of flow has no relevance to understanding the contemporary television landscape. Indeed, we need to be as attuned to the continuities and similarities as the differences in flow from the broadcast to digital era if we are to truly understand the new experiences of watching television.⁴⁷

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1975; London: Routledge, 1990), 87.
- 2 Will Brooker, 'Living on *Dawson's Creek*: Teen Viewers, Cultural Convergence and Television Overflow', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 4 (December 2001); Jason Mittell, 'TiVoing Childhood: Time Shifting a Generation's Concept of Television', in *Flow TV: Television in the Age of Media Convergence*, ed. Michael Kackman, Marnie Binfield, Matthew Thomas Payne, Allison Perlman, and Bryan Sebok (New York: Routledge, 2011); and James Bennett, 'Introduction: Television as Digital Media', in *Television as Digital Media*, ed. James Bennett and Niki Strange (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2001). It is notable that both Brooker and Mittell draw on the experiences of younger generations (children and teens). While this may evidence a generational shift, equally it may evidence the different needs of younger audiences.
- 3 Kathleen F. Oswald and Jeremy Packer, 'Flow and Mobile Media: Broadcast Fixity to Digital Fluidity', in *Communication Matters: Materialist Approaches to Media, Mobility and Networks*, ed. Jeremy Packer and Stephen B. Crofts Wiley (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 279–80.
- 4 Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media and Daily Life* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 176.
- 5 Research from Eurodata suggests that linear television viewing is increasing across the world ('One TV Year in the World: 2012 or the Multiple TV Experience', Eurodata, 21 March 2013, <http://www.mediametrie.com/eurodatatv/communiques/one-tv-year-in-the-world-2012-or-the-multiple-tv-experience.php?id=831> (accessed 29 March 2013)). Meanwhile reports from Ofcom and Nielsen about UK and US television viewing respectively indicate that linear broadcasting is still the primary way of watching television (Ofcom, 'C. PSB viewing: Reporting BARB Data on PSB Viewing', *Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2012*, June 2012. Nielsen, *The Cross-Platform Report*, Q4, 2011, <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2012/the-cross-platform-report-q4-2011.html> (accessed 25 June 2013)).
- 6 Max Dawson, 'Television Between Analog and Digital', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 38, no. 2 (2010): 98.
- 7 Julie Light, 'Television Channel Identity: The Role of Channels in the Delivery of Public Service Television in Britain, 1996–2002' (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2004). John

- Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000); Espen Ytreberg, 'Continuity in Environments: The Evolution of Basic Practices and Dilemmas in Nordic Television Scheduling', *European Journal of Communication* 17, no. 3 (2002): 283–304.
- 8 Susan Tyler Eastman, Jeffrey Neal-Lunsford and Karen E. Riggs, 'Coping with Grazing: Prime-time Strategies for Accelerated Program Transitions', *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 39, no. 1 (1995): 91–109; Susan Tyler Eastman, Gregory D. Newton, Karen E. Riggs and Jeffrey Neal-Lunsford, 'Accelerating the Flow: A Transition Effect in Programming Theory?', *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 41, no. 2 (1997): 265–83; Catherine Johnson, *Branding Television* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); and Hilde Van Den Bulck and Gunn Sara Enli, 'Bye Bye "Hello Ladies?" In-Vision Announcers as Continuity Technique in a European Postlinear Television Landscape: The Case of Flanders and Norway', *Television and New Media* (17 October 2012), <http://tvn.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/10/15/1527476412462143.abstract> (accessed 25 June 2013).
- 9 Williams, *Television*, 90.
- 10 Williams, *Television*, 90. Paddy Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life', *Media, Culture and Society* 11, no. 2 (April 1989): 149.
- 11 Idents are the sounds and graphics that broadcasters use to distinguish their channels on air.
- 12 Williams, *Television*, 90. Under pressure from commercial broadcasters the 'toddlers' truce', in which no television was broadcast between 6pm and 7pm, was abandoned in 1957 and both the BBC and ITV had to compete more directly for the attention of viewers.
- 13 Williams, *Television*, 93.
- 14 William Uricchio, 'Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow', in *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 170. Uricchio perhaps underplays here the significance that Williams places on broadcasters' desire to prevent viewers from switching over to the competition in the development of flow in the first place. In this sense, the battle between the programmers' and the viewers' control over flow identified by Uricchio is inherent in Williams's original formulation.
- 15 Ytreberg ('Continuity', 286–7) demonstrates that these changes are not unique to the US and UK, noting that the rise of multichannel television across Europe over the 1980s and 1990s made the junction points in the schedules more important.
- 16 Williams, *Television*, 94.
- 17 Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting', 149.
- 18 Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting', 152.
- 19 See Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
- 20 Van Den Bulck and Enli ('Bye Bye') make similar arguments about the role of continuity announcers in European television.
- 21 Johnson, *Branding*, 138.
- 22 John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 23 For the contemporary period, examples have also been taken from commercial non-public service television channels.
- 24 Mary Ann Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (London: BFI, 1990), 222.
- 25 Ytreberg, 'Continuity', 291.
- 26 Van Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye', 3–4.
- 27 This does point to one of the key differences between European and US television. The latter does not have the same tradition of using continuity announcers and, as Williams's memorable description of watching US television attests, it is common to cut straight into

Catherine Johnson

- ad breaks without any surrounding promotion or continuity. See Williams, *Television*, 91–2 and Johnson, *Branding*, 130–7.
- 28 Again, US television differs significantly, with short graphic channel logos largely featuring briefly at the end of programme trailers. See Johnson, *Branding*, 132–3.
- 29 Ytreberg, 'Continuity', 299.
- 30 The end credit squeeze is a controversial strategy within the UK and not used by all broadcasters. Van Den Bulck and Enli ('Bye Bye', 13) note the use of the end credit squeeze in Norwegian commercial television and it is a common feature of US television in the digital era.
- 31 Daniel Chamberlain, 'Scripted Spaces: Television Interfaces and the Non-places of Asynchronous Entertainment', in *Television*, ed. Bennett and Strange.
- 32 This is a feature that distinguishes the junctions of public service broadcasters from non-public service broadcasters. For public service broadcasters media planning has to balance ratings with public service values. Ytreberg ('Continuity') and Johnson (*Branding*) both claim that this makes the junctions particularly important for public service broadcasters.
- 33 Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting', 152; Van Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye', 4–5.
- 34 John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
- 35 Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), 7.
- 36 Interview with the author, 21 May 2010.
- 37 Kernan, *Attractions*.
- 38 Van Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye', 12–3.
- 39 Williams, *Television*, 93.
- 40 Johnson, *Branding*, 137–9.
- 41 Van Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye'; Ytreberg, 'Continuity'.
- 42 Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 19.
- 43 Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, 177.
- 44 Uricchio, 'Next Generation', 180.
- 45 Victoria Jaye, Head of IPTV and TV Online Content, BBC Vision, interview with the author, 2 July 2012.
- 46 Jaye gives the example of an automated algorithmic recommendation service suggesting *Terminator* after the family drama *Merlin* because both featured 'monster' in their metadata.
- 47 This article stems from research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

TV Times: Archive, Mood, Media

Ben Highmore

Abstract: Today, television is spreading centrifugally: it no longer requires a broadcasting schedule nor the furniture traditionally associated with it (the 'box' in the corner of the front room). In this age of 'Television-after-TV' one phenomenon that is particularly important is the increasing access and ease of access to the televisual past. This article investigates (sometimes in a speculative manner) how these changes are forming and transforming popular historical consciousness: the ordinary sense that we have of living at a particular moment that is connected with and disconnected from what came before.

*

In this essay I address the contemporary historical nature of television, and by extension the historical experience (or a crucial part of that experience) of a television-viewing subject. I am specifically interested in the nature of historical experience and historical consciousness within a mediascape where 'television' (to use what might be an increasingly vague term) has multiplied, migrated, and is exerting an extensive but elusive hold on the popular historical imagination. Rather than be lured by the seductions of the End-of-Television I want to recognise the longer history of television as a dynamic form that has always extended beyond what was recognisable as broadcast TV.¹ By calling YouTube and computer games, as well as DVDs and online streaming, televisual, I want to make a polemic point about the *longue durée* of discontinuity and continuity of the televisual as a dynamic cultural form.

In addressing popular historical consciousness I'm less concerned with historical content than with the way TV provides a temporal landscape made up of 'nows' and 'thens' that we can use to measure and locate ourselves as historical subjects. My initial sense is that 'now-ness' must have altered to some degree in an era when many of us regularly access breaking news on our mobile phones, but also frequently watch old sitcoms on a television or television-equivalent and scour the internet for half-remembered kids' shows and *Top of the Pops* performances. Doesn't this mean the past will act on the future and the present in a different way now than it did, say, forty years ago when television in Britain was made up of only three channels and shut down for the night around midnight? There is an old pun that proclaims in mournful tones: 'nostalgia just isn't what it used to be'. Perhaps today we need to think this through more seriously: perhaps the work of nostalgia is taking

new directions and casting new phenomenal experiences into the centre of television's actuality.²

Of course, to attempt to tackle the nature of temporal experience and its historical modes in today's mediascape is far too ambitious for a short essay. Instead I want to point to three aspects of television that could begin to clarify something of the way that Television-after-TV, to cite a phrase,³ might impact on the condition of possibility for popular memory and for the presence of the historical within the 'now' of contemporary media. The first is the way that television uses television (news reports, old programmes and formats, advertising, and so on) to show and to tell the past. Television's use of television to conjure the historicity of the past (the past's peculiar mode of being in the present) is, I want to suggest, a crucial characteristic of its current cultural form. The second is the way an expanded condition of television (one that includes on-demand services and YouTube, for instance) has altered the archival condition of TV, making it as much a repository of memory-forms as a transmitter of 'live' broadcasts. Indeed, if we follow the logic of various media (or medium) theorists, then TV's storage capacities (accessible in ways that were still undreamt a little more than a decade ago) would be its primary condition. My final concern is to suggest how this condition could inform the way that nostalgia and its various moods is figured as a deep structure of television. My working understanding of nostalgia is that it constitutes an affective barb that accompanies our commerce with the past: the moods of loss and longing it generates are politically and culturally varied. To explore this, I end up briefly considering the television series *Life on Mars* (BBC 2006–07). Crucially, this drama, which time-travels its audience back to 1973, figures a 1973 that is primarily fabricated out of television's past, rather than out of a social and economic past. Its nostalgic mode is as much about a loss of, and longing for, the present, as it is about a mourning for a past characterised by 'muscular' policing, routine sexism, racism and homophobia. In its time travel form it is a 1973 nostalgia for a future that is the viewer's present.

It turns out that 1973 is also the year that Raymond Williams wrote his book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*.⁴ It is in Miami in 1973 where Williams, still 'dazed from a week on an Atlantic liner', starts watching a movie on TV, only to get so confused by the number of commercial interruptions, as well as trailers for two films to be broadcast later in the week, that he can't any longer make out what is proper to the crime movie he thinks he is watching. He recognises that he hasn't watched a movie, but has experienced 'a single irresponsible flow of images and feelings'.⁵ 'Flow', in this particular instance, is the ceaseless rendering of juxtaposed temporal and geographical realms: 'a crime scene in San Francisco', 'deodorant and cereal commercials', 'a romance in Paris' and 'the eruption of a prehistoric monster who laid waste New York'.⁶

What is rendered in this Miami hotel room is the simultaneity (if we can talk of simultaneity for a time-based medium) of different times and places as a constant, immediate present. Williams was not trying to sell us a version of 'flow' that smoothed out the jumpy conflictual experience of TV, but a gestalt of TV where the ruptures, interruption, sudden jolts, as well as the smooth continuities, are a set of complex experiential characteristics.

What this does to the nature of historical experience is not Williams's most pressing concern, but this question is taken up a few years later by Susan Barrowclough and Raphael Samuel. Recognising that a large proportion of television's output has a temporal and historical dimension (from old movies and programmed repeats to the figuring of history in drama, popular social history, science programmes, and so on) Barrowclough and Samuel draw attention to the heterogeneity of TV's historical consciousness. Commenting on the range of temporal velocities that TV offers, they write:

In one register [TV] offers us a past that is completely static, a time when family was the backbone of society, when 'old-fashioned' virtues were unquestioned and everyone knew their place, an indeterminate past, a retrospective haven of stability to which we can escape from the disorders of the present. In another all is movement, discovery and innovation and we are whirled about in an exciting kaleidoscope of change. In a third the past is presented as a chamber of horrors, a sequence of catastrophic events – revolutions, depressions, violence and poverty – from which we can count ourselves fortunate to have escaped. In the same contradictory way the past and the present can be interchanged at the push of a button.⁷

This was the year before Channel 4 went on air, when the 'push of a button' was still limited to a choice of three options (four if we take account of, as we should do, the 'on-off' button).

Writing a year before YouTube was created, Bill Schwarz takes up some of these themes to push the point that television's 'media time' impinges constitutionally on the experience of 'historical time' in ways that 'scramble' it, but that are not 'indeterminate' or 'outside historical time'. Alert to the sensitivities of Fernand Braudel's conception of the multiple durations of historical time (roughly put: event-time, social-time and the *longue durée* of geo-time⁸) Schwarz invites critical scholars to be concerned with television's multiple figurings of temporality in relationship to other forms of rendering historical time; to be attuned to a world where television is recognised as a 'critical constituent of our temporal world'.⁹ It is to such an invitation that this essay is a provisional reply.

Television's Historicity

In the last decade or two it has become fairly common to see dramas with a period setting of the recent past signal pastness, not just through scenic details ('vintage' cars, wallpaper and the like), but via a television referent. For instance, both *Our Friends in the North* (BBC 1996) and *White Heat* (BBC 2012), which both start out by picturing the mid-1960s, show us people watching the variety programme *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (BBC 1958–78). Historical distance is performed by showing something that seems not simply outmoded (singers and dancers performing 'blackface' music hall) but also offensive to present-day sensibilities.¹⁰ This is television using television to generate historicity. Temporal distance – the extent to which the 'past is a foreign country: they do things differently there', so to cite¹¹ – is now (on television at least) as much about the diction of presenters, the production values of dramas and the landscape of media permissibility (what counts as good and bad taste; allowable and disallowable language and images; etc.) as it is about haircuts, manners and transport options. Or at least the mediated and the remembered, the televised and the experienced, are now inextricably entangled.

This sense of historicity – of television as a contemporary form that pictures even the most recent past as fundamentally distant – has perhaps been a constant aspect of television's operations. Speaking in 1986, Williams could describe a long-running drama from the 1970s (*Upstairs, Downstairs*, BBC 1971–75) that showed the lives of rich and well-connected Edwardians and their lowly servants, as inviting people to watch 'not in order to say that this is a past which connects with our present, but almost inevitably in the manner of some of the presentations, that this is a past which doesn't connect with our present – "Oh, gosh, what clothes we wore then!" and that sort of thing'.¹² The fact that *Upstairs, Downstairs* was revived as a new show in 2010 gets me nearer to the phenomenal world of TV that I want to think about, a world that constantly generates multiple temporalities. By reviving *Upstairs, Downstairs*, should we connect this programme's historicity to the Edwardian period (its most obvious referent) or see it as (simultaneously) referring to the 1970s and a much-loved TV show? Of course, this will depend on the viewer's own historical consciousness and whether or not the 1970s version of the programme is part of their televisual memory. Alternatively the 'original' show and its rehash are both available, for a price, to buy as DVDs or, for free, in fragmented form on YouTube.

To offer a sense of the 1960s by picturing for us a vision of the televisual world as constituted by families watching blackface minstrelsy is not to clarify history but to submerge it within what Ernst Bloch called 'non-synchronous simultaneity': the sense that the contemporary is made up of non-synchronous

times.¹³ Bloch's interest in the way that the non-synchronous (*die [Un-]gleichzeitigkeit*) constituted contemporaneity was directed at an analysis of the growth of National Socialism in Germany and the way that the atavistic and the futuristic could be lived simultaneously. *The Black and White Minstrel Show* was 'of' the 1960s and 1970s inasmuch as it was a nostalgic representation for a form of 'variety' that had a historical dimension, though not represented as historical in the same way as *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Any analysis of television's temporal phenomenology would want to be attentive to the multiple figuring of nostalgia as something fundamental to the historical consciousness (and unconsciousness) of TV. To figure historical distance by referring to *The Black and White Minstrel Show* is to show us a nostalgia that is no longer available. If this too has a nostalgic tone, then it is one that is doubly coded as nostalgia: we are placed as nostalgic for a form of nostalgia that has now passed.¹⁴

The transformation and double-coding of nostalgia might well account for the durability of some of its forms. Take, for example, a BBC TV show I remember from my childhood: *The Good Old Days*, which ran for thirty years from 1953. Its launch coincides with the establishment of television in Britain as truly a mass-medium; its end is marked by the birth of Channel 4 and the increasing deregulation of British TV and the renegeing of TV's Reithian heritage. If viewers in the 1950s were invited to feel the warm glow of nostalgia for the music hall (the show was filmed at Leeds City Variety in front of a live audience dressed, like the acts they were watching, in Victorian and Edwardian clothing), then by the 1980s, nostalgia is multiplied inasmuch as viewers were watching a 1950s format referring to the entertainments of the 1880s. To add to the complications, by the 1980s the nostalgic coding is also filtered through the generational differences of the audience, some of whom might be watching for the first time, others who had watched the show since the 1950s.

Nostalgia as a mode and mood can be found in the content of many television dramas: the endless supply of costume dramas that often transform social realism into affirmative nostalgia; the 'best of' shows that trawl through the archives to show us why 'we love the 1970s' or what the best sitcoms of all time were. But nostalgia might also account for some of the formal arrangements of television that we are witnessing today: for instance, the raft of channels now dedicated to nothing but reruns; Yesterday, Watch, Comedy Central, Dave, and so on. Dave employs a pun to designate its one-hour delayed channel: Dave Ja Vu. Of course for all these channels and for much of the schedules elsewhere, *it is all déjà vu*. What does such relentless replaying of programmes do to popular memory? Does the present-ness of TV eradicate the sense of past-ness to reruns of *Dad's Army* (BBC 1968–77)? Or does it offer a complex of time that embroils a sense of the early 1940s (when the

Ben Highmore

show is set) with the 1970s (when the majority of the show was produced and first shown) with the current moment when the show is being rerun, re-watched or watched for the first time?

The current 'archival' scene of television suggests that John Ellis' understanding that old television programmes discourage nostalgia would need some adjusting. Ellis usefully points at the fact that often our sentimental desire for the programmes of our youth jars with the actuality of the programmes and their out-dated production values. Where we might go in search of deeply affective resonance, we find instead wobbly studio sets and poor presenting skills. Instead, what old television does give us, according to Ellis, is 'an unexpectedly vivid insight into what it felt like to be alive in a particular moment'.¹⁵ TV times move fast, and in the intervening years between Ellis' book (2007) and now (2013) we can see that it is precisely the wobbly sets and poor presenting skills (the forms rather than the content) that are often the object of nostalgic desire.

The 'scrambling' of historical time by television isn't all backward facing; or rather television's historical consciousness is not only concerned with a historical past that is over, but with the future of the present as historical testimony. This is to say that television's historical consciousness isn't only concerned with the production of hindsight and recollection, but is also anticipatory. The production of the present and the future as inevitable and unavoidable rather than as contingent and ideological is the labour of turning history into nature.¹⁶ Nowhere has this been done more successfully than in rendering the late 1970s as a scene of endless strikes and power cuts to be followed by the seemingly unavoidable dismantling of union power under Thatcherism.¹⁷ No televisual account of the late 1970s in Britain is possible (or imaginable) in our present that doesn't picture trade unions as endless picket lines and streets strewn with piles of rubbish, followed by Margaret Thatcher becoming Prime Minister as some sort of inevitable redress. And this is because television in the late 1970s was producing such images as historical documentation of the present for the future. The idea that, according to the New Economics Foundation, the mid to late 1970s was a period of relative contentment and prosperity, amounts to little when the televisual iconography of contentment and prosperity is missing.¹⁸ Barrowclough and Samuel write that, 'another problem that the use of these [filmic, televisual] "traces" of the past raises is the often unbalanced importance they are given in relation to the absent traces'.¹⁹ If television is, to a large extent, the receptacle of popular and collective memory, then it can only remember what has been recorded as memorable in the first place. In the television era what counts as historical evidence is filmic evidence. This emphasis has shifted the dominant practices of rendering pre-television history: instead of making-do with the evidence

that exists (manuscripts, illustrations, and so on) television now routinely enacts history as televisual event through the practice of what television production companies call 'living history'. Television historians now dress as eighteenth-century milkmaids and churn butter by hand: archaeologists now wear mediaeval garb as they forge the iron for wheel-rims.

This sense of television as temporal registration of the past, and of the present as something that will exist as the past for the future, has become a characteristic of television as it has become an organ, even *the* organ, of record. In the first decades of television most of what was broadcast was treated as ephemera and subsequently disposed of: as it became a historical form, broadcasting was archived. Now, however, we have entered a period where this characteristic needs to be seen as its central operational activity. And the conditions for recognising it as such lead some to see the present state of the media landscape as post-televisual – as if the massive distribution and dissemination of television, and the rendering of most time-based visual media (from movies to amateur video) as televisual, amounts to its demise. Nowhere is this clearer than in the form of on-demand services, new channels dedicated to showing re-runs and the presence of YouTube. The recognition of TV as a distributed archive is crucial for recognising its condition as temporal (un)consciousness.

Television as Historical Archive

In that endless game of distinguishing which features separate humankind from its animal kin, various pleas have been made for language and for tools as characterising the difference that makes the human a 'special' kind of animal. Humankind, though, turns out not to be the only tool-user around; and language in various senses is hardly confined to human language. Perhaps philosophy might have more luck by claiming that human beings are characteristically archival animals. This, at any rate, might be the logical position if we follow media-technology theorists such as Vilém Flusser and Bernard Stiegler. For Flusser, 'the transfer of acquired information from one generation to another is an essential aspect of human communication, a general characteristic of humankind: man is an animal that has discovered certain tricks for the purpose of storing acquired information'.²⁰ We might immediately think of national archives, population databases, museums and libraries, but we could now also think of something like YouTube as the most insistent storage situation of television. Flusser's understanding of storage-communication is informed by cybernetics, and the activity of archiving communication is seen as fundamentally unnatural, deeply human and existentially crucial. If cybernetics

Ben Highmore

relies on the fundamental principle of entropy (the natural condition of all life, and the promise of its end), then storing and sorting communications is a fruitless negentropic (negatively entropic) activity, brought about as much by an existential fear of death as it is by any species benefit.

Be that as it may, the storage of information and communication in both documents and tools can also be seen as a fundamental exteriorisation of human memory. This is particularly true in the case of machine-tools and technologies: nothing remembers how to cut things quite as well as a knife. For Stiegler, tool forms are not just useful items that perform a function, they are the externalisation of the memory of their function for a collectivity of tool-users and the generations of tool-users that follow them (unconsciously communicating memory across generations so that we don't have to). But for Stiegler the current situation of massive externalisation of cultural memory into storage machines ironically brings with it an amnesia for human users that produces powerlessness:

It is clear that the exteriorization of memory, and the resulting loss of memory and knowledge that Socrates describes in the *Phaedrus*, is experienced today in our daily lives, in all the aspects of our existence, and more and more often, in our feeling of powerlessness, if not impotence. And it is experienced, remarkably, at the exact moment when the extraordinary mnesic power of digital networks makes us all the more attuned to the immensity of human memory, which seems to have become infinitely reactivatable and accessible.²¹

Stiegler's words can be seen as a synoptic abstraction of what many of the key critical writers around cultural memory debates have been suggesting for the last twenty years. For writers like Andreas Huyssen, the energy that has gone into archiving and displaying the past hasn't so much contributed to historical understanding as established the foundations for a 'culture of amnesia'.²² In this sense, the archive isn't a source of wisdom because it is a growing repository for understanding: rather it is a repository given over to repetitions, to incoherent jumps of thought, to random raids of bits of the past. The archive, then, suffers from a form of dementia: it is lost to itself, unthreaded and without overarching narrative form.

Some of the most repeated stories around modern television connect it to repetition. Writing in 1990, in the 'prologue' as the editor to an important collection of essays about television, Patricia Mellencamp could look back on her 1950s childhood and remember that 'after the Monday night broadcast of *I Love Lucy* [CBS 1951–60], with "Hound Dog" blaring from the radio, I drove to McDonald's, then a new teenage drive-in'. 'Today' she can 'watch Lucy

cavort daily at 10.30 in the morning' and 'watch my bootlegged tape of Elvis's 50s TV stints'.²³ Mellencamp's media consumption is made possible by cheap videotape technologies and the economic benefits for television networks of endlessly recycling old TV. *I Love Lucy* becomes a synecdoche for television's propensity for repetition.

In the same volume, Meaghan Morris retells the joke about *I Love Lucy* in the film *Crocodile Dundee*.²⁴ Mick 'Crocodile' Dundee has been taken from the wild outback of Australia to intensely urbanised and sophisticated Manhattan. The journalist who 'found' him, Sue Charlton, thinks she can impress Mick with his hotel's modern luxuries, particularly the television. Mick is unimpressed: he tells her, 'It's OK, I've seen it before'. For Sue, this is a clear indication of Mick's backwardness: silly man, she thinks, TV isn't a one hit deal, a novelty item to experience and move on; it's a habit, a world, a companion. Sue turns on the TV and we see Lucille Ball in *I Love Lucy*. 'Yep', says Mick, 'that's what I've seen'. Today, that joke might require swapping *I Love Lucy* for something like *Friends*. But the joke still stands for the moment at least.

What seems like a realm of excessive choice (hundreds of channels, 24-hour availability and endless access to old TV) is also experienced as a dearth of possibilities, a constant recycling of programmes and formats. The nostalgia for a certain kind of nostalgia is also a nostalgia for a lost innocence when the endless repeatability of television was not yet finally realised. Nostalgia is a mood that saturates television and feeds on its repetitive pathology, a pathology caused in part by the exponential rise in forms of delivery and distribution and the concomitant decrease in material production. As television expands in relation to platforms, so it contracts in the diversity of its textual forms, witness the enormous resources that go into the production of formats and series. We live in a time where the one-off drama or the completed drama mini-series is a rarity: it is much more likely that you are in series 7, episode 8 of *Breaking Bad* or *Shameless*.

Most of the time nostalgia is the precondition of television's scrutiny of the past – its sentimental mood. But sometimes it is also the object of its scrutiny. Such a case could be made for *Life on Mars* – a series that explored the nostalgic potential of old TV not just as a comfortingly sentimental affect, but also as an uncanny charge that contradictorily seems to work as an alibi for the present at the same time as rendering the present as precarious.

'It's 1973, Almost Dinner Time and I'm Having Hoops': Television's Nostalgic Moods

Life on Mars takes its title from the David Bowie song that got to number three in the pop charts in 1973 (from the 1971 album *Hunky Dory*). The series is steeped in popular cultural references from pop music, fashion and popular technology, but its most insistent reference is to 1970s television. The narrative concerns a present-day (2006) police officer (Sam Tyler, played by John Simm) who is hit by a car while investigating a particularly violent murderer. When Tyler regains consciousness he finds himself on a piece of waste-ground surrounded by decaying industrial buildings. We are in Manchester (a billboard shows us that this will be the place where they will build a flyover: Manchester's 'highway in the sky'). We start to realise we are no longer in the present day. Tyler's clothes have changed: gone is the designer suit to be replaced by brown flared trousers, leather jacket, Chelsea-boots, and so on. Just before he was hit by the car Tyler was listening to the song 'Life on Mars' on an iPod played through the car's stereo; when he 'awakes' the sound is emanating from an eight-track cartridge player (a forerunner to the cassette tape player).

Life on Mars is, I think, both symptom and diagnosis of the archival conditions of television. In many respects it is unusual in its complex time-travelling form, and its use of old television clips doesn't follow the way that they are mostly used on TV (as a sort of 'reality effect'). Yet *Life on Mars* plays out some of the key aspects of our present cultural moment where television's past is also *our* past in a way that is fundamental and difficult, that we are struggling and puzzling to deal with.

There isn't the space here to do more than point to some of the ingredients of how it figures 1973 in its relation to 2006.²⁵ In the first episode, we see Tyler trying to get to grips with his new historical context. To start with, he sees it as a hugely elaborate joke organised by colleagues. To his new police colleagues Tyler asks sarcastically, 'OK surprise me, what year is it supposed to be?' His question is answered by Detective Chief Inspector Gene Hunt who, after punching Tyler a couple of times, says, 'It's 1973, almost dinner time and I'm having hoops'. The reference is to a once popular and much-advertised food item – tinned spaghetti hoops in tomato sauce, usually served on toast. The work of historical distance is performed for a knowing viewer who might well have enjoyed a childhood of tinned spaghetti hoops: for the more aspirational Tyler tinned spaghetti is clearly 'now' (in 2006) a culinary anathema. In class terms, 1973 Manchester is presented as a haven of male working-class 'structures of feeling': a large industrial workforce and a vibrant leisure culture built around the ubiquitous pub.

Tyler is seen struggling with what is happening to him: 'I was four in 1973' he bemoans, 'I had an accident and I woke up 33 years in the past. Now that either makes me err, a time-traveller, or a lunatic or, I'm lying in a hospital bed in 2006 and none of this is real'. Right from the first episode we are made to understand that the most logical explanation for what we are witnessing is a protracted set of dream sequences that neatly follow the genre of the TV cop show in its 1970s guise. The narrative we are following, then, is from within Tyler's unconscious. If dream material is classically made up of the 'day's residue' and past memories, then the residues and memories of *Life on Mars* are primarily televisual. This sense that a person's unconscious might be inhabited by television and other popular culture forms is crucial to *Life on Mars*, and is signalled from the beginning with the choice of the titular song which includes the lyrics: 'But the film is a sadd'ning bore, for she's lived it ten times or more'. A film might have been watched a number of times, but here there is a much more constitutional understanding of media as lived experience, as constituting our experience not just of the present but also of the past. Such a figuring of popular memory as the televisual unconscious requires TV to be recognised as a storage media in the way that Flusser and Stiegler suggest: it is collective memory externalised; it is constitutional of our intimate sense of lived temporality; and it is operationally amnesic (what is not contained as televisual trace evaporates).

The past that Tyler conjures up is 'close' to his own present (he is still working in the same police station as he 'was' in 2006) but this only increases its historical distance. Of course Tyler is a fictional detective in 2006 so when he 'goes back' to 1973 it makes sense that he returns to the genre's earlier incarnations. The televisual world of 1973 in *Life on Mars* most closely resembles the world of *The Sweeney* (Thames Television 1975–78); a tough, macho-cop show that shifted the genre away from the more comforting images of police life shown in dramas such as *Z-Cars* (BBC 1962–78). In the 1970s, *The Sweeney* was praised and criticised for its purported realism: with *Life on Mars* tragedy is replayed as farce and we recognise the no-nonsense 'gov' (Gene Hunt) as a quotation of genre types (for instance the John Thaw character – Jack Regan – in *The Sweeney*). Television not only provides the temporal substance of *Life on Mars*, it also provides the conduit to Tyler's present: in his bedsit he watches TV, often falling asleep, and awakes to witness his doctors talking to him and about him in the guise of TV presenters (an Open University lecturer, for instance) or children's television characters (mainly from the late 1960s – *Camberwick Green*, *Trumpton*, and so on). Just like the unconscious, TV plays fast-and-loose with any strict sense of temporal sequencing.

There are moments of critical tension in this elongated flashback format: for instance, in the third episode of the first series, where Tyler and Hunt

Ben Highmore

investigate a stabbing in a textile mill, Tyler realises he is in the building where he lives in 2006 – a trendy ‘loft’ development in Manchester’s former industrial sector. Issues around gentrification and class, immigration and colonialism, sexuality and gender are all tackled in classical liberal discursive ways: sympathy is produced for those victimised by the processes being shown, but no explanatory framework is offered that could narrativise their causes. The programme works by inserting the sensibilities of 2006 into the world (the media world as much as the ‘real’ world) of 1973 and watches as they rub against each other, demonstrating failings and hubris within both temporalities. The comfort for liberals is to show how far progressive identity politics and anti-corruption has taken us: we are thrown into a world where institutionalised sexism and homophobia are taken for granted; where racism is glaringly banal; and where corruption and violence are the foundations of the police force. But for those conservatives who think that the liberal-rot set in somewhere in the 1960s and who think that feminism was the cause of all sorts of destructive impulses, there is also lots to be nostalgic about: not least the figure of Gene Hunt (played by Philip Glenister), the ‘hard-nosed’ DCI, for whom women are ‘birds’, beating up suspects a daily occurrence and for whom villains are villains who deserve to be locked up, whether the evidence is there or not.

Life on Mars, rather than being about the past (as such), shows us the future being written through the use of TV times. Can’t we see the alibi for a more ruthless capitalism and a more deregulated and brutal policing to accompany it, inscribed, not in the picturing of 1973 as an archive of children’s TV programmes or adult cop shows, but in the rendering of the early twenty-first century (as embodied by Sam Tyler) as obsessed with the rules of political correctness and health and safety? Nostalgia is always about the uses of the past for the present and the future: to see the early twenty-first century as a bureaucratic sensibility, where ‘common sense’ has been stymied and undermined by ‘political correctness’ and ‘health and safety’ (both ‘gone mad’ as the media reflex might have it) is to see a future as already more barbaric. *Life on Mars* might occasionally figure this as a warning, but it also performs it as a promise.

But this is to read it as a loving hymn to 1970s revivalism. Seen as a more complex figuring of TV times it confronts the comforts of its main narrative conventions (borrowed loosely from 1970s cop shows) with the more televisual-actuality of clips of 1970s TV (Open University TV, *Trumpton*, the test-card, and so on) which are rendered not as comforting but as deeply uncanny conduits of time. It is these frightening (for Tyler and for us) sequences that secure Tyler in the past, even though it is through them that we get to the present that is never simply ‘present’. If this TV is Tyler’s unconscious (and this is the

most plausible reading) then Tyler is overcome by reminiscence (a pathological condition, a cultural melancholic neurotically repeating the past). He, and perhaps we, are haunted by old TV, by endless TV clips showing rubbish piling up in the streets in 1978, or a teary old Margaret Thatcher leaving Downing Street in 1990. Here *his* nostalgia isn't for the past but for the present which he can't access and which is given a new precariousness. This loosens the present from its inevitability but refuses to replace it with something else (there is no utopian promise here).

As an allegory of life in an era of Television-after-TV, *Life on Mars* figures us as melancholics endlessly repeating narrative forms inherited from the past. If there is hope here it comes not from the comforts of nostalgia in its sentimental mood, but in its uncanny ability to make the present more precarious (other futures, so to say, are also available). Is it possible to imagine a cultural politics that could capitalise on the uncanny potential within TV's archival condition, to shake the present loose from its teleological moorings? And how would such a politics inoculate itself against the repetitious drive of its cultural pathology? *Life on Mars* doesn't show us how to do this but it does figure something of the phenomenal problem we are facing.

Notes

- 1 My comic of choice in the late 1960s was *TV Comic* where favourite TV shows were rendered as strip cartoons.
- 2 There is large literature on nostalgia. I have found the following particularly useful: Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, 'The Modalities of Nostalgia', *Current Sociology* 54, no. 6 (2006): 919–41; and Susannah Radstone, *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).
- 3 Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (eds), *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
- 4 The book was first published in 1974 and all the analyses of programming and television 'flow' are from March and June 1973.
- 5 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1990), 92.
- 6 Williams, 91–2. For a recent reworking of 'flow' see William Uricchio, 'Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow', in Spigel and Olsson, 163–82.
- 7 Susan Barrowclough and Raphael Samuel, 'History and Television: Editorial Introduction', *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981): 174–5.
- 8 See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* [1946], trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
- 9 Bill Schwarz, 'Media Times/Historical Times', *Screen* 45, no. 2 (2004): 93–105, 105.
- 10 For a history of 'blackface' entertainment in Britain see Michael Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Ben Highmore

- 11 This is the opening sentence of L.P. Hartley's 1953 novel *The Go-Between*. It also features as the title of a book on the uses of the historicised past: David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- 12 Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, 'An Interview with Raymond Williams', in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3–17, 6.
- 13 Ernst Bloch, 'Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics' [1932], trans. Mark Ritter, *New German Critique* 11 (1977): 22–38. Bloch developed this idea in his extraordinary 1935 book *Heritage of our Time*, trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).
- 14 This double coding is akin to that experienced with kitsch, whereby we are sentimental at one remove. See Celeste Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999).
- 15 John Ellis, *TV FAQ: Uncommon Answers to Common Questions about TV* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 164.
- 16 This is, for Barthes, the 'very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature'. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Granada, 1973), 129.
- 17 The best account of this period as a form of media production is given in James Thomas, "'Bound in by History": The Winter of Discontent in British Politics, 1979–2004', *Media, Culture and Society* 29, no. 2 (2007): 263–83.
- 18 Thomas, "'Bound in by History'", 263. And of course we 'know' that the 1980s were *more* prosperous because we all know the televisual images of yuppies, of young city traders with their huge mobile phones and expensive lifestyles.
- 19 Barrowclough and Samuel, 'History and Television', 174.
- 20 Vilém Flusser, 'What is Communication?' [1973–74], in *Writings*, trans. Erik Eisel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2002), 5.
- 21 Bernard Stiegler, 'Memory', in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ed. William J. Thomas Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 64–87, 69.
- 22 Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- 23 Patricia Mellencamp, 'Prologue', in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 1–13, 1.
- 24 Meaghan Morris, 'Banality in Cultural Studies', in *Logics of Television*, ed. Mellencamp, 14–43.
- 25 For a more strenuous analysis see Jon Garland and Charlotte Bilby, "'What Next, Dwarves?": Images of Police Culture in *Life on Mars*', *Crime Media Culture* 7, no. 2 (2011): 115–32; and in relation to other programmes featuring temporal displacement, see Paul Booth, 'Memories, Temporalities, Fictions: Temporal Displacement in Contemporary Television', *Television and New Media* 12, no. 4, (2011): 370–88.

‘An Ugly Phrase for an Unprecedented Condition’: Mobile Privatisation, 1974–83¹

Stephen Groening

Abstract: This article traces the concept of mobile privatisation, first introduced in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, through Williams’s other works, proposing that it is best understood as part of Williams’s project of a sociology of culture. Focused mainly on the term ‘mobile’, it goes on to demonstrate an incongruity between how the term is used today to designate portable and individualised media technologies and how Williams used the term in his work. The prospects of mobile privatisation depend on acknowledging Williams’s method and political stance. Accounting for both necessitates recognising that mobile privatisation is a critique of contemporary consumer capitalism and the role of technology within it.

*

Introduction

There has probably been no book more influential in the field of television studies than Raymond Williams’s *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (hereafter *Television*). Every year scores of undergraduate students are introduced to the concepts taken to be central and original to the book: flow and mobile privatisation. Because flow is a quality that can be read from television texts as well as programme guides and other institutional practices, the concept is closely associated with television and is the more influential of the two within television studies. Mobile privatisation, on the other hand, is often taken to be merely descriptive, with little analytic or theoretical purchase. A common approach to mobile privatisation pursues its implications for conceiving the intersection of communication technologies and the domestic sphere. Thus, the narrative leading to mobile privatisation begins in the 1920s, with the radio and a series of other technological innovations that emphasised the private home emerging alongside the separation of the workplace from the home and increased mobility of labour and goods. Broadcast technologies were part of these contradictory tensions between greater individual mobility and an increased importance placed on privacy and the single-family home. The association of television with ‘an at-once mobile and home-centred way of living’ seems like a statement of fact, a mundane and banal point.² Because so many of us live our lives in this manner, we can merely state that ‘this is so’,

and move on. Alternatively, mobile privatisation is offered up as an argument against technological determinism. Broadcasting, whether radio or television, is shown, via mobile privatisation, to be an 'incentive and response' to 'a general social transformation'.³ Radio and television allow their users access to the world outside the home without leaving it. As Williams put it, 'broadcasting in its applied form was a social product of this distinctive tendency'.⁴

I would argue that mobile privatisation lies closer to what Williams called the sociology of culture. Rather than a term applicable to a particular media form and particular media practices, mobile privatisation denotes 'a unique modern condition'.⁵ As such, it is technologically disloyal, and implicates a wide range of practices, devices, institutions and cultural forms. While we might historically mark off mobile privatisation as emergent with the telegraph and the radio, becoming dominant with the postwar establishment of television as a domestic communicative medium, this type of linkage between communicative technology and mobile privatisation is too linear – it ignores the fashion in which these technologies reached different locales at different times and were adopted in different ways by different groups of people – and too restrictive, in that it essentially ignores the place of the automobile (not normally considered a communication technology) in Williams's own working out of the concept over the decade following the publication of *Television*.

In the space of ten years, from 1974 to 1983, Williams used the concept of mobile privatisation as a way of understanding the rise of consumerist domestic culture, in an analysis of nationalism and its place in globalisation, and in a speech warning of the rise and tactics of a Thatcherite right wing.⁶ Such a range of deployments may seem unusual for a concept primarily associated with television, and yet the power and persuasiveness of the concept can be found precisely in this versatility and the fashion in which the concept itself constitutes and structures cultural analysis. In what follows, I propose that the concept of mobile privatisation has a renewed salience in contemporary societies marked by attachment to portable digital devices (epitomised by the mobile phone), but that analyses of the cultural significance of these devices under the rubric of mobile privatisation need to engage the full extent of Williams's use of the term, moving beyond the readily available observation that these devices encourage a semblance of mobility and a particular type of privacy.

In this essay, I trace a series of connections between television, the automobile and the mobile phone to help illuminate paths mobile privatisation can lead us down. I begin by analysing the term 'mobile media', which I contend is ideologically loaded in a way that makes it incongruent to the way Williams employs the word 'mobile' in mobile privatisation. I then argue that the emphasis on the single-family home (often imagined as a suburban

house), while certainly crucial to arguments in *Television*, has the consequence of blinding scholars to the crucial role of transportation technologies in the ‘general social transformation’ under analysis.⁷ I argue that television studies (and media studies more generally) need to move towards understanding communication and transportation together, as obverse modes, in order to better grasp the cultural, social and economic shifts of the recent past. Finally I conclude by calling attention to the political intention of mobile privatisation and its relationship to Williams’s concerns with bonding and common culture.

Mobility

In the past decade or so, the phrase ‘mobile media’ has come to mean those digital devices carried on the person. Such a designation conflates mobile and portable, but so-called mobile media have other implied characteristics beyond portability that are of import here. Commonly, these are individualised devices which allow for their users to create privatised sensory experiences, often through the use of headphones (although even when an earpiece is used during a mobile phone conversation, the private nature of the sensory experience spills out towards strangers, resulting in half-overheard conversations). Despite the designs towards individualisation and privacy, during use, the view-screens of many of these devices are visible to others beside their owners. This is mainly due to their hand-held nature, stemming from the particular definition of portability that requires operability even while the user is mobile, and also a result of a legacy of user interfaces favouring manual manipulation of buttons and switches (a pair of virtual reality goggles would provide stimuli in a more closed fashion). Also key to the category is the amount of user control over available content. This new category implicitly does not refer to devices that receive broadcast content, like transistor radios or battery-operated portable television sets, both of which could be construed as ‘mobile media’. The common usage of this term designates devices that compel their users to ‘pull’ content from digital networks and servers (including their own computers). This creates a curatorial aspect to these devices, so that their users can customise and personalise available content. However, this curation always takes place under the conditions of forced choices: the content needs to be legally available in digital form and compatible with the device, and so it is likely to be part of commercially produced mass culture and indistinguishable from content available via broadcast.

Given the above description, it is fairly clear how the category of ‘mobile media’ becomes problematic and amorphous. First, it is a designation borrowed from the consumer electronics industry, content providers and

the entertainment industry. Therefore, before we even enter into a critique, we are relying on vocabulary and frameworks provided by corporate and commercial interests. It is an appellation that overlaps with notions of privacy and individualism by excluding devices that do not require the kind of care and nurturing that customising a playlist or downloading software entail. Yet the designation 'mobile media' brackets off the potentially negative connotations of terms such as 'atomised', 'alone', or 'separate', that could be applied to the social consequences of these devices. Thus the term connotes freedom through movement, deliberately avoiding the predicament that such a freedom is an individualised freedom, delimited and controlled by others (the very corporate interests mentioned above), and also depends on the unfreedom of others (the workers involved in the manufacture of such devices most clearly). Second, portable and personal media devices have pre-existed the digital. The Sony Walkman is a clear antecedent of the smartphone and the tablet computer.⁸ Portable cassette and CD players do not require downloading of digital content, but rather require the user to engage in a much more tactile and physical use of media, by inserting, flipping and sometimes even rattling cartridges of magnetic tape or polishing micro-grooved plastic discs to get them to function. Third, the circumscription of mobile to mean only that which is carried or worn on the human body excludes a host of media technologies that were made to be portable and mobile. Examples of early mobile film technology range from suitcase-style 16mm projectors, mobile cinema vans used by the British Film Unit in Africa, the cinema trains of the Soviet Union and, even earlier, itinerant film exhibitors such as Lyman H. Howe.⁹ As I have pointed out elsewhere, the installation of television sets in aeroplanes and automobiles, as well as television's convergence with the mobile phone, renders a once predominantly domestic and stationary technology mobile.¹⁰ Lynn Spigel's work on portable television sets of the 1960s, which I will discuss further below, also demonstrates the permeability of the 'mobile media' category.¹¹

The exposition of the ideological content of the designation 'mobile media' demonstrates how mobility and privatisation are already intertwined in these devices, even though the second term is never made explicit. But most germane to my argument is the fact that limiting mobile to that which is easily carried on the person (and, crucially for the commercial interests at hand, rarely leaves a person's possession), is simply not the way that Williams used mobile in any of his accounts of mobile privatisation. So while I argue that mobile privatisation remains the most powerful and productive way to understand so-called mobile media, I want to make clear the differences between Williams's use of the term mobile and the way in which it is often deployed in contemporary media scholarship. In *Television*, 'mobile' indicates a kind of virtual mobility, in which

the ‘social intake’ that broadcast television provides its viewers enables access to people, places and events outside the home. Broadcasting thus provides mobility between private and public, often experienced as virtual mobility between interior and exterior. Radio and television act as interfaces between the protective (and protected) domestic space and the dynamic, risky economic and political world. Similarly, the television is linked to a kind of social mobility, as it is indicative of rising standards of living (and, in another sense, encourages viewers to imagine themselves in situations other than their own, something which Williams did not explicitly connect to mobile privatisation in *Television*). By 1983, in both ‘Problems of the Coming Period’ and ‘The Culture of Nations’, Williams linked mobile privatisation to the automobile, connoting both physical mobility and the possibility of movement (motility). One of the consequences of the lack of recognition of the range of meanings Williams packed into ‘mobile’ is that we have its dismissal just at the moment when the term becomes most salient.

As an example, in Spigel’s essay on portable television she notes that in Williams’s account the television sets themselves are stationary in the home, and it is the people who are mobile. Portable television of the 1960s, she claims, dissolves the boundaries between exterior and interior (no longer is the outside brought into the home by the television, since the television can be brought outside) because the sets themselves are mobile. Thus, she reverses Williams’s phrase to privatised mobility, calling attention to the way in which postwar domestic spaces were imagined as literally mobile, as in the recreational vehicle (RV) or mobile home.¹² The first objection to this treatment of mobile privatisation would be that the automobile has already been included in Williams’s working out of the term. The second would be that Spigel’s term connotes a kind of totalisation that Williams always sought to avoid. The word ‘privatised’ here would seem to connote that privacy has actually been achieved, or at least that complete privacy is an achievable condition. Of course, the television set relies on the outside, public world for its content and functioning (via electricity and broadcast signals), so it is never fully private but actually a node in hybrid public/private infrastructural network; something also true for the automobile. Williams’s use of the word ‘privatisation’, on the other hand, calls attention to an ongoing process – a goal of ultimate and complete privacy that is constantly sought but never fully achieved. Third, while Spigel’s attempt to link portable television to automobile culture via the RV puts her on stronger ground when arguing that it is mobility that has become private (as opposed to public forms of conveyance like the railroad or streetcar), it is difficult to see how the RV privatises mobility as a practice when it too relies so heavily on the infrastructure of roads, filling stations and the like.¹³

Stephen Groening

My point is that mobile privatisation refers to a process in which the project of creating privacy is mobile and therefore travels from place to place as if colonising different spaces and times within lived experience, taking them away from the public and transforming them into spaces and times of *presumed* privacy. Mobile privatisation has no loyalty to place. One of the reasons that emergent forms of personal and portable media technologies have been adopted so widely so quickly is that they put mobile privatisation into practice easily and flexibly. While Williams connected mobile privatisation to the home and a particular form of domesticity, the domestic is a category of space, not a place. In fact, the allure of mobile privatisation is that it can create the semblance of the domestic anywhere. That is, the television set in the home brings a football match into the home just as much as it brings the home to a football match. Similarly, the automobile, the mobile phone and even the Walkman allow their users to produce a semblance of domesticity wherever they are. Control over sensory stimulation, from sounds to sights to temperature, and the ability to choose entertainments, as well as the capability to connect to friends and family via these technologies, have the effect of producing a form of domesticity that emulates the home (even if it does not fully realise it). Mobile privatisation is a process of transforming places which previously had their own histories, meanings and significance into quasi-domestic space. This series of flexible and mobile transformations, which create a continuum of sensory experience from the home through the traversed space, suggests a relationship between communication and transportation.

Transport

Too often, electronic media are considered substitutes for actual travel, rather than a reason to get moving. I would argue that portable electronic media serve as inducements for physical mobility. I do not mean such things as travel shows on television or airline reservation software on a mobile phone. Rather, I am thinking of how media devices already presume physical movement and encourage it by obviating some of the reasons to stay-in-place (loss of connections to friends and family, for instance). Owning a portable media device allows for mobility and also invites mobility, as a justification for ownership and as a reward for using the device. In other words, we need to consider communication and transportation technologies as working in concert, in order to better understand the movement of the private alluded to above.

In his narrative of social transformation that precedes the introduction of mobile privatisation in *Television*, Williams deliberately groups communication

and transportation technologies together as ‘incentives and responses within a phase of general social transformation’.¹⁴ The ‘general social transformation’ included urbanisation and population growth, which in turn necessitated more extensive and less personal political administration; and the introduction of industrial forms of labour, which required greater synchronisation of tasks, communication between producers, distributors and vendors and the ability to transport large numbers of workers from their dwellings to places of production. By the 1920s, the types of technology produced as ‘incentives and responses’ were designed for *individual* use (even if groups of people could also use them, a quality which distinguishes domestic television sets from many contemporary handheld devices). Together, the automobile, the radio receiver, the television set and other electric domestic devices ushered in a new form of living, allowing a certain limited kind of mobility that was dependent on the infrastructure of roads, radio broadcast towers and the electrical network.¹⁵ At the same time, they encouraged a limited form of privacy: their owners and users could retreat into the home, which continues to be envisaged as a self-sufficient space of safety and security even today. This set of technological responses provides the means for physical mobility in the form of individualised and private travel as well as individualised and private retreat accompanied by virtual mobility. Thus what we have as a set of ‘incentives and responses’ are forms of transport.

I use the term transport to denote both physical movement as well as emotional and sensory movement. From this perspective, all media technologies ‘move’ us; the implication being that media are constitutive of mobility, they do not simply enable or serve mobility. Moreover, the term transport indicates a configuration of techniques and technologies. Mobility can often connote a kind of self-sufficiency, one can be mobile – perhaps only in a limited fashion – without the assistance of an object. Transport, however, is not so ambiguous in regards to agency. Transport is only possible with the aid of technology. And it is in this way that transport can be used to indicate the conjunction of seemingly disparate technological forms in social and cultural life. Arguably mobile privatisation is both the inspiration for and an important component in this approach to media, since mobile privatisation is emblematised by a confluence of communication and transportation technologies.

That Williams does not limit his account of mobile privatisation to communications technology but extends it to include transportation technology has already been recognised.¹⁶ My point here is that treating the automobile as an instance of an inward-dwelling but outward-looking lifestyle different from television is to approach the trap of ‘privatised mobility’, in which the physical movement of the automobile is taken as a categorical distinction from the home, thereby placing the automobile outside the purview of mobile

privatisation. This distinction breaks down if we think of television as just as much a technology of transporting as a technology of communicating, an approach to television that was certainly once more common.¹⁷ As Williams expounded in 'The Culture of Nations', mobile privatisation is also exemplified by 'a shell you can take with you', so it is surely not limited to any one type of built environment; house, flat, car, train, mall, office, aeroplane, pavement can all be sites of mobile privatisation.¹⁸ Crucially, mobile privatisation, while characterised by electronic technologies and the sites which house them, is a 'modern condition', not an effect of technology, architecture or infrastructure.¹⁹ Rather, mobile privatisation could be understood as the dominant form of subjectivity (if Williams ever used such a term) available to persons living in the technologically intensive spaces of consumer capitalism.

The commute takes on special importance here. The commute is part and parcel of the larger socioeconomic changes Williams indicates led up to the invention and institution of television: the increased distance between work and home and the increased reliance on public infrastructure for the continued illusion of self-sufficiency for each. The commute emblematises the new geography of urbanised industrial capitalism, crystallises the spatio-temporal contradictions of contemporary capitalism and calls attention to the fluid dynamics of the public/private divide. The word commute is normally used as a verb; according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, its origins as a noun are entirely American and date only to 1960. In its original usage, commute means to alter, transform, or substitute, and it was turned into a verb meaning to travel daily or regularly from home to work and back, like the shuttle of a loom, only at the start of the twentieth century. The evolution of the term from denoting exchange to denoting travel has a certain logic, since the commute is that period during which the commuter transforms from the domestic/familial person to the commercial/labouring person. This juxtaposition can be understood in private/public terms: the alteration is due in part to travelling from the private to the public sphere.

Indeed, it is during the commute that perhaps the most intensive projects of mobile privatisation can now be found. In 'The Culture of Nations', Williams invoked the contradictions of the automobile to illustrate the condition of mobile privatisation: 'looked at from right outside, the traffic flows and their regulation are clearly a social order of a determined kind, yet what is experienced inside them – in the conditioned atmosphere and internal music of this windowed shell – is movement, choice of direction, the pursuit of self-determined private purposes'.²⁰ In its simulation of the domestic space, through climate control, music system, seating arrangement and even, to a certain extent, the apparent control over routes, the automobile illustrates many of the same 'incentives and responses' Williams attributed to television.

'An Ugly Phrase for an Unprecedented Condition'

It is unfortunate that the analogy of television to the automobile is never carried out by Williams, but the 'movement, choice of direction, and pursuit of self-determined private purposes' could just as easily describe channel switching, not to mention time-shifting technologies, the current multitude of cable and satellite channels and the proliferation of screens displaying content that currently characterise television.

The past few decades have seen an intensification of these sorts of privatising technologies converging in both the domestic space and the automobile: satellite services such as OnStar in automobiles and DirectTV in the home, while the internet and wireless telephony have become integrated in the automobile via systems such as Ford's Sync and Chrysler's Uconnect and in the home via internet-capable television sets. These developments are significant in their own right, enmeshing drivers and viewers further in a web of communication signals permeating the atmosphere, while offering types of freedoms and mobilities exemplary of the contradictions of mobile privatisation. For the purposes of my argument, however, these devices are merely enforcing the mobile privatisation already present in these spaces. Developing alongside these technologies for the home and automobile is the introduction and widespread adoption of mobile privatisation in spaces and places that Williams excluded from mobile privatisation, the 'public technology, best exemplified by the railways'.²¹ This is where mobile media devices reenter the picture; and here I mean more than just those which rely on the internet for their content, and include portable personal cassette and CD players with headphones. The significance of these devices lies in their deployment within systems of public transportation, such as the railways, buses and even the pavements, thereby extending the process of privatisation into areas not overtly characterised by the 'shells' of the automobile.

The personal portable media device provides the semblance of the domestic space more than the magazine or the newspaper, because those media forms do not involve the senses in the same way that a screen attached to headphones does. Indeed, the combined practice of reading while listening to a Walkman demonstrates this nicely. In the home, reading is an activity that takes place under relatively controlled conditions. Reading on the bus or the train without a headset is closer to reading in a café or park, the sounds and smells are not as easily controlled as in the home. Following the work of Jonathan Sterne, we can posit that it is the headphones which provide the privatisation in this situation, and it is privatisation which is the sought-after condition; mobility is already structured and constrained by the commute.²² Travelling from the home to the workplace at more or less the same time and along the same route routinises travel and renders the journey mundane. Mobile media devices allow for the further division of these quasi-public spaces into small

spheres of privatised sensory experience, simulating the domestic space. The commute is an excellent example of the kind of 'very powerful and very ambivalent' quality of mobile privatisation Williams referred to in 'Problems of the Coming Period', in which the reward for submitting to the logics of capitalism (specifically the unremunerated period of the commute) is creating and choosing what you hear, see and, to some extent, where you go.²³ This is because the 'genuine kinds of freedom of choice and mobility' offered through transport in the broad sense depend on the separation of commuters from each other, so that everyone can make their own individual choices without being subject to the choices of others. With mobile privatisation, there is no need for discussion or agreement.

For Williams, this is due in part to the radical difference between external perception of the 'shell' of mobile privatisation and the internal experience of that 'shell'. Alluding to the automobile, he wrote that from the outside, the shells 'are not so much people, in any full sense, but other units which signal and are signalled to'.²⁴ But from inside the shell, the mobility, the choices, even the ability to connect to friends and loved ones, are experienced as almost idyllic, filled with romantic notions of freedom, unfettered control and power. This in turn leads to a kind of defensive posture from within the shell. If things go awry, 'mainly what is wrong, we usually conclude, is what all those other shells are doing'.²⁵ Mobile privatisation actively obscures understanding social relations as a system in which people are interdependent on one another. Williams went so far as to call the attitude within these shells 'hostile, in some cases understandably hostile, to anything from outside that was going on to interfere with this freely chosen mobility and consumption'.²⁶

If we think of mobile privatisation as a politically defensive attitude/posture rather than a politically neutral (but sociologically fascinating) inward-dwelling but outward-looking lifestyle, the significance and urgency of personal portable media devices becomes more evident. For the use of these devices in quasi-public spaces means that mobile privatisation has been carried outside the home (and the automobile), and become individualised, travelling with a single human body, rather than a 'shell' that could contain a group. The mobile phone is the paradigmatic example partly because it embodies the convergence of two-way communication device and one-way entertainment device. More importantly, the mobile phone gives its users the ability to regulate and control the reception of sights and sounds in a manner akin to television.

For Williams, mobile privatisation is the identity formation crucial to consumer culture: 'the international market receives its deep assent from this system of mobile-privatised social relations'.²⁷ In 'Problems of the Coming Period', he wrote that, 'it involves, in its immediate definition, a good deal of evident consumption'.²⁸ In 'The Culture of Nations' he argued that this new

identity of mobile privatisation is offered as the alternative to the identity of ‘the sovereign consumer’, which ‘raises a problem’, since ‘it is accepted only as describing that level of life: the bustling level of the supermarket. [...] The economic behaviour of the consumer is something you move out to, so as to bring the good things back’.²⁹ In *Television*, it would appear that Williams associates the emergence of mobile privatisation to the widespread use of the radio in the 1920s and 1930s. But this is the period which also saw the rise of advertising and marketing, which, combined with large-scale ‘serial’ production, formed the basis of consumer culture today.³⁰ Conspicuous consumption is crucial to Williams’s implementation of the term mobile privatisation and gives it much of its theoretical purchase. Conspicuous consumption is directly linked to both the status display associated with the ‘home-centred way of living’ and the defensive posture adopted from within it, as people jealously guard their status from any perceived threats.³¹ The mobile phone retains these attributes; possession of a mobile has become the standard-bearer of social belonging and social significance. The model of phone indicates a corresponding level of importance, job type and taste distinction. Like the automobile, the mobile phone is part of a biographical project. And I do not mean to indicate the stylish cases and baubles many attach to their mobile phones; in the subway system of Washington, DC, where I live, whether a rider possesses a Blackberry or an iPhone speaks volumes about her/his occupation and world-view.

Likewise, using these devices retains the qualities of unprecedented mobility. Listening to music on the bus or underground may not, at first thought, provide the same kind of mobility as watching the Eurovision Song Contest, and yet the attraction of putting on headphones and turning on music lies precisely in the experience of being *transported* out of the current predicament. Because the tedium of public transport is often experienced as a kind of frustration over not having control over one’s mobility, the mobile phone helps the bus, train or underground passenger achieve an approximation of what some have termed automobility.³² The headphones offer a special kind of protection as well: sequestering the user from other passengers and the vehicle itself as well as guarding other passengers from sounds they have not chosen. The headphones are a kind of sign that says ‘leave me alone’ or ‘don’t talk to me’ or ‘I’m ignoring you’. The regulation (on the Washington, DC subway at least) that music must be listened to through headphones presumes that no one wants to share and that each passenger has their own tastes; in short, it presumes un-community.

I do not mean to argue that personal portable media devices always and everywhere prevent social interaction or face-to-face interaction. Indeed, I regularly see undergraduate students addressing each other with headphones on. And often the possession of a mobile phone and headphones can be a

Stephen Groening

conversation starter ('What are you listening to?' 'Oh, you have that kind of phone?', etc.) I suspect a couple of factors at work here. First, many of these students grew up in a period when many other students use headphone-enabled devices constantly and so the only way to have conversation is through/despite them. Second, the classroom creates different forms of collegiality and camaraderie than the subway, so that the students see common bonds which override the technology. In the subway, however, the common bond of work is often misrecognised as competition and/or status distinction.

Community

The ability to retreat into a shell and to navigate through the world in this shell disguises social relations and encourages individuals to see themselves as cut-off, isolated and self-reliant. In this way, the technologies enabling mobile privatisation encompass a classic Marxist critique: that real, objective social relations are actively hidden. Mobile privatisation functions within the ideological project of capitalism, offering rewards in return for acquiescence to the status quo and their tacit agreement not to enter into an investigation of the social order. For Williams, mobile privatisation is a partial answer to the riddle of how social relations can be misrecognised and how collectivity can be so easily turned into competition via aspirational identities.

Taste, fashion, distinction are also ways that consumers are put into competition with one another. While generally treated within the field of cultural studies as principally involving identity formation and therefore adhering slightly to Enlightenment notions of the self (that the self can be made coherent or fashioned autonomically), this approach ignores that, within the structures of mass culture, many of the materials available for identity formation are products of administered culture, designed and marketed by small, elite groups and the result of massive market research and promotional campaigns.³³ Like the divisions created among workers, the schisms of 'hip', 'cool', 'hot', 'sexy' and so on discourage consumers from recognising their commonalities. This is quite often the neglected element of mobile privatisation, that the increased focus on the private home is just as much a form of *distinction* as it is a form of *isolation*. Such a focus underpins the so-called consumer economy which itself relies on the kinds of isolations Williams identifies in his discussions of radio, television and the automobile. In order for the latest trends in home decor, gardening, clothes and media devices to be successfully marketed, consumers must see themselves as independent units actively in pursuit of goals that can then be displayed and envied by others. This may seem like an odd formulation, since trends and fashions

depend on *widespread* adoption, but keep in mind that the physical structures which permeate our lived environment – the architecture of living – actively prevent collectivity. In this way, several families living in the same building can own the latest large-screen high-definition television set without each other’s knowledge, and each television set can be positioned within the living space in such a way to produce difference from (and presumed superiority to) other television sets. Once the television set is properly prepared, it can be displayed to friends, family, acquaintances and its distinctiveness appreciated and envied, despite the fact that it may be more or less the same as every other television set in the building.

It is no accident that in the *New Left Review* reprint of ‘Problems of the Coming Period’, the section in which Williams explicates mobile privatisation is titled ‘The Decline of Community and the Future of Socialism’.³⁴ Because mobile privatisation ‘is not living in a cut-off way’ and allows you to ‘move all the time in the society, choosing the places you’re going to’, it does not feel like a loss of community or an abandonment of society, since you can partake of all the sights and sounds offered by electronic media and the other products of a highly developed system of consumer capitalism.³⁵ Mobile privatisation looks very different from inside the shell than from outside the shell. But to a certain extent, seclusion is not the most severe problem of mobile privatisation. The deep problem is that the shell of mobile privatisation ‘is offered as a primary identity, as your real life’.³⁶ The ‘genuine kinds of freedom of choice and mobility’ are taken to be real, and whatever consequence that might have for those outside the shell (or for other shells) are taken to be less real, distractions, or obstructions in the path of the pursuit of one’s life. As Williams pointed out, the right has been very quick and quite adept at portraying any sort of political position that might acknowledge real social relations or depend on common feeling and mutual obligation as a threat to the shell. In this way, mobile privatisation functions as an inducement to withdraw from community in favour of ‘the pursuit of self-determined private purposes’.³⁷

Mobile privatisation provides a productive understanding of how the ideology of bourgeois individualism, with its attendant beliefs in autonomous creation of the self, coherent subjectivity and, moreover, competition between individuals as a virtue, is furthered and propagated by the technologies produced within such a system and the lifestyles which are advertised and promoted in concert with these technologies. This is a different argument than those currently in vogue regarding loneliness and the loss of community due to the proliferation of electronic media.³⁸ Too often, laments about the loss of community and the atomisation of society conclude ‘if only we talked to each other more, things would be better’, as if what is needed is a healthy dose of more face-to-face communication.³⁹ But as Williams argued

throughout his career, it is not the quantity or amount of communication that matters; what matters is how the exchange of culture is situated, structured and institutionalised.⁴⁰ In the preface to the 2003 Routledge edition of *Television*, Roger Silverstone pointed out that the importance of the final chapter of the book lies in how Williams argued these points forcefully in the face of imminent changes in television technology.⁴¹ In the advent of cable television systems, for instance, Williams saw potential for democratic communications but also the danger of large broadcasting companies using the language of representation, choice and freedom as a mask for escalating monopoly practices and commercialism, which works against democracy and community.⁴² Because mobile privatisation depends on the rhetoric of freedom of choice and freedom of mobility, it serves as an explanation for why so many would give up the bonds of community. As Williams has stated, 'place has been shown to be a crucial element in the bonding process [...] when capital has moved on, the importance of place is more clearly revealed'.⁴³ The appeal of 'an at-once mobile and home-centred way of living' could then be seen to lie in the way that what is offered in the shell and taken to be our real life mimics capital: free to move on, to conquer space and time, to alter any place to suit its needs and pursuits.⁴⁴ In this way, mobile privatisation is on the side of a space-time annihilating capitalism and against a place-loyal community of human relations; demonstrating the importance of considering transportation and communication technologies together.⁴⁵

Television studies missed the link between mobile privatisation and Williams's socialist politics. Mobile privatisation often seems a neutral statement of facts – readily observable phenomenon of media-saturation, technological conspicuous consumption and suburban living – as such, it is mere description, rather than a theoretical critique. But if one put Williams's treatment of television as medium alongside his treatment of newspapers in *The Long Revolution*, we come to a very different conclusion: that communication and community are always working in tandem, each essential to each other and each characterising the other. To make this clearer, I need to return to the problem of technological determinism, which is the context in which Williams first introduces mobile privatisation in *Television*. By treating technological innovation as embedded in social relations, rather than an autonomous sphere of discovery, Williams exposes the political problem of technology. Williams does not locate mobile privatisation in television, or radio, or the automobile, much less the mobile phone or the laptop. Certain innovations are *selected*, within social and economic relations, because of their perceived value to existing social relations; and these technologies, in their current form, support and encourage mobile privatisation.⁴⁶ In turn, they help to proliferate and promote mobile privatisation. Mobile privatisation is a set of ideas about

the world and about the individual’s place in society. It is put to work to justify (and apologise for) capitalism, partly because, as an aspirational identity, it can be offered as a reward for submitting to capitalism. As a dynamic formation in process, then, mobile privatisation is fluid; with distinct characteristics, to be sure, and the particularities of local instantiations continue to be of interest. Studying these instantiations without losing sight of Williams’s quest to ‘differ from technological determinism [and] restore *intention* to the process of research and development’ remains an urgent task.⁴⁷ Since technological innovations are ‘looked for and developed with certain purposes and practices already in mind’, if we want to affect technology, then we have to affect society, which requires taking a coherent political position.⁴⁸

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, ‘The Culture of Nations’, in *The Year 2000* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 188.
- 2 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974; London: Routledge, 2003), 19.
- 3 Williams, *Television*, 11.
- 4 Williams, *Television*, 20.
- 5 Williams, ‘The Culture of Nations’, 188.
- 6 Williams, *Television*; Williams, ‘The Culture of Nations’; Raymond Williams, ‘Problems of the Coming Period’, in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. R. Gable (1983; London: Verso, 1989), 161–74.
- 7 Williams, *Television*, 11.
- 8 Williams’s account of mobile privatisation from ‘The Culture of Nations’ is reprinted in the CCCS book on the Walkman: Paul Du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh McKay and Keith Negus (eds), *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 128–30.
- 9 Haidee Wasson, ‘Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!: 16mm and Cinema’s Domestication in the 1920s’, *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 1–21; Rosaleen Smyth, ‘The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939–1945’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 8, no. 3 (1988): 285–98; Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- 10 Stephen Groening, ‘Automobile TV, the Post-Nuclear Family, and SpongeBob SquarePants’, *Visual Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 148–53; ‘From “A Box in the Theater of the World” to “The World as Your Living Room”’: Cellular Phones, Television, and Mobile Privatization’, *New Media and Society* 12, no. 8 (2010): 1331–47; ‘Film in Air: Airspace, In-flight Entertainment, and Non-Theatrical Distribution’, *Velvet Light Trap* 62, no. 2 (2008): 4–14.
- 11 Lynn Spigel, ‘Portable TV: Studies in Domestic Space Travel’, in *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 60–105.
- 12 The phrase ‘privatised mobility’ is also used by Margaret Morse in an earlier essay, ‘The Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, The Mall, and Television’, in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 193–221.

Stephen Groening

- 13 Spigel, 'Portable TV', 60–105.
- 14 Williams, *Television*, 11.
- 15 Williams, *Television*, 19.
- 16 James Hay, 'Unaided Virtues: The (Neo-)Liberalization of the Domestic Sphere', *Television and New Media* 3, no. 1 (2000): 53–73; Shaun Moores, 'Television, Geography, and Mobile Privatization', *European Journal of Communication* 8, no. 3 (1993): 365–78; David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility, and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 149.
- 17 For early theorisations of television emphasising television as transportation and/or travel, see Rudolf Arnheim, 'A Forecast of Television (1935)', in *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 188–98 and Gunther Anders, 'The Phantom World of TV (1956)', in ed. B. Rosenberg and D.M. White, *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959), 358–67. In the United States, advertisements for television sets also used travel as a theme, perhaps most famously in DuMont's 1944 'Armchair Columbus' ad.
- 18 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 188.
- 19 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 188.
- 20 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 188.
- 21 Williams, *Television*, 19.
- 22 Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
- 23 Williams, 'Problems', 171.
- 24 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 188.
- 25 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 189.
- 26 Williams, 'Problems', 172.
- 27 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 189.
- 28 Williams, 'Problems', 171.
- 29 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 188.
- 30 Williams, *Television*, 17.
- 31 Williams, *Television*, 17.
- 32 John Urry, 'The "System" of Automobility', *Theory, Culture, and Society* 21, nos 4–5 (2004): 25–39.
- 33 See, for example, Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 365–6; Williams, 'Communications and Community'; and Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System', in *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays* (1980, London: Verso, 2005), 170–95.
- 34 Raymond Williams, 'Problems of the Coming Period', *New Left Review* 140 (1983): 7–18. The version included in *Resources of Hope* lacks the subheadings.
- 35 Williams, 'Problems', 171.
- 36 Williams, 'Problems', 171.
- 37 Williams, 'Culture of Nations', 188.
- 38 I am thinking here of Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001) and Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).
- 39 This prevailing notion that the values of community are inherently better and under threat is deftly refuted by Williams's essay 'The Importance of Community', in *Resources of Hope*, 111–9.
- 40 Probably the most succinct summary of his arguments occurs in the essay 'Communications and Community', in *Resources of Hope*, 19–31.
- 41 Roger Silverstone, 'Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition', *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 2003), xi–xii.
- 42 Williams, *Television*, 146–7.

‘An Ugly Phrase for an Unprecedented Condition’

- 43 Williams, ‘Decentralism and the Politics of Place’, *Resources of Hope*, 242.
- 44 Williams, *Television*, 19.
- 45 Williams, ‘Culture of Nations’, 189.
- 46 Williams, *Television*, 7.
- 47 Williams, *Television*, 7.
- 48 Williams, *Television*, 7.

Mobile Privatisation and the Neoliberal Self

Jim McGuigan

Abstract: Raymond Williams's concept of mobile privatisation is one of his most original contributions to media and cultural analysis. Originally glimpsed in his writing as long ago as the early 1960s, mobile privatisation has become an even more apposite notion today in the study of culture and society. The concept was formulated in Williams's work on new communications technology and the mediation of everyday life during the 1970s. Critique of technological determinism and an alternative, multidimensional and non-reductionist mode of socio-historical analysis are salient features of Williams's mature theorising and methodology. This article extends Williams's cultural-materialist approach by applying the concept of mobile privatisation to an ideal-typical construction of the preferred self at present – the cool, technologically savvy and neoliberal self. The article also calls the 'mobilities paradigm' of recent sociology into question and offers a more critical means of analysing neoliberal selfhood in relation to mobile communications.

*

This was the network by which the society lived, and through which it moved and communicated. The rest ineradicably was private.¹

Introduction

Driving back from Wales to Oxford, the young academic, Peter Owen – in Raymond Williams's 1964 novel, *Second Generation* – reflects upon the social significance of motorcar traffic, noting 'an obvious strangeness in the fact of traffic'.² According to Williams, in *Towards 2000*,³ this was when he first wrote about the phenomenon of mobile privatisation that was later conceptualised in his theoretical work on communications, though he had not named it then. The coordination of traffic is a remarkable and systematic social accomplishment. Yet, the units in coordinated movement through that system – the motorists and their passengers – are making their own private decisions as to where to go. Enhanced public mobility and the privatisation of social life somehow go together today. This paradoxical combination represents a characteristic way of late-modern life that is facilitated by the development of technologically sophisticated means of mobile communication, in effect, both physical and virtual.

In what follows, I shall recapitulate Williams's thinking about mobile privatisation, critique the recent development of a mobilities 'paradigm' in Sociology and relate Williams's thinking to the formation of an ideal type of person today, the neoliberal self.

'An Ugly Phrase'

Several years after coining the term, 'mobile privatisation', Williams remarked, 'It's an ugly phrase for an unprecedented condition'.⁴ He was talking about a social condition connected to emergent technologies of travel and messaging in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Following the Second World War there were, of course, further developments in this respect, most notably to do with the spread of car ownership and air travel, computerisation, transistorisation, satellite communications and so forth. And, at present, there is a feverishly neo-McLuhanite obsession with 'new technology' – usually meaning information and communication technologies (ICTs) specifically linked to the internet – with a deterministic belief that digitalisation and access to on-line services 'changes everything', including the impact of 'user-generated content' on commerce and politics.

The sheer speed of technological change is indeed awesome. We may, quite recently in historical terms, have become accustomed to a device that was fresh and seductive in what might still feel like only yesterday for older generations when it is apparently rendered obsolete and about to be swept aside by yet another extraordinary innovation. Hybridity is a defining principle of rapid turnover. The drive towards the *all-purpose mobile communication device* has been an absolute imperative for quite a while now. Currently, it is being said that the smart phone supported by cloud storage is reaching a 'tipping point' for superseding the PC, even in its most up-to-date and light-weight laptop, wireless, 3G/4G and multicoloured incarnation as the key technology of the modern age because of the overwhelming need for convenient personal communication on the move. Or, perhaps touch-screen telephonic tablets are, for the moment, yet more realistic alternatives than the smaller smart phones to PCs and laptops since they are less of an eye-strain, that is, until they themselves become obsolete too when the next must-have essential gadget comes onto the market.

Back in the 1970s, Williams contested an earlier phase of technological determinism, inspired more directly at that time by Marshall McLuhan, in his short book, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, researched and written during a visiting professorship at Stanford University, California, just south of San Francisco in the area that had already been named 'Silicon Valley'

before Williams's sojourn there. He was admirably placed to learn about new technologies of communication associated with computing, video-recording and cable and satellite transmission systems. Much of this technological development was focused upon a home-centred way of life which, as Nicholas Garnham later noted, meant a huge business emphasis on developing domestic audio and audio-visual equipment, sound systems and television, and cultural products that made more efficient and, from the point of view of the culture industry, lucrative use of limited leisure time.⁵

To make sense of the sociality of television in the first instance, but also of broader significance, Williams formalised the concept of mobile privatisation just as a plethora of technological innovations were about to be unleashed on the general public in rapid succession over the next forty years. For him, this notion referred to a relatively new historical patterning of everyday life associated with the growth of urban-industrial society in general as much as with the specific use of communication technologies. Williams noted 'two apparently paradoxical yet deeply connected tendencies of modern urban living; on the one hand mobility, on the other hand the more apparently self-sufficient family home'.⁶ Developments in transport, especially building the railways and mass migration across the world in steam ships during the nineteenth century, had increased the mobility of people and peoples. Yet, at the same time, the atomisation of modern industrialised society was concentrating life outside paid work in the small family home. There had emerged 'an at once mobile and home-centred way of living: a form of *mobile privatisation*'⁷ in the twentieth century. Broadcasting fitted perfectly into and helped to shape this arrangement, not only with the radio and then the television replacing the hearth as the site of gathering together in the home, but also in providing access to events occurring at a distance.

The concept of mobile privatisation captured the contradictory role of television in particular as a characteristic feature of modern daily life. Television facilitated a much expanded, albeit imaginary, mobility through the vast array of representations available to the ordinary viewer. Here a distinction must be drawn between physical mobility – facilitated by modern transport – and the virtual mobility that was facilitated by telegraphy and broadcasting from the late-nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth century.

Domesticity became the focus of expanded consumption and indeed consumer culture; labour-saving devices and the like, and broadcasting's typical mode of address to the listener and viewer in the domestic setting was firmly established, with all that this entails, eventually including endless advertising. To a considerable extent, broadcasting would come to actually schedule activities within the home: with day-time programmes addressed to 'the housewife', children's programming when the kids returned home

from school, 'the toddler's truce', 'family viewing' and adult viewing after 'the watershed' when children were supposed to be in bed. And, with the advent of satellite transmission from the 1960s, it became possible, from the comfort of the home, to see events occurring in real time on the other side of the world. Incidentally, in this context, it is interesting how little comment there is on latter-day 'time-work discipline', to adapt E.P. Thompson's phrase.⁸ There has been an increase in long hours of flexible shift-working day and night that is not unrelated to the development of twenty-four-hour multi-channel television, digital time-shifting, timeless access to the cultural archive during leisure time; not to mention twenty-four-hour supermarket opening and anytime on-line shopping.

When Williams returned to the concept of mobile privatisation in the 1980s, ten years after its treatment in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, he remarked upon social loneliness and isolation. It was not only that people in urban-industrial societies were living in small family units (the nuclear family replacing the extended family) but that increasing numbers of people were living alone, many of them, especially the elderly, heavily dependent on technological means of communication for social contact at remote distance. And, 'at the same time there is a quite unprecedented mobility of such restricted privacies'.⁹ In *Towards 2000*, at a later stage of mobile privatisation when living in a self-contained shell had become yet more common, Williams recalled his earlier thoughts on traffic:

Looked at from right outside, the traffic flows and their regularities are clearly a social order of a determined kind, yet what is experienced inside them – in the conditioned atmosphere and internal music of the windowed shell – is movement, choice of direction, the pursuit of self-determined private purposes. All the other shells are moving in comparable ways but for their own different private ends. They are not so much other people, in any full sense, but other units which signal and are signalled to, so that private mobilities can proceed safely and relatively unhindered. And if all this is seen from outside as in deep ways determined, or in some sweeping glance as dehumanised, that is not at all how it feels like inside the shell, with private you want to be with, going where you want to go.¹⁰

Thus, Williams reminded us in the 1980s, before mobile phones became commonplace accoutrements of everyday life, that mobile privatisation was not confined to the social use of broadcasting and television – in fact, it referred to a characteristic way of life in the modern age. It included driving a motorcar either by yourself or with one or more significant other as passenger, separated from yet coordinated in some remote sense with many strangers

doing the same sort of thing in their little, shell-like worlds. For Williams, these practices – watching telly, driving cars – are synecdoche for a larger whole, ‘a now dominant level of social relations’, that is, the market system: ‘The international market in every kind of commodity receives its deep assent from the system of mobile-privatised social relations.’¹¹ The shell might be a home, a car or, latterly, an all-purpose mobile communication device.

Clearly, then, Williams’s concept of mobile privatisation, dating from the 1960s and 1970s, is even more relevant now with regard to the ‘life on screen’, to borrow a phrase,¹² and sociality of newer communications media. As already noted, in talking about *privatisation*, Williams had in mind how individuals and intimate groups are turned away from wider social engagement and become cocooned in private worlds. This experiential loss may be the principal reason, as a form of virtual compensation, for the astonishing take-up and spread of ‘social media’ like Facebook and Twitter, which Sherry Turkle herself, no longer quite so comfortable with ‘life on screen’, has acknowledged.¹³ There is, however, another meaning of *privatisation* that has been rather prominent over the past thirty to forty years, that is, the selling off of public assets and a long-running campaign to dismantle or, failing that project, reduce to a bare minimum the social – or social-democratic – aspect of the state. Williams anticipated this looming prospect with regard to communications media long ago. Back in 1974, he concluded *Television* on a chillingly prophetic note:

... what is at stake: a new universal accessibility. Over a wide range from general television through to commercial advertising to centralised information and data-processing systems, the technology that is now or is becoming available can be used to affect, to alter, and in some cases to control our whole social process. And it is ironic that the uses offer such extreme social choices. We could have inexpensive, locally based yet internationally extended television systems, making possible communication and information-sharing on a scale that not long ago would have seemed utopian. These are the contemporary tools of the long revolution towards an educated and participatory democracy, and of the recovery of effective communication in urban and industrial societies. But they are also the tools of what would be, in context, a short and successful counter-revolution, in which, under the cover of talk about choice and competition, a few para-national corporations, with their attendant states and agencies, could reach farther into our lives, at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective response to many different kinds of experience and problem became almost limited to choice between their programmed possibilities.¹⁴

Tomorrow's World Sociology

'Technology' – that is, ICTs – is so cool these days that the BBC has taken to advertising the latest and forthcoming communicational gadgets for free every Saturday in its *Click* programme on the BBC World/24 Hour News channel, presented with gushing enthusiasm by Spencer Kelly. The BBC has a history of being excited by 'new technologies', most notably in its programme *Tomorrow's World*, which ran for thirty-eight years from 1965 to 2003. The programme featured very early items on the prospects for home computing, without the eventually ubiquitous screen, and mobile telephony. In one of his *Listener* columns of 1968, Williams commented on 'the detached atmosphere of *Tomorrow's World*, where devices and techniques can be looked at in themselves'.¹⁵ The tone of *Tomorrow's World* was very different from *Click*. In those days the BBC was proudly non-commercial rather than shamefacedly so, as it is today. Nevertheless, both programmes share a very common technological determinism, similarly assuming that innovations in technology are autonomous phenomena automatically deriving from scientific discovery and that they constitute the cardinal determinant of social and cultural change, assumptions that Williams critiqued so decisively in *Television*.¹⁶ The 'mobilities paradigm' in recent Sociology is vulnerable to the same critique. At the very least, if not exactly gushing, it is remarkably uncritical of the economic and political determinations around the technology and society relation. This is why it is tempting to think of its futurological imaginary as '*Tomorrow's World Sociology*'.

John Urry and Mimi Sheller announced 'the new mobilities paradigm' in 2006.¹⁷ Urry went on to produce a wide-ranging textbook entitled simply, *Mobilities*. Curiously, Williams is nowhere mentioned in the original article, though he is cited in passing in the textbook. Various sources contributing to the paradigm are, however, listed in the article, including present-day scholars such as Arjun Appadurai, James Clifford and Nigel Thrift. Several contributory strands of thought are surveyed in the textbook, which is meant to be comprehensive. In the chapter of *Mobilities* on these sources there is, for instance, a section devoted to the unjustly neglected classical social theorist, Georg Simmel,¹⁸ already mentioned in the article as providing 'a broad agenda for the analysis of mobilities'.¹⁹ Urry is right to do so, as will be indicated later in this article. The German Simmel died in 1918, however, whereas the Welsh Williams died seventy years later, in 1988. Urry studied at the University of Cambridge at the same time that Williams was teaching there. Yet, mobile privatisation merits only one brief mention in *Mobilities* and not with reference to any of the texts in which Williams himself wrote about it;²⁰ and, of course, mobile privatisation does not appear in the index. This particular failure of

appropriate acknowledgement and, indeed, appreciation, is symptomatic of a curious amnesia concerning Williams in the social sciences today.²¹

Of six major points of change necessitating the construction of a 'new mobilities paradigm' listed by Sheller and Urry, the advent of "machines" enabling "people" to be more individually mobile²² is the only remotely novel one. It has developed swiftly and ubiquitously since Williams's death, the key device being the 2G mobile phone which became affordable in the mass market and went from being a luxury to a taken-for-granted necessity very quickly during the 1990s.²³ It played a significant role in initiating 'a convergence between travel and communication' for a great many people. The other major points of change that they identify were already well developed, however, when Williams was still around, such as economic dematerialisation or virtualisation linked to the financialisation of capitalism, which has indeed intensified over recent decades as neoliberalism has become hegemonic.

That rich people, Castells's 'globapolitans',²⁴ are even more mobile these days than they used to be is hardly something that would have surprised Williams, although it certainly fascinates Urry and his high-flying collaborators like Anthony Elliott. Moreover, the positive claims that are made for these communicational developments echo Williams's socialist optimism about the democratising potential of interactive media, ironically it must be said, in a period when socialism itself has actually been in retreat. And, although proponents of the mobilities paradigm register some negative aspects that might be associated with ICT development, their technological enthusiasm tends to blank out genuinely critical insight.

Another concept of Williams's – structure of feeling – is actually mentioned by Urry in *Mobilities* but in this instance Williams is not cited at all and the impression is given instead that it is Nigel Thrift's concept – 'a "mobility" structure of feeling [is] in the air'.²⁵ Urry is much more interested, it should be noted, in travel and tourism than he is in communications media. So, if nothing else, the mobilities paradigm returns to the trains and boats and planes, as well as media, of the old Communication Studies curriculum before they were discarded as topics of study by the rise of Media Studies in the 1980s.

Urry's main strategy in designing his mobilities research paradigm is to make lists of important objects of study. He lists a dozen 'main mobility forms in the world', ranging through various kinds of migration such as labour market flows, studying abroad, retirement globe-trotting, visiting family and friends, and business travel, for instance – a fairly banal list, it has to be said. To be sure, Urry has himself written, with Kingsley Dennis, very incisively about car culture and its environmental costs.²⁶ He also registers the personalised and indeed individualised character of car travel, not unlike Williams's original novelistic observations of fifty years ago.

Eventually, Urry mentions the mobile phone, remarking that for young people now it is more important than the television set. Furthermore,

The iPod, the laptop computer, the DVD player and the use of the mobile phone for TV have all drawn upon and developed further this 'privatised' augmentation of the moving body ... Mobile telephony has taken this personalized portability to new limits [such mobility, however, as Urry himself notes, was preceded by other portable technologies like books, magazines and newspapers].²⁷

Towards the end of *Mobilities*, Urry adds *social relations of circulation* to Marx's *social relations of production* with the introduction of the avowedly Bourdieu-inspired notion of 'network capital', a valuable new resource, apparently, of what he considers to be a comparatively new kind of 'expressive capitalism'. Again, he provides us with a list, this time a list of the eight components of network capital, including travel documents, international contacts, access to means of travel, so on and so forth.²⁸ Urry is well aware that these attributes of network capital are unequally distributed, though he does not have much to say about it. He goes on to demonstrate a curious lack of critical judgement when he cites management consultant Richard Florida's 'creative class' thesis in connection to enhanced mobility without questioning its sociological flaws and cool neoliberalism.²⁹

Neoliberal Selfhood

Raymond Williams's concept of mobile privatisation aimed to make sense of the dynamics of social and cultural change by exploring the dialectic of communications and everyday life. Williams used the anthropological notion of 'ways of life' at a time when the concept of identity was not so prominent as it is today.³⁰ In fact, 'identity' does not even figure in the revised and expanded version of his book, *Keywords*.³¹ Williams did, however, appreciate the Lukacsian emphasis on the homological significance of typical characters in literature,³² which in turn was inspired by the early German sociological work on typification of Max Weber³³ and Georg Simmel.³⁴ And, in the chapter 'Individuals and Societies' in *The Long Revolution*, Williams identified certain kinds of contemporary *social type* in a rudimentary fashion: *members* of society who conform to such an extent that they may be regarded as *subjects* (in the sense of, say, 'subjects of the Queen' perhaps) or *servants*; and, non-conformists might include *rebels*, *exiles* and *vagrants*. To quote Williams in this respect: 'We need descriptions such as member, subject and servant, or rebel, exile and

vagrant, if we are to get beyond the impasse of simple conformity and non-conformity'.³⁵

In this concluding section, then, I want to propose the hypothesis that neoliberal capitalism constructs a preferred self in the ideal-type sense and that this is closely associated with the specific development of mobile communications technology. Although technology cannot be entirely reduced to ideology, there is, none the less, an ideological dimension to the design and marketing of business and consumer technologies.³⁶ As Williams himself argued, the newer communications technology presented very contrasting ideological possibilities, broadly speaking, conducive to democratic socialism, on the one hand, or, alternatively, strengthening the grip of capitalism in terms of political economy, culture and social conduct on the other hand. Capitalism has been triumphant in the period since Williams's death and, in spite of the near-terminal crises it generates, for most people in the world today there really is no apparent or even desired alternative.

In his co-authored book with Anthony Elliott, *Mobile Lives*, Urry claims to 'show how the mobilities paradigm can be extended to analysis and critique of self-identity and ordinary daily life'.³⁷ Furthermore, it is argued, 'an intensively mobile society reshapes the self'.³⁸ Urry's earlier notion of 'disorganized capitalism' is reactivated in order to situate the mobile self in contemporary social structure and fluid process.³⁹ Although Rudolf Hilferding's concept of 'organised capitalism' has proven a useful descriptor not only for early-twentieth century cartelisation in Germany but, more generally, for the various state-capital relations of mid-century, including the social-democratic moment in Britain, 'disorganised capitalism' has always been an unsatisfactory way of describing the restructuring of global capitalism since the oil crisis of the 1970s. There is nothing disorganised about the neoliberalisation process that is dedicated to eliminating the last traces of socialism from the world and ensuring that an exceptionally ruthless way of doing business prevails in the accumulation of capital. A preferable concept to 'disorganized capitalism', then, is 'neoliberal capitalism',⁴⁰ which differs from nineteenth-century 'liberal capitalism' in a number of ways, including culturally. If liberal capitalism cultivated puritanical habits, then neoliberal capitalism has reversed matters by cultivating a new and indeed hedonistic spirit,⁴¹ a cultural formation that even incorporates signs and symbols of disaffection often, as in the case of Apple, to popular and extremely profitable effect. I call this cultural formation 'cool capitalism'.⁴² It is consistent with 'the recasting of identity in terms of flexibility, adaptability and instant transformation'.⁴³ According to Elliott and Urry, the free movement of networked individualism is the Utopian ideal today, best exemplified by 'the "fast lane" mobilities of the ultra-rich or global elite'.⁴⁴

For exploring the lived experience of the mobile subject, Elliott and Urry's methodological strategy is to tell what we must assume they consider typical life stories of individuals either briefly or at some length. There is, for instance, 'Simone ... a British-based academic, originally from Brazil, who travels a great deal for her work'.⁴⁵ And, then there is 'Sandra Fletcher ... [who is] sophisticated and smart – a high-profile advertising executive'.⁴⁶ A favourite source of examples for Urry is the recounting of fictionalised lifestyles in David Lodge's comic novel, *Small World*, which is about a network of academics who meet up with one another at various locations around the world. The examples given are symptomatic of an inward-looking albeit politically correct feminism. Quite apart from the particularity of this familiar academic habitus, Elliott and Urry's exemplary life stories, whether fictional or actual, represent a misplaced concreteness. They are specific but do not constitute the specificity of a generalisable type or a satisfactory representativeness in a social-scientific sense.

An alternative methodological strategy would be the ideal typification procedure, in the heuristic sense, recommended by Weber and practised by Simmel to characterise the lives of the stranger, the poor, the miser, the spendthrift, the adventurer and the nobility.⁴⁷ These are abstract formulations that do not exactly conform to any particular empirical instance. They are defined, in the Weberian sense, by essential features that are accentuated in order to bring out the most salient aspects of a given social reality. For example, the stranger type is not 'the wanderer who comes today and is gone tomorrow' but, instead, is someone 'who comes today and stays tomorrow'.⁴⁸ Such a typification has obvious relevance for thinking about outsidership in the migrant experience. There is a problem, however, with Simmel's social types; they are virtually ahistorical archetypes.

Historicisation is methodologically necessary, then, in the construction of an ideal typification of the neoliberal self. This is not just the subject positioning of a universal and undifferentiated capitalism that is interpellated, in the Althusserian sense, by ideology,⁴⁹ an ideology which has tended to be defined in the broadest terms by its origins in the philosophy of 'possessive individualism'.⁵⁰ To be sure, individualism does matter but today this is better understood as compulsory *individualisation* rather than a romanticised sense of personal freedom as such. As Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim have argued quite convincingly, individuals today are compelled to make agonistic choices on which way to go at nodal points along their life-course trajectory – there may be no guidance – and also to take sole responsibility for the consequences of choices made.⁵¹ It is as though the post-Second World War philosophy of existentialism that flourished in Parisian cafe society has lately achieved mass diffusion. Now that the old collective supports and scripts no

longer apply, everyone is abandoned to their fate like an angst-ridden French philosopher. Individualisation is a contradictory phenomenon, however, both exhilarating and terrifying. It really does feel like freedom, especially for women liberated from patriarchal control. But, when things go wrong there is no excuse. That would be *mauvaise foi* (bad faith). The individual is penalised harshly not only for personal failure but also for sheer bad luck in a highly competitive and relentlessly harsh social environment. Although the Becks deny it, such a self – condemned to freedom and lonely responsibility – is exactly the kind of self cultivated by neoliberalism, combining freewheeling consumer sovereignty with self-activating and enterprising managerialism.

Such a self is not unappealing. It may actually be very attractive, especially for the young, socialised as they are into a cool-capitalist way of life that does not appear to insist upon conformity and even permits a limited measure of bohemian posturing. And, of course, such neoliberal selfhood is persistently compared favourably with the stultifying regimentation of a bygone socialism. In fact, generational tension is a distinct feature of the neoliberal imaginary, including the dismissal of ‘dinosaur’ attitudes concerning all sorts of matters, from the economic value of a return to actually making things in hitherto de-industrialised countries, through the defence of universal public healthcare and pension entitlement to rapid uptake and use of the latest mobile communications technology. In this sense, the neoliberal self is connected to a generational structure of feeling, though not exclusively so since adherence to youthful up-to-dateness has become much more common today amongst older generations too.

The consumption aspect of the neoliberal self is the most obvious, involving the subjectivity cultivated by the cool seduction of promotional culture and acutely brand-aware commodity fetishism. Naomi Klein said most of what needs to be said about it at the turn of the millennium.⁵² Other authors have added to the critical picture since then, such as Alissa Quart’s *Branded – The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* on viral marketing among young girls⁵³ and Juliet Schor’s *Born to Buy – The Commercialised Child and the New Consumer Culture*⁵⁴ on the cool seduction of children. Anya Kamenetz’s *Generation Debt – Why Now is a Terrible Time to be Young* is especially important for understanding the plight of many recent graduates,⁵⁵ with their high expectations, caught between an Olympic training in consumerism and the bitter outlook of life-long debt dependency, poor job and retirement prospects, high rents and unaffordable house purchase.

These factors contribute massively to the circumstances and pressures under which the neoliberal self is situated in relation to production; that is, in addition to the inculcation of competitive business ideology and the excessive managerialism that governs much of working life these days. The

consumption aspect of the neoliberal self does not simply equate to the feminine in the terms of some older binary opposition and the production aspect is no longer necessarily masculine due to a progressive loosening of gender constraints. Masculine consumerism has been cultivated and women have become increasingly significant participants in labour forces where there has been a certain feminisation of work, though not proportionately at the higher levels. The twenty-first century world of neoliberal capitalism is not at all the same as the nineteenth-century world of liberal capitalism. There is indeed greater widespread affluence and, in many respects, capitalism really has delivered the goods to a great many people. However, inequality across the Earth has actually worsened over the past thirty odd years, the rich have become richer, most of the poor have remained poor and some of them have become much poorer. Moreover, the rate of exploitation at a global level – with sweated labour conditions, fierce workplace discipline and still comparatively meagre rewards in so-called ‘developing countries’, including booming China and India – would have shocked Marx and Engels.

And, the massification of a seriously reduced quality of higher education has put a young middle-class generation, significant numbers of whom work in the precarious occupations of the so-called ‘creative industries’, firmly into the neoliberal trap. Their paradoxical life conditions have been written about insightfully by Andrew Ross. Personal initiative and frantic networking in the precarious labour market of short-term contracts, where enterprising ‘creativity’ is at a premium, according to Ross, represent an ironic fruition of counter-cultural campaigns for job enrichment dating from the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁶ This phenomenon is also commented upon by Boltanski and Chiapello in their discussion of the questionable success of the artistic critique of capitalism.⁵⁷ They go so far as to argue that the politically liberationist themes of May 1968 have been channelled into a managerialist ‘theory’ that extols the idealised figure of the portfolio worker in the professional-managerial class who finds self-realisation by multi-tasking and forever switching from one challenging project to yet another challenging new project instead of remaining within the securities of old routines. As Boltanski and Chapello put it, for *cadres* instilled with ‘the new spirit of capitalism’, in effect, ‘Autonomy was exchanged for security’.⁵⁸ Such figures, moreover, are highly mobile in their relentless pursuit of success: ‘Great men do not stand still. Little men remain rooted to the spot’.⁵⁹ For Boltanski and Chiapello, inequality is relational: there are winners and losers.

Precarious forms of labour are increasingly the norm not only for a reserve army but across the professional-managerial occupations as well, rather like the casual work traditionally experienced by many proletarians that was struggled

against and reformed by labour movements in the past, such as on the docks where workers were hired at the gate on a day-to-day basis.

People subjected to such uncertainty and unpredictability at the 'cutting edge' of so-called 'creative' and allied careers must fashion the kind of self that can cope in peculiarly neoliberal conditions where trade-union representation has been eliminated or severely restricted. This kind of self is a neoliberal self, figuring a competitive individual who is exceptionally self-reliant and rather indifferent to the sharedness of his or her predicament – and, therefore, incapable of organising collectively to do anything about it. Such a person must be 'cool' in the circumstances, selfishly resourceful and fit in order to survive under social-Darwinian conditions.⁶⁰ Many, of course, simply fall by the wayside, exterminated by the croak-voiced Daleks of neoliberalism.

However, the mass media of communication hardly ever report upon the admittedly grim depiction of the neoliberal self sketched in here, not even for the young adults in the eye of the storm. There is some concern about costs of study and youth unemployment but much more commonly, thanks to advertising, music media and Hollywood, young adults are seen to be cool, laid back and partying most of the time. And, of course, their lives are hugely enhanced by fun communications technology, especially Apple products – iPods, iPhones and iPads – with all the great apps.

Mobile technology is not only for leisure, though; it's for work too, at one time mainly represented by the besuited business commuter/traveller, normally a man but sometimes a woman, who used to have a Blackberry and insisted on speaking into it very loudly on trains. Now the typical figure is just as likely to be casually dressed, often on the younger side, quite probably male but possibly female in an airport lounge on wifi with earplugs and an Apple gadget, exceptionally well connected and at the same time cocooned privately in alien public space.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, *Second Generation* (1964; London: Hogarth Press, 1988), 234.
- 2 Williams, *Second Generation*, 233.
- 3 Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (1983; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 188–9.
- 4 Williams, *Towards 2000*, 188.
- 5 Nicholas Garnham, *Capitalism and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information* (London: Sage, 1990).
- 6 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974), 26.
- 7 Williams, *Television*, 26.
- 8 E.P. (Edward Palmer) Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present* 38, no. 1 (1967): 56–97.
- 9 Williams, *Towards 2000*, 188.

- 10 Williams, *Towards 2000*, 188–9.
- 11 Williams, *Towards 2000*, 189.
- 12 Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).
- 13 Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).
- 14 Williams, *Television*, 151.
- 15 Raymond Williams, 'The Miner and the City', in *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings*, ed. Alan O'Connor (London: Routledge, 1989), 44.
- 16 Jim McGuigan, 'Raymond Williams on *Culture and Society*', *Key Words* 10 (2012): 40–54.
- 17 Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New *Mobilities* Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 2 (2006), 207–26.
- 18 John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 20–6.
- 19 Sheller and Urry, 'The New *Mobilities* Paradigm', 215.
- 20 Urry, *Mobilities*, 127.
- 21 McGuigan, 'Raymond Williams'.
- 22 Sheller and Urry, 'The New *Mobilities* Paradigm', 221.
- 23 Jim McGuigan, 'Towards a Sociology of the Mobile Phone', *Human Technology* 1, no. 1 (2005): 41–53.
- 24 Throughout the world there is 'a small elite of *globapolitans* (half beings, half flows)', according to Manuel Castells in *The Power of Identity* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997), 65, presumably including jet-setting academics.
- 25 Urry, *Mobilities*, 6.
- 26 Kingsley Dennis and John Urry, *After the Car* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).
- 27 Urry, *Mobilities*, 171.
- 28 Urry, *Mobilities*, 197–8.
- 29 See my critique of Florida's creative class thesis, 'Doing a Florida Thing – The Creative Class Thesis and Cultural Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15, no. 3 (2009): 291–300.
- 30 See Marie Moran, *Identity and Capitalism* (London: Sage, forthcoming), in which she argues that 'identity' is, in effect, a new keyword.
- 31 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976).
- 32 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 95–100.
- 33 Sam Whimster (ed.), *The Essential Weber: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- 34 Donald Levine (ed.), *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).
- 35 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (1961; Cardigan: Parthian, 2011), 117.
- 36 See Jürgen Habermas, 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', in *Towards a Rational Society* (1968; London: Heinemann, 1971), 81–122.
- 37 Anthony Elliott and John Urry, *Mobile Lives* (London: Routledge: 2010), x.
- 38 Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, 3.
- 39 Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (London: Polity, 1987).
- 40 David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 41 Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999; London: Verso, 2005).
- 42 Jim McGuigan, *Cool Capitalism* (London: Pluto, 2009).
- 43 Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, 7.
- 44 Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, 22.
- 45 Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, 1.
- 46 Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, 25.

Jim McGuigan

- 47 Georg Simmel, 'Social Types', in *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Form*, ed. Donald Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 141–213.
- 48 Simmel, 'Social Types', 143.
- 49 Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984).
- 50 Crawford B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).
- 51 Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization* (London: Sage, 2002).
- 52 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (London: Flamingo, 2000).
- 53 Alissa Quart, *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (London: Arrow, 2003).
- 54 Juliet Schor, *Born to Buy: The Commercialised Child and the New Consumer Culture* (New York: Scribner, 2004).
- 55 Anya Kamenetz, *Generation Debt: Why Now is a Terrible Time to be Young* (New York: Riverdale, 2006).
- 56 Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labour in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
- 57 Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*.
- 58 Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 199.
- 59 Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 361.
- 60 Williams, of course, wrote incisively on social Darwinism's original incarnation, 'Social Darwinism' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 86–102. For discussion of a more recent manifestation, see my 'Apprentices to Cool Capitalism', *Social Semiotics* 18, no. 3 (2008): 309–19.

Cultural Materialism, Media and the Environment

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller

Abstract: In this article, we examine two interrelated characteristics of the cultural materialism exemplified in Raymond Williams's work. The first is an analytical focus derived from his critique of 'militant particularism'. The second is the integration of an ecological perspective into arguments for social transformation. We expand his 'ecological argument' via biosphere perspectives, linking local ecological catastrophes to global environmental realities, seeking to honour Williams's socialist ethico-political commitments to labour and his idea of militant particularism while pressing for a deeper analysis of the eco-crisis. Focusing on problems of environmental and occupational risks in media technology production and disposal, we argue against a narrowly consumerist, or neoliberal, view of cultural materialism, and provide opportunities to illustrate what an eco-materialist study of culture might offer.

*

As the spectacular expansion of the global economy has undermined the environment, the need to control unlimited economic growth has become increasingly urgent. There is a patent conflict between the need to reverse or at least to control the impact of our economy on the biosphere and the imperatives of a capitalist market: maximum continuing growth in the search for profit. This is the Achilles heel of capitalism. We cannot at present know whose arrow will be fatal to it

Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*¹

The hard issues come together on two grounds: the ecological argument, and changes in the international economic order

Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000*²

The Backdrop – Militant Particularism(s)

In the spring of 2012, 8,000 coal miners in the northern Spanish provinces of Asturias and Leon went on strike to protest the central government's order to cut subsidies to the coal sector. The strike lasted nearly four months, with miners arming themselves with rifles and makeshift rocket launchers to ward off attacks from the Guardia Civil, Spain's paramilitary force. Strikers took over towns, occupied mines, and set up barricades to mark the borders between

their communities and the outside reality of austerity policies adopted by Spain under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Central Bank. They became the most militant workers in the country in terms of industrial action.³

The region has a long history of anti-capitalist trade union militancy, symbolised not only by the outpouring of solidarity from the international trade union movement but also by the outrage expressed by the sons and daughters of the region, generations of whom were fed and nurtured by the northern mining economy. One of them is Spanish football star David Villa, proud of his roots in the Asturian mining town where he grew up listening to stories about his great-grandfather, a revolutionary in the anti-government miners' revolt of 1934 who was known locally as 'Trotsky'. Villa used his celebrity to call for wider solidarity with the miners in the face of an official gag order on media coverage. In a spectacular action to bring further attention to their struggle, hundreds of miners marched 450 km to Madrid, joining ongoing protests that had begun with the 15 May 2011 anti-government occupations and eventually inspired the global Occupy movement.⁴

At stake was not just a wage or livelihood, but the integrity of a way of life. The coal economy was struggling to meet Spain's growing energy demands and dependence – Spain imports between 70 and 80 per cent of its energy, mostly in oil, gas and coal.⁵ The subsidies that were slashed by the right-wing Mariano Rajoy government were designed to bolster the domestic sector and finance programmes to shift workers from mining to jobs in green infrastructure development, in keeping with the previous government's legislative effort to move Spain to renewable energy consumption.⁶ The contradictions were obvious if complex for a progressive politics, as if one person's job and wage were another's air and water, and reactionaries were claiming to protect the latter. In the contradictory mess of Spanish politics, deals were still made for green infrastructure and forward-looking energy policy. The promises included green jobs, with training, and a public subsidy to minimise the pain of transition in affected communities. After the crisis hit, the austerity fix cancelled all government obligations to the green transition, and the miners responded in kind.

Their strike references three interrelated characteristics of the cultural materialism exemplified in Raymond Williams's work. The first is an analytical focus derived from his critique of 'militant particularism'.⁷ The second is the use of alternative forms of media and cultural expression to bring this struggle into the wider political culture. And the third is the integration of an ecological perspective into arguments for social transformation. In this essay, inspired by the Asturian resistance, we draw on a decade of our scholarly and popular writing about the environmental impact of the media, including the 2012 book *Greening the Media*, to illustrate his first and third points.⁸

The miners' strike was not merely a local flare up of militant action. In keeping with the militant particularism endorsed by Williams, it expressed a transterritorial, multi-generational struggle against European government policies that threaten workers' rights, autonomy and wellbeing. The contradiction between capital and labour unquestionably defines the miners' lives in a particular place and time, but also resurfaces in the shared histories of intergenerational conflict, resistance and solidarity. The regional identity of Asturians is built on both working-class formations and cultural-linguistic differences that express the ties of local particularities to structural forces in the global political economy.⁹ The battle lines they drew in this conflict were deeply rooted in knowledge of the roads, valleys, rivers and mountains where the miners took positions to outwit and out-gun, when they could, the better armed paramilitary representing state and capital.

The role of the alternative media emerged at the height of the strike, before the late summer withdrawal back to work in the mines. At that time, the fight clearly linked the situated realities of working-class community to forms of communication that reached regional, national, and international audiences already positively predisposed to a socialist understanding of the miners' actions. In the media events organised with the iconic Villa (also known as *el guaje*, 'the kid', in Bable, the Asturian dialect) and those focused on the miners marching to join anti-government protesters in the capital, we can identify the kind of transmission, reception, and response that resists the 'dominative' forms of communication that Williams criticised two generations ago in *Culture and Society*.¹⁰

The miners' struggle is an instance of oppositional media events confounding mainstream control over the signification of resistance, as per the Occupy movement's strategy to frame protests as acts of 'the 99 per cent'. In contrast to Williams's time, when broadcasting and print were predominant, today's on-line media sources (streaming video, YouTube archives and other web-based media) allow us to retrieve information almost instantly about the miners' struggle and hopes, to hear about their friends, families and neighbours, and to understand their disgust with national political leadership. We can more readily find electronic channels through which to contribute money and other expressions of solidarity to their cause. Of course, such access to information and communication is not immune to manipulation through framing and propaganda, but it can enrich the empirical basis of analysing struggles through cultural materialism, in particular when exposing how workers survive the capitalist political economy during its periodic crises. Though it's risky to say, we can imagine that Williams, after warning against technological determinism, would welcome these media tools into the mix of reportage, theorisation, abstraction and polemic that informed his cultural materialism.¹¹

The miners' strike exemplifies a cultural landscape in dialectical tension with the wider world of policy, law, international trade, mass communication and newer mediated forms. The power struggle at the heart of the Spanish miners' strike of 2012 hinged on one of the 'hard issues' for the left that Williams identified in *Towards 2000*.¹² Environmental despoliation threatens the planet. But political action that aims to mitigate the destruction wrought by industrial growth will fundamentally change the character of industrial societies and, with it, whole ways of life. The question for Williams was how, in the face of 'the ecological argument', can a cultural materialism, and more generally a socialist politics, be imagined. This is especially acute in the Asturian example, where a right-wing state is seeking to retrain workers and restructure employment in the name of a greener and more efficient world.

In the early 1980s, Williams found little to praise in proposals to address threats to labour posed by the ecological and industrial decline of advanced capitalist societies. Some activists raced ahead with calls to reject industrial production and return to subsistence agriculture, local crafts, the pastoral life – but few were followed. The reason, he argued, was not because these were 'unavailable ways of life' but rather that they were 'unavailable as whole ways of life for existing populations of urban industrial societies'. To make such 'unrealistic proposals' the central platform of anti-capitalist critique was 'either an indulgence or a betrayal'.¹³ Such environmental politics engaged in a shallow form of militant particularism that lacked a connection to general interests, misunderstood the international political economy and internalised dominant forms of expression. For Williams, its proponents were 'friends of nobody, and to think that they are allies in the ecology movement is an extraordinary illusion'.¹⁴ He argued against the temptation to 'jump' into these forms of environmentalism with 'indifference towards all other organised and institutionalised political and social forms'.¹⁵

By the time of the miners' strike in Spain, such worries appeared unnecessary. A conservationist concern with the local environmental impact of coal mining, for example, might still be 'a friend of nobody' but also have little political traction given the deeper, greener sense of militant particularism at play in the miners' struggle. Drought, flood, habitat decimation, species decline – all these local ecosystem calamities are widely acknowledged today as products of global biosphere processes, and directly attributable to capitalist industrial and development practices.

Understanding the biosphere is not a simplistic matter of acting locally–thinking globally, which has led to lots of posturing without much empirical research or working through methodological issues (which cannot be resolved via awkward locutions like 'glocalism'). Biosphere thinking provides an exit from sentimentalising local, embedded cultural practices. It also presents a stark

ethical dilemma about how to address the threats to the 'whole way of life' that are engendered by a means of production largely responsible for the eco-crisis. This is precisely the ethico-political challenge posed by the coal miners' strike in Spain to cultural materialists, one that serves as the background for our analysis of media technology, environment and cultural materialism.

Note to Materialists – Revive Socialist Project

Some avowed adherents to Williams within cultural studies have travelled some distance from the necessary blend of twenty-first-century socialism and environmentalism. The shift is breathtaking. These writers have disclaimed their leftist roots and invested instead in Schumpeterian entrepreneurs, evolutionary economics and 'creative industries'. They never saw an 'app' they didn't like, or a socialist idea they did.¹⁶ They dismiss Marxist perspectives on class exploitation and environmental despoliation, which one commentator scorns as part of a 'leftist backlash against digital media'.¹⁷ The lives of workers seem to matter little when compared to technological innovation, as new products and services destroy existing ones, with anyone left standing the beneficiary.

Consider a prominent study prepared for capital and the state entitled *Working in Australia's Digital Games Industry*. It does not refer to working conditions in rare earth metals extraction, factories where games are made, or electronic waste dumps – all of which should fall under 'working in Australia's digital games industry'.¹⁸ In this research, media technologies are benign drivers of growth that somehow transcend the toxic realities of their origins – a dead idea that survives, zombie-like, in such industry research as this 2013 report from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC): *The UK Film, TV and Video Games Industries Today – Powering Ahead*.¹⁹ The pro-growth salute to 'powering ahead' privileges the productivity of industry while forgetting the materiality of bodies, experiences, careers and habitats. By and large, the risks to environment and to the people who actually make media technologies are excluded from the dominant discourses of high technology. It is as if telecommunications, cellphones, tablets, televisions, cameras, computers and so on sprang magically from a green meritocracy of creativity, with by-products of code, not smoke.

These new-media *savants* like to invoke pre-capitalist philosophers of play and thought, particularly the Ancient Greeks, thereby dodging questions of state and capital by heading for an aesthetics devoid of any relation to contemporary political economy. Their reliance on high art and high technology brokers a high neoliberalism that rests on the banal possessive individualism of neoclassical economics. Far removed from the messy

realities of inequality and injustice, reactionary game analysts, for example, are content to study virtual 'environments' to understand 'whole societies under controlled conditions', neglecting or caricaturing history and ethnography as they do so.²⁰ This transcendence of reality resides in a fantasy world where old (print, live) and middle-aged (screen) media are irrelevant – where *La fin de la télévision* [the end of television], *La televisión ha muerto* [television is dead] and other Olympian pronouncements suggest the very end of media-as-we-know-it.²¹ Media and cultural studies are instructed to make themselves anew because new technologies are helping our species evolve as we wreak creative destruction on aged hierarchies.²²

And while it might be historically true that new media supplant or supplement earlier ones *as central organs of authority and pleasure* – newspapers versus speeches, films versus plays and records versus performances – the fact is that the new blends with the old in a pattern of incorporation that finds television modelling the internet and vice versa, while print and telephony expand due to their convenience and durability.²³ Established cultural producers dominate across these media, which are really rather distant from cyberbarian sweatshops and elite techno-bohemian wet dreams.²⁴ The BBC offers news produced by a lot of professionally-trained journalists; YouTube features TV drama; and Wikipedia follows the eighteenth-century format of an encyclopaedia.²⁵ This traditional tendency becomes apparent with minimal critical, historical, sociological, or spatial reflection. We are prone to a 'new frenzy for images' that would have been familiar to the generation of 1860–80, entranced by trickery and overt re-assemblage, with photographers aspiring to art and painters hoping for verisimilitude.²⁶

Along with this repetition of genres comes a repetition of claims and fantasies. In the nineteenth century, people were supposedly governed by electrical impulses. Telegraphy was conceived of as a physical manifestation of intellect that associated the essence of humanity with communicative labour. In the early twentieth century, radio waves were said to move across the ether, a mystical substance that could contact the dead and cure cancer. George Orwell described this rhetoric seventy years ago in ways that resonate today:

Reading recently a batch of rather shallowly optimistic 'progressive' books, I was struck by the automatic way in which people go on repeating certain phrases which were fashionable before 1914. Two great favourites are 'the abolition of distance' and 'the disappearance of frontiers'. I do not know how often I have met with the statements that 'the aeroplane and the radio have abolished distance' and 'all parts of the world are now interdependent'.²⁷

During the inter-war period, it was claimed that the human sensorium had been retrained by technology. By the 1950s and 1960s, machines were thought to embody and even control consciousness. This mad mixture of science and magic continues into our own digital culture as cyber-enthusiasts fetishise each new 'upgrade' as if it could reboot their identity into a perpetual now-ness. Facebook features 'Peace on Facebook' and claims the capacity to 'decrease world conflict' through intercultural communication, while Twitter modestly announces itself as 'a triumph of humanity'.²⁸ Two decades ago this frenzy was captured on video as people lined up to buy the Windows 95 operating system, amid Microsoft's advertising futurism.²⁹ Today, the excitement gathers around a different firm's wizardry; tomorrow it will be yet another³⁰ Machinery, rather than political-economic activity, is the guiding light. Even the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, long a key site for alternative theories and representations of the economy, has joined the chorus.³¹

Today's version of this perennial yet endlessly naive technological optimism is both predictable and shocking. It blends with a deregulated, privatised, individualistic, anti-collective perspective that has been dominant across the consumerist social sciences for decades. This optimism is not only indifferent to the inequality and the violence of capitalist development that preoccupied Williams's cultural materialism; it is consciously opposed to Williams's socialism. If cultural materialism aims to take issues of class and environment seriously, it must look to Williams's socialism and critique of militant particularism, then merge these with a contemporary biosphere perspective.

Greening Cultural Materialism – The Media Example

a) The Metaphor

The philosopher John Dewey first suggested that communications exerted environmental influence upon the organisation of society. Dewey stressed technology's inexorable link to 'things and acts', 'instrumentalities' deployed on behalf of other goals 'of which they are means and predictive signs'.³² Marshall McLuhan spoke of environs of media technologies as the central concern of a field of 'media study', promoting the idea that media analysis was 'resolved with a metaphor' of environments.³³ This substitution still obscures the ecological context of media technology (search any database for media and environment, environmental impact of media, media and ecology, or related phrases, and you will see what we mean).³⁴ Williams's careful scepticism of is a useful corrective. This passage from his 1972 essay 'Ideas of Nature'

describes a despoiled landscape that must see a shift of vocabulary if it is to be understood as a purposive rather than accidental result:

The slagheap is as real a product as the coal, just as the river stinking with sewage and detergent is as much our product as the reservoir ... [T]he pollution of industrial society is to be found not only in the water and in the air but in the slums, the traffic jams, and not these only as physical objects but as ourselves in them and in relation to them ... [W]e cannot afford to go on saying that a car is a product but the scrapyard a by-product, any more than we can take the paint-fumes and petrol-fumes, the jams, the mobility, the motorway, the torn city-centre, the assembly line, the time-motion study, the unions, the strikes, as by-products rather than the real products they are.³⁵

b) Landscape

From a biosphere perspective, media environments look more like this: transmission and reception towers, guy wires and transmission cables altering land use, obstructing the flight path of migratory birds, killing tens of millions of them (over two hundred species) in North America every year and an estimated 174 million annually across Europe and the United States.³⁶

Consider one particularly telling instance of the biosphere's political-economic changes: Guiyu, in the Guangdong Province of China. Once a farming town, over the last two decades it has become a centre for recycling electronic waste (e-waste) from the 'creative industries' of the West. The environmental impact of this transition to e-waste recycling includes persistent organic pollutants saturating the human food chain. With soil and water poisoned, it is unsafe for Guiyu residents to return their agricultural lands to productive use. Perhaps 20 per cent of the recyclers lack basic protection against toxic metals, with lead exposure at fifty times the 'safe' levels (82 per cent of the city's children under aged six suffer lead poisoning). Contaminants of residual waste from incinerators and landfills have saturated local dust, soil, river sediment, surface- and ground-water and air. People living in proximity to the sites carry lethal dust residue on their clothing and into their homes. Of Guiyu's more than five thousand e-waste workers, many are pre-teen girls, picking away at dangerous materials with little or no protection (this is all too common among the estimated 700,000 working in unregulated e-waste processing throughout China).³⁷

c) History

These landscape stories are invisible to orthodox histories of media technology, which recount a non-ecological, teleological narrative of heroic business innovators and plucky independent inventors dialing up freedom and fun for consumers, ringing in new forms of public knowledge to satisfy an innate desire for progress and artistic realism. This mimetic fallacy assumes that the power of artists' and audiences' desires drives technological innovation in the media.

Despite Williams's counter-example, in accordance with the dominant foundation myths, media history is rife with narcissistic accounts from the media themselves, which often tell us that digitisation derived from the laid-back musings of California dreamers rather than the military-industrial-entertainment-academic complex. And digitisation fused the media in the 1980s to create today's *Aufklärung*, delivering text, voice, data, video and music to consumers and enabling them, *Gestalt*-like, to become producers. 'Prosumers' supposedly emerged from the dream to take over the means of production, streaming onto computers of every size and resolution.³⁸ The prosumer is subject to the simultaneous triumph and emptiness of commodity aesthetics, where signs substitute as sources and measures of value. The symbolic power of media technology is enhanced by the idea of a liberated consumer, which, like the commodity sign, provides no residual correspondence to a reality other than its own.

In a materialist cultural history, the heroic march to aesthetic realism, digital media and consumer sovereignty looks starkly different. In parallel to a succession of key moments in capitalist development, environmental effects of media technology began to emerge in small, incremental stages in the fifteenth century. The volume of toxic drips and harmful puffs increased over four centuries, spreading across the Earth in a pattern of uneven development established by merchants, mercenaries and missionaries. The Industrial Revolution brought crucial transformations in the scale and scope of media technology, as the convergence of chemical, mechanical and electrical processes accelerated the accumulation of toxins in the environment. In the twentieth century, these innovations launched the era of electronic media and US hegemony while increasing the burden borne by the Earth's ecosystems.

Take film. The type and volume of chemical waste emitted into the air and waterways by large-scale film stock production is traceable to the chemical process for extracting cellulose from cotton and wood pulp, which was invented in the 1800s for papermaking. This process required large volumes of clean water and a variety of chemicals, including alcohol, sodium hydroxide, camphor and nitric and sulphuric acids. From the mid-1920s, the Kodak Park

Plant was churning out 200,000 miles of film stock annually, sucking more than twelve million gallons of water daily from Lake Ontario and spewing the used water, along with chemical effluents, into the Genesee River. At the end of the century, when it supplied 80 per cent of the world's film stock, Kodak Park was using thirty-five to fifty-three million gallons of fresh water a day. By then, the company was the primary source of carcinogenic dioxin released into New York State's environment. Rochester was 'ranked number one in the US for overall releases of carcinogenic chemicals' from 1987 to 2000.³⁹

A fog of enchantment clouds a materialist history of media and environment. But this is an old story of technological hype, with advertising serving as the main source of the mysticism. In Williams's words:

Advertising, in its modern forms, then operates to preserve the consumption ideal from the criticism inexorably made of it by experience. If the consumption of individual goods leaves that whole area of human need unsatisfied, the attempt is made, by magic, to associate this consumption with human desires to which it has no real reference. You do not only buy an object: you buy social respect, discrimination, health, beauty, success, power to control your environment. The magic obscures the real sources of general satisfaction because their discovery would involve radical change in the whole common way of life.⁴⁰

Likewise for the philosopher Max Horkheimer: the supposedly resistant consumer is susceptible to a new mastery, a new servitude, for those who labour to serve and shape that consumer – who might otherwise be a different kind of person in another role.⁴¹ Meanwhile, marketers delight in selling digital media as an historical arrival of a 'New TV Ecosystem'.⁴²

d) Labour

This encourages us to think about the media in terms of work and the environment, as per the contradictory situation of the Asturian strikers confronted by right-wing green restructuring. The thought experiment required by desire to support the miners that must confront the horror their industry has wrought is also required to rethink the media as agents of material impact rather than consciousness.

Since the 1970s, 'knowledge workers' have gained in status among economists thanks to information-based industries that promise endless gains in productivity and the purest of competitive markets.⁴³ They form what Joel Kotkin calls an 'aristocracy of talent' elevated by the meritocratic discourse of progress, informatisation and the 'creative industries', and luxuriate in ever-

changing techniques, technologies and networks. And because their work is abstracted from physical, dirty labour, they thrive in the twilight zone of the technological sublime. On the left, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri graphically, romantically and inaccurately refer to the exchange of information, knowledge and emotion by computer as 'immaterial labor'.⁴⁴ Business people love this form of talk, as they even dream up 'virtual workers'.⁴⁵ Right-wing futurist Alvin Toffler invented the related concept of 'the cognitariat', which has since been taken up and redispersed by progressives; Negri more helpfully uses it to describe people mired in contingent media work who have heady educational qualifications and a grand facility with cultural technologies and genres.⁴⁶

This Pollyannaish decoupling perhaps reaches its acme in telecommuters, who not only have paper-free offices, but office-free work. Like the defence attorney Mickey Haller in Michael Connelly's hardboiled Los Angeles novel *The Brass Verdict*, who works in a Lincoln Town Car driven by an ex-client, they operate from wires and cell-masts rather than buildings. But the net energy benefit from telecommuting in the US is, at best, 0.4 per cent, for while people no longer drive to work, they still live in suburbia and hence travel sizeable distances to experience something resembling commercial and governmental life, in addition to increasing their domestic power use.⁴⁷

The ephemerality of place and environment in these accounts of elite knowledge workers on the move could divert us away from the militant particularism that brings the labour and lives of communities into sharp relief. Williams thought about this. He suggested the term 'mobile privatisation' to capture the paradoxical feelings of being distinct from others yet capable of continuous connection with them.⁴⁸ For Williams, the automobile, radio and television epitomised mobile privatisation – they were industrial forms suitable for the social regulation of populations in the name of individual freedom that twentieth-century capitalism necessitated. Today, the technology that best exemplifies the social condition of mobile privatisation is the mobile phone, which derives its appeal from political-economic arrangements that have seen a rise in two-income families, increased commute time and other characteristics of an overworked, debt-ridden, divided society.⁴⁹

Materialist studies of labour and culture must go further into the ecological history and environmental risks associated with work in media technology. Since the age of print, media technologies have needed and emitted toxic substances, creating modern risks to ecosystems and workers. Print workers, past and present, must contend with poisons from solvents, inks, fumes, dust and tainted wastewaters. Similar conditions affected workers in film-stock manufacture, where cotton dust added the additional risk of 'brown lung'. Occupations involving batteries have historically been some of the most

dangerous, with exposure to lead and other pathogens causing fatal injury to the lungs, skin and nervous system. These illnesses not only make battery workers in the United States the top risk group in the world for lead poisoning, but the expansion of production, salvage and recycling has extended the problems around the world. The manufacture and disposal of plastics have caused increasingly greater damage, with brain, liver, kidney and stomach cancer associated with carcinogenic dioxin and hydrochloric acid released into the environment. Plastic flotsam accumulating in the open waters of the North Pacific (nicknamed the great Pacific garbage patch), North Atlantic and Indian Oceans have threatened habitats and drawn attention to the unthinking habits of consumers addicted to plastic, which is recyclable but not biodegradable – it breaks down into ever smaller fragments but isn't absorbed into the Earth's sink and can last for thousands of years. And microwave communication workers can suffer from 'chronic exposure syndrome', and there is growing concern with lower-level radiation emitted from televisions, computers, electronic games, computer monitors, mobile phones, laptops, networks of telecommunication and electrical towers and power lines. Biothermal risks exist for workers continuously exposed to radio, TV and telecommunication equipment, as well as high-rise office workers near high-power transmission antennae.⁵⁰

Conclusion: i-Thing, I Think I Love You. But I Want to Know for Sure

As we drafted this essay, the latest in Apple's retinue of innovations was upon us via the iPhone 5 – the supply of new designs from the company seems unlimited, along with its ability to stimulate demand and over-production through imitation as the supposedly 'virtuous circle' sees expensive prototypes copied by other firms more cheaply once a market has been established.⁵¹ Whether in the form of a phone, tablet, or computer, the new model will inevitably arrive in a sleek, minimalist package of wonder that offers to transport people across time and space. This bit of magic is precisely how corporations sell high-tech products – they promise transcendence from both our present world and technology's dirty industrial origins.⁵²

Apple clearly exercises a special hold on much of the public imagination, but there is a wider question here about the belief we outlined earlier that new and enduring freedoms and pleasures accompany digital gadgetry, particularly via mobile privatisation. That faith makes it especially difficult to find a secular view of technology, one that refutes the totemic, quasi-sacred power that industrial societies have all too frequently ascribed to modern machinery – an old, old story that, as we have seen, ironically reappears, albeit with new

actors, on a routine basis. Williams's insistence on the historical materiality of communications is a valuable corrective.

We can shake off the magic if we treat innovation sceptically, questioning the planned obsolescence that confuses an abundance of i-things with wellbeing and creativity. We would gain something in return: a connection to the present where we can comprehend the deplorable working conditions that bring these high-tech wonders into the world and the ecological impact of such cool stuff. Cultural materialism shows a way.

In this article, we have revisited Raymond Williams's cultural materialism to expand the 'ecological argument' via biosphere perspectives, linking local ecological catastrophes to global environmental realities. We have tried to honour Williams's socialist ethico-political commitments to labour and his idea of militant particularism while pressing for a deeper analysis of the eco-crisis and forms of labour that contribute to it. This presented a number of arguments against a narrowly consumerist, or neoliberal, view of cultural materialism, and provided opportunities to illustrate what an eco-materialist study of culture might bring. As the Spanish miners understood, the greening of industrial political economies is a strife-ridden, transformational moment that calls on worker participation to move livelihoods and cultural norms toward a society of sustainability. The challenge posed by the militant miners of Asturias and other working-class communities facing similar transformations might just be the most productive place for eco-cultural materialism to ply its trade.

Notes

- 1 Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World: Marx and Marxism 1840–2011* (London: Little, Brown, 2011), 12.
- 2 Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (London: Chatto & Windus/The Hogarth Press, 1983), 255.
- 3 Martin Roberts, 'Spain: The Miners' Rebellion Against Austerity', *New Statesman*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/world-affairs/2012/06/spain-miners%E2%80%99-rebellion-against-austerity>; William Rogers, 'Spanish Miners Continue their Resistance to Austerity Measures', *Left Labor Reporter*, 6 July 2012, <http://leftlaborreporter.wordpress.com/2012/07/06/spanish-miners-continue-their-resistance-to-austerity-measures/>; 'Asturias, Madrid y Castilla y León Fueron las Regiones con más Conflictividad en 2012', *Nueva España*, 2 April 2013, <http://www.lne.es/economia/2013/04/02/asturias-madrid-castilla-leon-regiones-conflictividad-2012/1391064.html>.
- 4 Luis Martín, 'Vivo pensando en el fútbol', *El País*, 3 July 2010, http://elpais.com/diario/2010/07/03/deportes/1278108009_850215.html; Aníbal Malvar, 'Trotksi, el abuelo del héroe nacional', *El Mundo*, 22 June 2008, <http://www.elmundo.es/suplementos/cronica/2008/662/1214085602.html>.
- 5 Trading Economics, 'Energy Imports: Net (% of Energy Use) in Spain', <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/spain/energy-imports-net-percent-of-energy-use-wb-data.html>.

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller

- 6 Allan Hughes and Elaine G. Leigh, 'The Spanish Miners' Fight is our Fight Too', *New Internationalist*, 26 July 2012, <http://newint.org/blog/2012/07/26/spanish-coal-miners-strike/>.
- 7 Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope*, ed. Robin Gale (London: Verso, 1989), 242–50; David Harvey, 'Militant Particularism and Global Ambition: The Conceptual Politics of Place, Space, and Environment in the Work of Raymond Williams', *Social Text* 42 (1995): 69–98.
- 8 Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, *Greening the Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Also see our articles in *Psychology Today*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *Clarín*, available at <http://www.tobymiller.org>.
- 9 This also propels us towards George Marcus' notion of 'multi-sited ethnography' and Laura Nader's conception of 'studying up', in concert with Williams's work: George Marcus, 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95–117; Laura Nader, 'Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up', in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell H. Hymes (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 284–311.
- 10 'Te lo mereces, guaje', *El País*, 13 March 2013, http://deportes.elpais.com/deportes/2013/03/13/champions/1363133292_203000.html; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 301–6.
- 11 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).
- 12 Williams, *Towards 2000*, 248–67.
- 13 Williams, *Towards 2000*, 256.
- 14 Raymond Williams, *Socialism and Ecology* (London: Socialist Environment & Resources Association, 1982), 14. Reprinted in Williams, *Resources of Hope*. Williams was arguably ahead of his time in forging some sort of basis for green socialism. It wasn't until his death in 1988 that social theorists and journals like *Capitalism Nature Socialism* represented a consistent ecological turn in the social sciences. See Michael Goldman and Rachel A. Schurman, 'Closing the "Great Divide": New Social Theory on Society and Nature', *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 563–84.
- 15 Williams, *Resources of Hope*, 250.
- 16 Terry Flew and Stuart Cunningham, 'Creative Industries After the First Decade of Debate', *The Information Society* 26, no. 2 (2010): 113–23; Michael Keane, 'Understanding China: Navigating the Road Ahead', *Economia della Cultura* 1, no. 1 (2009): 19–34; George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson, 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital "Prosumer"', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10, no. 1 (2010): 13–36, incarnate and summarise these positions.
- 17 John Hartley, *Digital Futures for Cultural and Media Studies* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 182.
- 18 Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, and Games Developers' Association of Australia, *Working in Australia's Digital Games Industry: CONSOLIDATION REPORT* (Brisbane: Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, and Games Developers' Association of Australia, 2011).
- 19 PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, *The UK Film, TV and Video Games Industries Today – Powering Ahead* (London: PwC, 2013), <http://www.creativeengland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Screen-Event-Website-version-RM1.pdf>. PwC's powering ahead metaphor might also be applied to its attitude toward paying its corporate tax obligations,

- http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2013/apr/25/pricewaterhousecoopers-complex-structure-tax-properties.
- 20 Edward Castronova, 'On the Research Value of Large Games: Natural Experiments in Norrath and Camelot', *Games & Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media* 1, no. 2 (2006): 163–86.
- 21 Thomas Streeter, 'The Moment of *Wired*', *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (2005): 755–79, outlines the history of this discourse in *Wired* magazine. Sigfrid H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), 260; Jean-Louis Missika, *La fin de la télévision* (Paris: Seuil, 2006); Javier P. De Silva, *La Televisión Ha Muerto: La Nueva Producción Audiovisual en la Era de Internet: La Tercera Revolución Industrial* (Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 2000). Wander here for more: <http://www.mediapost.com/futureofmedia/>.
- 22 Hartley, *Digital Futures*. Sometimes these changes and predictions are celebrated; at others, denounced. On the one hand, media studies buys into the individualist fantasy of reader, audience, consumer or player autonomy – the libertarian intellectual's wet dream of music, movies, television and everything else converging under the sign of empowered fans. On the other, it buys into the corporate fantasy of control – the political economist's arid nightmare of music, movies, television and everything else converging under the sign of empowered firms. Those antinomies shadow the fetish of innovation that informs much talk of media technology and consumerism while ignoring the environmental destruction and centralised power that underpin them. See Toby Miller, "'Step Away from the Croissant": Media Studies 3.0', in *The Media and Social Theory*, ed. David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2008), 213–30.
- 23 Horace Newcomb, 'Studying Television: Same Questions, Different Contexts', *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 1 (2005): 107–11, 110; Tom Standage, 'Your Television is Ringing', *Economist*, 12 October 2006, <http://www.economist.com/node/7995312>.
- 24 Ursula Huws, *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003).
- 25 'A Cyber-House Divided', *Economist*, 4 September 2010, 61–2, <http://www.economist.com/node/16943885>; John Kelly, *Pride of Place: Mainstream Media and the Networked Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, 2008).
- 26 Michel Foucault, 'Photogenic Painting', in Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, *Gérard Fromanger: Photogenic Painting/La peinture photogénique*, trans. Dafydd Roberts, ed. Sarah Wilson (London: Black Dog, 1999), 83.
- 27 George Orwell, 'As I Please', *Tribune*, 12 May 1944, <http://telelib.com/authors/O/OrwellGeorge/essay/tribune/AsIPlease19440512.html>.
- 28 'A Cyber-House Divided', 61.
- 29 Microsoft Windows 95 Launch Footage, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0CRWaz09r8>.
- 30 For more examples of this enchantment with media technology see Maxwell and Miller, *Greening the Media*.
- 31 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Information Economy Report: The Software Industry and Developing Countries* (Geneva: United Nations, 2012).
- 32 John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 122–3.
- 33 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), ix. Sidney Finkelstein, 'McLuhan's Totalitarianism and Human Resilience', *Communication and Class Struggle*, ed. Armand Mattelart and Seth Seiglaub (New York: International General, Sidney), 176–82; Armand Mattelart, *Mapping World Communication; War, Progress, Culture*, trans. Susan Emanuel and James A. Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 129.

- 34 McLuhan's belief that '[a]s software information becomes the prime factor in politics and industry ... suddenly *small is beautiful*' continues to hold sway over the dematerialising fantasies of cyberhipsters. Marshall McLuhan, 'Canada as Counter-Environment', in *Canadian Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sourayan Mookerjee, Imre Szeman and Gail Faurschou (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 71–86, 74.
- 35 Raymond Williams, 'Ideas of Nature', in *Problems of Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 83–4. The essay was originally published in the tellingly titled, *Ecology: the Shaping Inquiry*, ed. Jonathan Benthall (London: Longman, 1972), which appeared at the same time as the groundbreaking study, *The Limits to Growth*, commissioned by the Club of Rome. Donella H. Meadows, Gary Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).
- 36 Ornithological Council, 'Deadly Spires in The Night: The Impact of Communications Towers on Migratory Birds', *Issue Brief from the Ornithological Council* 1, no. 8 (1999), <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/orncounc/issues/OCBv1n8.html>.
- 37 Anna O.W. Leung, Nurdan S. Duzgoren-Aydin, K.C. Cheung and Ming H. Wong, 'Heavy Metals Concentrations of Surface Dust from E-Waste Recycling and its Human Health Implications in Southeast China', *Environmental Science and Technology* 42, no. 7 (2008): 2674–80; Wong, Coby, S.C. Wu, Nurdan S. Duzgoren-Aydin, Adnan Aydin, and Ming H. Wong, 'Trace Metal Contamination of Sediments in an E-Waste Processing Village in China', *Environmental Pollution* 145, no. 2 (2007): 434–42.
- 38 Ritzer and Jurgenson, 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption'.
- 39 Julie A. Reilly, 'Celluloid Objects: Their Chemistry and Preservation', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 30, no. 2 (1991): 145–6; Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs, *Liquid Asset: Great Lakes Water Quality and Industry Needs* (Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs, 1992), <http://www.glc.org/docs/liqasset/liqasset.html>.
- 40 Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System', *Advertising & Society Review* 1, no. 1 2000, DOI: 10.1353/asr.2000.0016.
- 41 Max Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason: Lectures and Essays Since the End of World War II*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. [unnamed], (New York: Continuum, 1996), 126, 129.
- 42 Murgesh Navar, 'The New TV Ecosystem', *Media Post's Video Insider*, 30 June 2008, <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/85767/the-new-tv-ecosystem.html>.
- 43 François Bar with Caroline Simard, 'From Hierarchies to Network Firms', in *The Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Social Consequences of ICTs. Updated Students Edition*, ed. Leah Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 350–62, 351.
- 44 Joel Kotkin, *The New Geography: How the Digital Revolution is Reshaping the American Landscape* (New York: Random House, 2001), 22; Armand Mattelart, *The Information Society: An Introduction* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 177–8, 43; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 286, 290–2.
- 45 Lawrence Webber and Michael Wallace, *Green Tech: How to Plan and Implement Sustainable IT Solution* (New York: American Management Association, 2009), 200–19.
- 46 Alvin Toffler, *Previews and Premises* (New York: William Morrow, 1983); Antonio Negri, *goodbye mister socialism* (Paris: Seuil, 2007).
- 47 Michael Connelly, *The Brass Verdict* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008); Institution of Engineering and Technology, *Rebound: Unintended Consequences from Transport Policies and Technology Innovations*, 2010, 3, 8, <http://www.theiet.org/factfiles/transport/unintended-page.cfm>.
- 48 Williams, *Television*, 26.

- 49 Dan Schiller, *How to Think About Information* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). See also Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American* (New York: Basic Books, 1992) and James Hay, 'My Space?', *Television & New Media* 10, no. 1 (2009): 72–6.
- 50 These examples are drawn from Maxwell and Miller, *Greening the Media*.
- 51 Giovanni Arrighi, 'States, Markets, and Capitalism, East and West', *positions: east asia cultures critique* 15, no. 2 (2007): 251–84.
- 52 Apple has faced a series of labour and environmental scandals since it forced suppliers to speed up the production of gadgets with ever-shorter life spans at the Taiwanese-based supplier Foxconn, confronting all-out rebellion and worker violence at one of its Chinese plants. To the consternation of many brand loyalists, supply chain realities have confounded Apple's just-in-time production system ever since the first iPad arrived on the market, <http://blogs.computerworld.com/bring-your-own-device-byod/21039/iphone-5-factory-riots-2000-chinese-revolt-against-foxconn-conditions-report-itbwcw>; http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/24/technology/data-centers-in-rural-washington-state-gobble-power.html?ref=todayspaper&_r=2&#comments.

Grace Paley and the Tenement Pastoral

Chris Witter

Abstract: Grace Paley's short stories, which first appeared in 1959, are usually read as Jewish, feminist or early postmodern fiction. What is elided in most discussions is the central importance of class. As yet, no critics have substantially explored her work in relation to the formation of an ethnic proletariat in the modern metropolises of the northern US in the early decades of the twentieth century, nor in relation to the Popular Front working-class movement of the 1930s. This article seeks to articulate this history, building on the work of Michael Denning to locate Paley's 'tenement pastoral' in continuity with a plebeian tradition of 'subaltern modernism'.

*

This essay seeks to resituate the work of Grace Paley in relation to the legacy of the Popular Front of the 1930s and what Michael Denning calls 'the ghetto or tenement pastoral'.¹ This is a literary form central to an alternative working-class literary tradition – a 'subaltern modernism' – from which I see Grace Paley's work emerging and diverging.² My argument here is that Paley renegotiates this form in the late 1950s and 1960s in a way that anticipates and – to some extent – inaugurates the counter-cultural New Left and feminist preoccupation with a critique of everyday life. As such, Paley's work constitutes a bridge between the 'Old' and the 'New Left', helping us to understand the emergence of the counter-culture and the reasons why it took the forms it did.

In the introduction to a special issue of *Contemporary Women's Writing*, dedicated to Grace Paley, Marianne Hirsch notes that 'as yet Paley has received little serious critical attention'.³ Paley's work has been explored in relation to discussions of Jewish identity, feminism and literary postmodernism, but, with a few notable exceptions, the importance of class as a determining factor in Paley's work has been consistently elided.⁴ As yet, no critical work on Paley has attempted substantially to explore her work in relation to the historical importance of the 1930s to the 1960s. Consequently, these different vectors appear as 'thematic' preoccupations rather than as historical determinants of a social formation in which Paley's work appears as a constitutive practice.⁵ On the contrary, I suggest that Paley's textual practices engaged with the shifting terrain of America at a crucial moment of historical transformation, which can be broadly characterised in terms of a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, and from modernism to postmodernism.⁶ My contention here is that in order to understand this we must examine Paley's emergence from a specific

conjuncture, which Michael Denning has called ‘the age of the CIO Popular Front’.⁷ This was the moment, in the early 1930s, when a strong working-class movement emerged, whose basis was the new CIO (Congress of Industrial Organisations) unions, and which was rooted in the ethnic neighbourhoods of America’s northern modern metropolises.⁸ This movement was able, until the late 1940s, to exert an economic, political and cultural influence on American life, creating new ways of thinking, being and belonging, as well as new cultural forms and narratives.

Paley’s work emerges from and explores the experience of (chiefly) ethnically Eastern European, Jewish working-class women, living in the tenements of the Bronx and the Lower East Side of New York, between the 1920s and the 1970s, and it is here we must begin if we are to understand how her work is bound organically to three interlinked social movements: the working-class movement of the 1920s–1940s, the counter-cultural New Left of the late 1950s–1970s and women’s struggle throughout the twentieth century – particularly the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Essential to understanding Paley’s textual practice is the transformation of America in the early twentieth century by the development of capitalism, and the elaboration of Fordist political economy. The rapid industrialisation of the US from the 1880s to the 1940s created an intense demand for labour that led to a wave of immigration from Eastern Europe, Asia, South America and the southern US. These forces, along with the reactionary political pressures of Tsarist Russia, are what brought Paley’s family to the US, in 1905, along with so many others. This demand for labour, its concentration in the factories and cities, and the ethnic consciousness that developed in the urban neighbourhoods and fraternal organisations, helped create a strong sense of class consciousness.⁹ However, it was the Great Depression and the resulting economic and political realignment which really produced the active, politically empowered, union-based working-class movement to which Denning ascribes both a renegotiation of US social relations and the ‘laboring of American culture’ – that is, ‘the increased influence on and participation of working-class Americans in the world of culture and the arts’.¹⁰

From 1935 to 1948 this working-class movement exerted a shaping influence on American political economy and created ‘a new militant working-class culture that was no longer marginalized in the “foreign” ghettos’.¹¹ This culture, as the corollary of working-class power, was able to combine ‘pride in ethnic heritage and identity’ with ‘an assertive Americanism’ – an ‘ethnic Americanism’ – that renegotiated and partially reclaimed ‘the figure of “America” itself’.¹² The contradictory effect of this was that the ethnic working class, of which Paley was a part, achieved a new sense of class consciousness mediated by ethnic identity at the very moment when these social groups began

to lose 'their anchorages in the closed cultural world of kin, craft, community, and [ethnic] culture'.¹³ It is exactly these tensions, I would argue, that inform the 'ghetto pastoral' which, according to Denning, 'became the central literary form of the Popular Front, [reconfiguring] the lineaments of the American tale [and] inflecting much of twentieth-century fiction, film, and broadcasting'.¹⁴ This is the form that Paley takes up and reworks in her short fiction.

~ ~ ~

Denning characterises the ghetto or tenement pastoral as 'tales of growing up in Little Italy, the Lower East Side, Bronzeville, and Chinatown, written by plebeian men and women of these ethnic working-class neighbourhoods'.¹⁵ Crucially, these stories 'were not explorations of how the other half lives. Rather, they were tales of how *our* half lives'.¹⁶ Whilst ghetto pastoral emerged from the literary formation of the 1920s and 1930s proletarian avant-garde, its relation to radical politics remained ambiguous. Rather than detailing strikes and struggles, or directly addressing political themes, novels such as Mike Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930), James T. Farrell's *Young Lonigan* (1932) and Richard Wright's *Land Today* (written 1934–35, published 1963), tended to concern themselves primarily with everyday life in working-class neighbourhoods, and particularly with childhood, family and neighbourhood community. The result, Denning argues, was that

The ghetto pastoral was [...] a curious hybrid: it combined the dream of a new proletarian literature nurtured by the cultural politics of the left, the ethnic and racial modalities through which the relations of class were lived, the recurring obsession with working-class childhood, and the struggle with the most prestigious and lucrative literary form, the novel.¹⁷

Denning, then, interprets the tenement pastoral as, primarily, a variant novel form. But, his observation that 'the plebeian writers had a deep ambivalence about the novel' is crucial if we are to extend the tenement pastoral form to include Paley's short fiction.¹⁸ For Denning this ambivalence is multifaceted: on the one hand it derives from the estrangement these working-class writers felt from 'the literary culture of the dominant classes'¹⁹ and from a form that, as Raymond Williams noted, was 'centred predominantly on the problems of inheritance of property and of propertied marriage'.²⁰ On the other hand, this ambivalence seemed to spring from the inherent difficulty of representing the ghetto neighbourhood and the everyday lives of the working classes in a tightly-plotted novel.²¹ For these reasons, it is precisely Paley's choice to write short fiction that qualifies, rather than excludes, her work from being

understood as a continuation and elaboration of the tenement pastoral form. On the one hand we can see Paley's work, with its (controlled) 'sketchiness' and its emphasis on the oral telling of everyday lives, as being in line with a popular tradition of 'true confession' stories, which appeared in magazines like the Yiddish-language *The Forward*, Bernarr MacFadden's immensely popular and successful new magazine of the 1920s *True Story*, and Mike Gold's first incarnation of the *New Masses*, all of which asked for tales of working-class people, told 'naturally, simply, in your own words'.²² On the other hand, we can see how Paley draws on a modernist tradition, running through James Joyce, William Carlos Williams and Langston Hughes – amongst others – who presented proletarian writers with new ways of representing the everyday, forms that avoided the necessity of plotting, and a means of using vernacular which, as Denning puts it, 'avoided the condescension of dialect'.²³ Instead, this tradition sensed in the everyday language of the ethnic working class a complexity and malleability that allowed for new means of poetic expression. This clearly feeds into the more direct antecedents of Paley's work: the short fiction ghetto pastoral tradition that runs from Joyce's *Dubliners* (which she acknowledges as an influence), through Anzia Yeziarska, to Paley's friend and peer, Tillie Olsen.

Yeziarska's 'America and I' is an early example of ghetto pastoral in which we find many of the elements of Paley's fiction. The narrative is delivered as a monologue by a Jewish-Russian working-class woman. It begins: 'As one of the dumb, voiceless ones I speak. One of the millions of immigrants beating, beating their hearts at your gates for a breath of understanding.'²⁴ Here we have the foregrounding of orality that is transmitted to Paley's work from both popular plebeian and modernist traditions, and which is particularly to be found in stories like 'Goodbye and Good Luck' and 'Distance' in which the reader is positioned as addressee. Yeziarska and Paley also have the trick of making language work double-time – both as expressive vernacular and as poetic imagery – for everywhere they employ a language which first appears idiomatic, but decomposes, on second glance, into metaphor.

Yeziarska's opening also makes clear that we are not dealing with 'naturalism', but with allegory. This is important, for Denning sees the ghetto pastoral form as one that constructs the ghetto as 'an allegorical landscape of poverty and desire', in which the actions of the (often young) characters explore the 'pre-political sense of magic and allegory'.²⁵ (Here we see the debt Denning's term owes to William Empson.)²⁶ For Denning this partly emerges from the class position of these writers, and their sense of estrangement from political agency (the realisation of which often appears, as revelation, at the end of the stories). We can certainly trace this in Yeziarska's text. Here, the narrator does not appear as a specific individual, though this story may appear as autobiography.

Rather, the 'one' stands in for 'the millions' it exemplifies. This explains the apparent paradox of the first sentence – 'As one of the dumb, voiceless ones I speak' – which only fully unravels itself within the allegorical structure of a story that is about finding a way of articulating the needs, demands and desires of the ethnic working class. This search takes the form of the unnamed woman narrator's arrival in America and her search for a way of living that gives her independence and meaning. Sick of the deadening drudgery of work, she explains: 'I want to do something with my head, my feelings, all day long, only with my hands I work.' She continues: 'I burned to give, to give something, to do something, to be something.'²⁷ Here we have exactly this sense of pre-political understanding, an as yet inchoate personal desire that allegorises the desire of a whole class; autobiography only operates as the conceit that makes the allegory effective. From her first encounter with 'Americanized' Jews, to the revelation (through self-education) that turns her towards the lives of those who live in the ghettos ('my people'), and instils in her a determination to find America through 'only writing about the Ghetto', each incident appears not as a naturalistic account, but as the exemplary situation – as allegory.²⁸ More, this is an allegory that reproduces ethnic working-class consciousness and validates ethnic working-class experience, opening up a literary space for it, and offering both political and literary direction. Yeziarska's quiet innovation, her 'subaltern modernism', thus fulfils the role Benjamin ascribes to the revolutionary writer in 'Author as Producer', since it has both an 'organisational function' and is a means of 'inducing other producers to produce, and [putting] an improved apparatus at their disposal'.²⁹

As with Yeziarska, Paley's short fiction rides the line between autobiography and allegory that is constitutive to the form of the tenement pastoral, using this as a means of constructing and exploring the ghetto as an 'allegorical landscape of poverty and desire'. Chief among these desires, I would suggest, is for social mobility and autonomy – a struggling to escape poverty and personal entrapment which constitutes a domesticated and personalised expression of gendered class struggle as it appears on the plane of everyday life. This struggle is encoded in the tenement itself, which figures in Paley's work as both material, structuring space (encoding gendered social relations) and as metonym for the historical development of the ethnic working class, as realised through class struggle. Here we might immediately think of the references to this in Paley's essay collection, *Just as I Thought*: the May Day parades, aunties with ILGWU (International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union) memberships, and 'gang fights [...] between the kids of the Third and Fourth International'.³⁰ But what is overt in the essays is woven into the whole fabric of Paley's short fiction, as we can see from a comparison of two stories

from Paley's first collection – 'Goodbye and Good Luck' and 'Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life'.

In 'Goodbye and Good Luck' an ageing Jewish-Russian working-class woman, Rose, narrates to her niece the story of her romance with the star actor of the Russian Arts Theater – Volodya Vlashkin, 'the Valentino of Second Avenue' – in the 1920s.³¹ From details given in the story, we know that Rose was born around 1890, and probably arrived in America as a child. But, the telling itself occurs in the 1950s, and thus stages not only an act of personal and familial revelation, but an encounter between different generations, as well as the historical distance and socio-economic changes that occurred within the ethnic working-class community during that time. Encoded within this is a conflict over tradition, identity and social mobility in an America 'which was making promises to its immigrants, external and internal [... whilst being] at the same time only not quite officially hostile'.³² Paley shows us, in this story, how this conflict between the working-class 'new immigrants' and an 'American' elite played out on the bodies of women in everyday behaviour, within the family and in relation to 'culture'.

Like Yezierska's narrator, Rose rejects and is rejected by the working world of labour-intensive drudgery.³³ Likewise, she rejects the patriarchal division of labour inscribed in 'traditional' Jewish gender roles – and the concomitant limiting of personal mobility and autonomy. She laments her mother's marriage to 'who she didn't like' [*sic*] and rejects the life of her sister, who 'waits in a spotless kitchen for a kind word'.³⁴ Instead, Rose decides 'to live for love', engaging in a relationship with the married actor, Vlashkin.

In some ways this represents an assertion of independence, and a progressive reformulation of sexual relations in the early twentieth century, from that of 'separate male and female spheres' to the construct of the 'companionate' partnership, as Deborah Rosenfelt puts it.³⁵ But, Paley complicates this familiar story of pursuing 'true love against the odds'. Vlashkin is a character who symbolically transcends the ghetto. As Marcus Klein notes, the Russian 'theater of the Lower East Side reached beyond itself', forming a locus of 'culture in the formal sense' and 'breach[ing] the ghetto precisely by parodying the cultural discordance of ghetto life'.³⁶ Not only has Vlashkin 'made it' into the ranks of the 'cultured' and cosmopolitan middle classes, but becoming 'cultured' means, here, being able to pass 'among Americans'.³⁷ It is in this context that we must understand his exchange with Rose: 'why do you wear a scarf around your neck? You only hide your young throat. These are not olden times, my child, to live in shame'. Responding to the implicit charge of parochialism, Rose responds, 'Who's ashamed?' She removes the neck-scarf, but confesses 'my hand right away went to the kerchief's place, because the truth is, it really was olden times'.³⁸ Here we have a sense of the conflict

between what Klein has termed (not without irony) the ‘modernism’ of the ‘Americans’ and the ‘barbarism’ of the ‘new immigrants’, mediated by class and gender. The wearing of the scarf signifies the ‘clinging conservatism’ that Klein attributes to the ghetto. This conservatism is itself multivalent, for, as Klein explains, given that ‘the primary social fact’ of the ghetto, until the 1930s, was its isolation from ‘America’, this had ‘the effect of making retrenchment’ in ‘the old ways, the traditional ways [...] a virtue’ (that is, a form of pride, an expression of kinship, and so on).³⁹ Rose’s removal of the scarf represents the (partial and ambivalent) loosening of these bonds of patriarchal conservatism and the exercising of her desire for sexual, cultural and economic mobility and autonomy. Yet this takes the equivocal form of a desire to be able to pass ‘uptown’, and to ‘stay in strange hotels, among Americans’.⁴⁰ A further ambivalence is the sense that Rose identifies her desires too closely with Vlashkin, not seeing clearly that he encourages her ‘freedom’ only so far as it suits his own desires (tellingly, Rose at one point says: ‘Vlashkin helped me get a reasonable room near the theater to be more free’).⁴¹

Paley thus makes the incident of the scarf stand in, allegorically, for a host of ambivalent conflicts – conflicts that are not only personal and individual, but which are represented (through the conspicuous use of archetypal forms of labour, culture and language use) as ‘typical’ experiences. In this connection, Steve Fraser explains that for many first generation immigrants: ‘the fatalism, restricted mobility, patriarchy, and moral and educational parochialism of the old-world village were reinforced by the exigencies of industrial and urban life’.⁴² However, this situation and the social relations that underpinned it were subsequently transformed by the developments of Fordist political economy (which is also to say, by social struggle). For, ‘the CIO helped fabricate a “new man” – existentially mobile, more oriented to consumption than production, familiar with the impersonal rights and responsibilities of industrial due process’.⁴³ Paley positions Rose in the midst of this crucial shift within the ethnic working-class: in removing the scarf Rose symbolically prefigures this loosening of the bonds of ‘tradition’. But, Rose is no ‘new *man*’. Whilst Vlashkin’s bohemian mobility – as a petty bourgeois male – is relatively untroubled, for Rose this process is fraught with guilt, exclusion and (sexual and economic) exploitation. Rose herself makes this clear:

Don’t laugh, you ignorant girl.

Do you think it was easy for me? [...] In the morning I had to do piecework if I wanted to keep by myself. So I made flowers. Before lunch time every day a whole garden grew on my table.

This was my independence, Lillie dear, blooming, but it didn’t have no roots and its face was paper.⁴⁴

In this context, a further similarity with Yezierska's story emerges: both narrators – in their search for self-assertion and independence – take recourse to the cultural.

Throughout the story, Rose's desire for Vlashkin is inseparable from her admiration of his art – which even makes him appear 'a younger man, lively on restless feet, his mouth clever'.⁴⁵ Yet, as stated above, this identification of her desire for a more fulfilling life with Vlashkin – and his cultural capital – is a point of tension within the story. This is encoded here in the reoccurring metaphor of theatre. As Rose explains to her niece: 'a great artist like Volodya Vlashkin ... in order to make a job on the stage, he's got to practice. I understand it now, to him life is like a rehearsal'.⁴⁶ Rose's life is given over to Vlashkin as mere material for 'practice', and the fantasy of social mobility which, for Rose, is implicit in their relationship, is in fact predicated on illusion, for Vlashkin has no intention of marrying her.

One thing that remains unequivocal, however, is Paley's celebration of the verbal creativity of Rose's telling and of the Yiddish-inflected language of the tenement neighbourhoods. As we noted above, throughout her work Paley uses idiomatic language to produce startling metaphors, locating creative resources within everyday speech and experience. One of the best examples from this story is Rose's description to her niece of her piecework, quoted above. Here Paley connects and celebrates in one gesture Rose's craft – in making paper flowers (roses?) and in story-telling – with her struggle to assert herself and establish her autonomy. Thus, at the same time as Rose claims her independence 'didn't have no roots', Paley cultivates and renovates her own 'roots', locating in the creativity and struggle of the ethnic working-class women of the tenement neighbourhoods a distinctly counter-hegemonic 'usable past'.⁴⁷ If this is a story about 'tradition' and 'culture', then, it does not simply concede these to reactionary social forces. Instead, Paley points to the sort of 'radical tradition' of women's story telling that Deborah Rosenfelt has outlined – one distinctly bound together with struggles along the lines of ethnicity and class, which is also to say, struggles over the national 'tradition' and 'culture' of America.⁴⁸

The course of this struggle, and the enormous cultural shift that occurred as a result, becomes clearer if we compare this story with another, 'Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Life'. In this story, Faith – a reoccurring character in Paley's fiction – appears as mother and wife, the constant anchor of the male lives she cares for. All the action of the two vignettes that compose the story (respectively 'The Used-Boy Raisers' and 'A Subject of Childhood') occurs within the tenement apartment. Whilst two husbands, a lover and two sons come and go, setting 'off in pride on paths which are not my concern', Faith remains.⁴⁹ In some ways, then, she exemplifies Friedan's 'feminine

mystique', since her own life is subordinated to the care of these men and the children who will one day become men.

At the same time, Faith exemplifies the real gains achieved through working-class women's struggle. Set in Greenwich Village in the 1950s, the difference between Rose and Faith exactly exemplifies the shift from the first generation immigrant, rooted in 'olden times' and the more mobile and 'Americanized' second generation. Beginning a 'compendium of motivations and griefs, life to date', Faith says:

Truthfully, Monday through Fridays – because of success at work – my ego is hot; I am a star; whoever can be warmed by me, I may oblige [...] On Saturday mornings in my own home, however, I face the sociological law called the Obtrusion of Incontrovertibles. For I have raised these kids, with one hand typing behind my back to earn a living, I have raised them all alone without a father to identify themselves with in the bathroom like all the other little boys in the playground.⁵⁰

Encoded here is a different sense of belonging, a changed structure of feeling, and a partial reconfiguration of gender and familial relations. Faith asserts a new sense of 'independence', based on new opportunities for education and employment (though Paley makes it clear that we would be naïve to idealise these). Whilst Faith is, perhaps, anxious that her sons do not have 'a father to identify themselves with', she is proud of her achievement in raising herself and her children up 'from toilets in the hall and scavenging in great cardboard boxes at the Salvation Army', and that it 'has been my perversity to do this alone'.⁵¹ The space of the tenement apartment encodes this independence – it is 'my own home' – and she has a degree of sexual independence in as much as she is able to offer a spare key to Clifford, her lover, inviting him into that space. Indeed, the tenement apartment is more than a symbol: it appears here as the materialisation of gendered social relations – as a structured and structuring space. Consequently, however, it is also an ambivalent space, where Faith is trapped caring for her children 'on Saturday mornings'.

If Faith exhibits a new sense of independence, this is modulated by a discourse of integration: Faith appears more 'Americanised' than Rose – linguistically, culturally and economically. Indeed, this appears here in a modernist discourse of rationality and expertise that has roots in the 'scientific management' and macroeconomic and social 'planning' of the New Deal, and which continued through to the 1960s. I'm thinking here of the psychoanalytic terms, recourse to 'sociology' and the scientific jargon – such as 'thermodynamic' and 'speedy atmosphere' – which appear in Faith's summary of her personal situation. Likewise, in the first vignette of the story, when

Faith is discussing religion with her current and previous husband ('Pallid' and 'Livid' respectively), Livid inveighs against 'Hypocrisy. Corruption. Cave dwellers. Idiots. Morons'.⁵² On the one hand, this indicates a move away from the religious ties of the 'old world' – specifically Judaism. But, beyond this, as Elaine Tyler May argues, a discourse of 'expertise' can be seen as a vital part of postwar liberal ideology:

Postwar America was the era of the expert [...] Physicists developed the bomb; strategists created the cold war; scientific managers built the military-industrial complex [...] Science and technology seemed to have invaded virtually every aspect of life, from the most public to the most private. Americans were looking to professionals to tell them how to manage their lives.⁵³

This included everything from technical management of economic cycles to surviving nuclear fall out to successful child-rearing and satisfying sex. The appropriation of this discourse by the CIO generation must in turn be understood as a part of a move away from 'olden times' and an attempt to negotiate a space within American society. In this – in, for example, Faith's anxieties about correctly rearing her children – we see how these societal shifts impact upon everyday life, and the structure of feeling of a whole generation.

At the same time as a new, 'Americanised' independence is asserted by Faith, this is compromised in a number of ways. Beyond the economic struggle that underpins Faith's independence – just as it underpinned Rose's – Paley also makes us attentive to gender relations, as I intimated above. In the second vignette, Faith has an argument with her lover, Clifford, over the quality of her parenting (one centred on the ideology Tyler May identifies). Insulted, Faith throws an ashtray at Clifford and he leaves. Whilst all of the adult men in her life come and go freely, Faith remains in the apartment; it becomes a place of stasis and confinement – a place where her life is subordinated to the care of her lovers and her sons. After the argument, Faith pleads with her youngest son to go out and play with his brother, as she is 'despairing for one solitary minute'.⁵⁴ But, he refuses: 'I don't care if Richard goes away, or Clifford. They can go do whatever they wanna do [...] I'm gonna stay right next to you forever, Faith.'⁵⁵ The story ends:

I cradled him. I closed my eyes and leaned on his dark head. But the sun in its course emerged from among the water towers of downtown office buildings and suddenly shone white and bright on me. Then through the short fat fingers of my son, interred forever, like a black-and-white-barred king in Alcatraz, my heart lit up in stripes.⁵⁶

Of all Paley's stories, this ending is one of the most clearly epiphanic moments. But, Paley's allegory reveals only antinomy. Rather than finding reconciliation with men through motherly love – as some critics have suggested – here Faith's love and her desire to mother her child subjects her to his demands and desires.⁵⁷ This is clearly paralleled by her relationships with Clifford and the two husbands of the first vignette. The symbolism of the sun, which illuminates Faith's heart but also creates imprisoning shadows, articulates the contradictions of this: that female desire for men – whether heterosexual or mothering – can become an opportunity for exploitation by men.

One thing Paley clearly avoids in her stories is the sort of political conversion narrative that has often been described as a mainstay of much radical proletarian fiction of the 1930s.⁵⁸ Paley's reconfiguration of the form of the ghetto pastoral privileges its emphasis upon the everyday in order to explore the micrography of struggle and its ubiquity in the lives of working-class women, concretely relating the personal and the political, the objective and the subjective. As we have seen, one terrain on which this plays out in these stories is the ambiguous character of desire, as both repressive and liberating force.⁵⁹ Indeed, the best paraphrasing of Faith's situation in 'Two Short Sad Stories' appears in another story, 'Faith in a Tree', from Paley's second collection. In this story, Faith's mother tells her: 'You're an American child. Free. Independent.' Faith wonders:

Now what does that mean? I have always required a man to be dependent on, even when it appeared that I had one already. I own two small boys whose dependence on me takes up my lumpen time and my bourgeois feelings.⁶⁰

Far from presenting the pressures experienced by women as 'inevitable' or 'timeless', Paley uses such antinomies – and particularly the contradictions of desire – to map the intersectionality of struggle, foregrounding the continuities and discontinuities between the struggles of the ethnic working-class of the Popular Front and those of women in the 1950s and 1960s, in a serious attempt to expose the political and social contradictions encoded within everyday life. As such, Paley's stories of the difficulties faced by individuals are always allegories that mark out the ongoing necessity of collective struggle. In relation to this, we should note that just as 'Two Short Sad Stories' is representative of an emergent second-wave feminist political consciousness, so 'Faith in a Tree' is the first story in which Paley begins to address the peace movement of the 1960s.

What we can now see is that Paley represents a point of connection between the CIO Popular Front of the 1930s and feminist and New Left dissent in the

1960s. We thus begin to understand not only the formation of Paley's textual practices, but also the crucial importance of social struggles along the lines of ethnicity and gender to the emergence of the counter-cultural concern, in the 1960s, with everyday life, interpersonal relations and the politics of 'culture'. Moreover, we see that this alternative tradition, this 'subaltern modernism' of which the tenement pastoral is a part, becomes one important resource for the renegotiation of modernism in the 1960s by writers engaged (in various ways) with working-class, feminist and New Left movements. This provides us with a more concrete basis for reconstructing the formation of the 'anti-modern' or postmodern.⁶¹ More work must be done here but, through the tracing of such histories, we may begin to develop a new understanding of our relation to modernism and postmodernism, and to the social movements of the twentieth century.

Notes

- 1 Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front* (London: Verso, 2010), 231.
- 2 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 231.
- 3 Marianne Hirsch, 'Grace Paley Writing the World', *Contemporary Women's Writing* 3, no. 2 (2009), 121–6, 121.
- 4 See the brief discussions of Paley in: Kathlene McDonald, *Feminism, the Left, and Postwar Literary Culture* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 109; Deborah Rosenfelt, 'From the Thirties: Tillie Olsen and the Radical Tradition', *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 3 (1981), 371–406; Alan Wald, *American Night*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 216.
- 5 See: Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 94.
- 6 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 27.
- 7 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 21.
- 8 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 6–7.
- 9 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 8–9, 239.
- 10 Denning, *Cultural Front*, xvi–xvii.
- 11 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 7.
- 12 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 9.
- 13 Steve Fraser, 'The "Labor Question"', in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 64.
- 14 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 231.
- 15 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 230.
- 16 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 230.
- 17 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 240.
- 18 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 231.
- 19 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 231.
- 20 Raymond Williams, quoted in Denning, *Cultural Front*, 241.
- 21 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 243–8.

- 22 Denning, 204–5. Paley mentions that her grandmother subscribed to *The Forward*, in *Just as I Thought* (London: Virago, 1999), xiv.
- 23 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 242.
- 24 Anzia Yeziarska, 'America and I', in *America and I*, ed. Joyce Antler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 72.
- 25 Denning, *Cultural Front*, 244, 236.
- 26 William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1960).
- 27 Yeziarska, 'America and I', 78.
- 28 Yeziarska, 'America and I', 82.
- 29 Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 233.
- 30 Paley, *Just as I Thought*, 40, 36.
- 31 Paley, *The Collected Stories* (London: Virago, 1999), 4.
- 32 Marcus Klein, *Foreigners* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 20.
- 33 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 3.
- 34 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 6, 3.
- 35 Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt, 'Getting into the Game', *Women Studies International Forum* 9, no. 4 (1986), 368.
- 36 Klein, *Foreigners*, 33.
- 37 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 13.
- 38 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 5.
- 39 Klein, *Foreigners*, 18–21.
- 40 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 13.
- 41 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 6.
- 42 Fraser, *Rise and Fall*, 66.
- 43 Fraser, *Rise and Fall*, 70.
- 44 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 6–7.
- 45 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 6.
- 46 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 10.
- 47 See Klein on Van Wyck Brooks, *Foreigners*, 39–46.
- 48 Rosenfelt, 'From the Thirties'.
- 49 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 90.
- 50 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 94.
- 51 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 94.
- 52 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 87.
- 53 Elaine Tyler May, 'Cold War – Warm Hearth', in *Rise and Fall*, 164.
- 54 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 98.
- 55 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 99.
- 56 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 99.
- 57 See: Hoke Greiner, 'The Question of Chronology in Paley's "Two Short Sad Stories From a Long and Happy Life"', *Studies in Short Fiction* 29, no. 4 (1992), 583–6.
- 58 Denning, 235; Rosenfelt, 'Getting into the Game', 264.
- 59 Cf. Empson, *Some Versions*, 7.
- 60 Paley, *Collected Stories*, 181.
- 61 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 3.

Keywords

Abuse

Abuse is first recorded in the early fifteenth century in English (although ‘abusion’, with related meaning, occurs slightly earlier). The immediate forerunner is the Middle French *abus/abbus*, whose earliest sense is the improper use of power. The etymological root is the Latin *abūsus*, the past participle of the verb *abūti*, which had a range of signification, some of which was retained in English: to use up, to squander, waste, to make full use of, utilise, to take advantage of, exploit, to put to wrong use, to misinterpret, misrepresent, to misuse (language).

The over-arching sense of the term is the improper treatment of something or someone, although as is always the case, it is the variation in meaning which is most significant. Interestingly, the first recorded use in Middle English (borrowed from the French) relates to questions of governance, particularly with regard to politics and the law. Caxton (1483), for example, refers to ‘the abuses of the courte’, and this sense is retained in the technical legal phrase ‘abuse of process’. A slightly later extension introduces the more general meaning of misuse, which has been current from the late fourteenth century but which has broadened considerably and now includes almost any object. Thus, for example, the use of the term to refer to harmful or excessive taking of a drug – a coinage that dates from the mid to late eighteenth century, as in Wesley’s warning (1787) that ‘distilled liquors have their use, but [they] are infinitely overbalanced by the abuse of them’. Two other developments of the term, indirectly related, have persisted since the late sixteenth century. These are the improper use of words, defined neatly by Puttenham (1589): ‘*Catachresis*, or the Figure of abuse’. And the now common sense of insulting or nasty language, as for example: ‘he ran out screaming abuse’. Another retention is the sense of using up or wearing out; this is marked as obsolete by the *OED*, though the meaning is surely current in phrases such as ‘an abuse of hospitality’, ‘an abuse of someone’s patience’, and so on. This leaves two senses which are both familiar and resonant in contemporary usage: sexual maltreatment (dating from the late sixteenth century), and the inflicting of physical, emotional or mental harm (effectively from the eighteenth century).

Two broad patterns of significance are noticeable then. The first is the general sense of improper practice, deriving from the incorrect, or corrupt, breaching of customs or rules (either explicitly codified or socially understood). This covers everything from the misapplication of the law, to the ‘wrong’ use of words, to the ‘misuse’ of a drug. The second general meaning,

Keywords

which appears later, is important in that it refers specifically to damage, of various kinds, to human beings. The transition may be via the sense of a verbal insult or the use of contemptuous language against a person, from the mid sixteenth century, but the shift is clear – from the impersonal (an offence against a socially given code) to the personal (harm to a human being). Again, however, the interest lies in the specifics since there are sub-divisions within this development. The first relates to a particular type of bodily harm – sexual violation – and was almost without exception (the exception being ‘self-abuse’ to mean masturbation) used with regard to women and children until the very late twentieth century. Coke’s *Institutes of the Laws of England* (1634), for example, gives a definition of rape which illustrates both the application of the term and, inadvertently, the historically changing bounds of sexual convention: ‘the unlawful and carnal knowledge and abuse of any woman above the age of ten years against her will’. The second sub-division refers primarily to physical violence and was first recorded (1698) in a petition to parliament that sought legislation to prevent ‘the foul abuse of children at schools’ (perhaps significantly, it was followed by a reference to the ill-treatment of animals). Though it did not occur until the mid to late twentieth century, this sense was extended importantly to signify emotional or mental harm (usually, though not always, accompanied by corporal violence or the threat thereof).

It is striking that in the last third of the twentieth century, the use of abuse in its two most recent senses grew exponentially. It is unclear precisely why this has happened, though it is likely to be related to a shift in attitudes to specific modes of behaviour which were once condoned but which are now categorised and treated as socially unacceptable. Of particular relevance in this regard has been the achievement of feminism in revealing the extent of previously unacknowledged forms of violence towards women and children in particular. But whatever the cause, there has been a remarkable growth in the use of a set of noun phrases to designate categorical practices of abuse, together with related terms. Examples include ‘sexual abuse’; ‘physical abuse’; ‘psychological/mental abuse’; ‘drug/alcohol abuse’; ‘child abuse’; ‘elder abuse’; ‘partner abuse’; ‘domestic abuse’; ‘animal abuse’; ‘abuse victim’; ‘abuse counsellor’; ‘abuse scandal’. One final and curious twist in the semantic history of abuse has been the very recent euphemistic deployment of the term. The grotesque practices carried out by American soldiers on Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib jail in the early twenty-first century were successfully framed by the authorities as abuse rather than torture (individual soldiers were charged with aggravated assault and battery). This obfuscation (‘enhanced interrogation technique’ is another example) was evidently an attempt to avoid the politically embarrassing charge that the prisoners’ human rights had been violated.

Keywords

The term abuse, it turns out, can be an acceptable way of referring to the unacceptable.

Tony Crowley
Scripps College, California

Recoveries

Ethel Carnie Holdsworth: *This Slavery*¹

This Slavery (1925) is a key example of an interwar socialist novel written from and largely about working-class female experience. In Nicola Wilson's introduction to the new edition, Ethel Carnie Holdsworth (1886–1962) emerges as an extraordinary figure: a mill worker turned professional novelist, poet, editor and journalist whose literary work spanned poetry, feminist polemic, popular romance and children's books.² Holdsworth appears as a writer at once connected with the currents of the left in the decades before the Second World War and yet in a sometimes antagonistic relationship with the individuals and institutions that have come to form its familiar landscape. She was for a time a protégée of Robert Blatchford, for example, who appointed her editor of his *Woman Worker* in 1909, but her tenure lasted only a matter of months. Wilson suggests that her increasingly outspoken political writings did not suit Blatchford's wish to present her as a 'Lancashire Fairy' (ix).

These biographical details are immensely useful in approaching this arresting and original but also enigmatic novel. *This Slavery* is a confrontational text in ferocious revolt against the factory system it depicts, and yet it is also politically ambiguous in a way that socialist and feminist critics may find problematic. The plot concerns two sisters, Hester and Rachel Martin, Lancashire millworkers and socialists whose lives take different directions under the pressures of unemployment. Holdsworth establishes the contrast between the sisters as an expression of the utopian and scientific aspects of the socialist tradition, but also as a complementary distinction between heart and brain: Hester plays Beethoven ('the son of a cook') while her sister reads *Das Kapital* (33). Rachel, practical and materialist, perceives the solution to the brutality of their situation only in revolution, and her imagination is frequented by violent visions of a socialism that may come 'knee-deep in blood' (70). Hester, whose vision of socialism is artistic and utopian, is unable to reconcile herself to violence, and sees her escape in marriage to a mill manager. This marriage is a central moral problem: Hester's argument that 'I have reduced my Slavery from being a slave of many to being a slave of one, compromising no more than the rest of the slaves do' (138) is neither fully rejected nor accepted by the text. The sisters' lives are interwoven with those of several male characters, particularly with the itinerant, prophet-like Bob Stiner, an outcast who preaches socialism through chalked slogans, 'a passing ship with the old flag flying', bearing the 'good true, unadulterated message' (29). Stiner appears as an icon of a pure but unworldly ideal that can only, like Stiner himself, appear at the margins of social reality.

The equivocation between a realist and a symbolic register suggested by this outline is at the heart of the political question the novel poses. As Wilson acknowledges, the key critical problem in the novel is the absence of clear historical markers (xviii). Although references to figures in the socialist tradition – Shelley, Morris, Marx – appear throughout, there is no clear sense of historical moment. The centrepiece is a confrontation between the workers and the mill owners, the violence of its outcome recalling the turbulent years of 1910–11. The absence of references to the First World War or the Russian Revolution would support that reading. But Holdsworth's rejection of historical specificity is also part of her response to the formal challenges the novel presents for the working-class writer. Holdsworth steers her novel away from real historical conditions in a bid for a generalising, even mythic register that emerges quite unexpectedly in the second of the novel's two 'books', in which the novel appears to make a series of striking comments on its own formal problems. A 'Prologue' sung by 'Time' begins the second book, and the same voice returns near the end to conclude that what is told is 'Just a fantastic human story, symbolising Society – and all its struggling types' (250). However, another voice, seemingly authorial, asserts a different challenge to novelistic convention, making ironic apologies for the text's frustration of reader expectations: 'I am sorry if you had expected the curtain to ring down on a beginning which is traditionally the ending of a tale', but 'Such is life' (122). These voices appeal simultaneously for a more symbolic and a more realistic literary mode, adequate for expressing the wider forces of history and for the reality of working-class lives that do not coincide with traditional novelistic structures. A final anonymous voice appears on the last page to assert that the frustrated individual lives are nonetheless components of a grand narrative of struggle which is the novel's deeper concern: 'For in all that we were – and we were very human – we had but one glory. We were of thee, Democracy' (250). Holdsworth's rejection of historical detail is therefore intended to allow the text to stand as the expression of the spirit of a particular tradition. But this produces a text that feels strangely ahistorical, and which risks depriving that tradition of its real, lived history; ennobling and yet also disempowering the figures for whom it seems to speak.

As a working-class woman novelist, Holdsworth was writing without an established tradition behind her. There are connections to be made, however, with radical writing of a later period, though this strange, intensely conflicted novel seems destined to resist any final categorisation. Although a recent article has contrasted Holdsworth's critical neglect with the more established reputation of Sylvia Townsend Warner, interpreting the contrast in terms of the authors' class backgrounds,³ the resemblances between *This Slavery* and Warner's work are striking and suggestive. In particular, Holdsworth's plotting

Recoveries

of romance crossing class lines at a moment of violent confrontation could be brought into a productive dialogue with Warner's *Summer Will Show*.⁴ *This Slavery*'s power to provoke and unsettle makes its recovery a genuine enrichment of the body of radical fictions, and suggests that a wider recovery and reappraisal of Holdsworth's would be of immense value.

Elinor Taylor
University of Salford

Notes

- 1 Ethel Carnie Holdsworth, *This Slavery* [1925]. Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2011. xxxiii + 260 pp. £12 pb. ISBN 978-1-84233-141-5.
- 2 Nicola Wilson, 'Introduction', in *This Slavery*, ix–x.
- 3 Belinda Webb, 'Neglected Women Writers: This is a Class Issue', *Guardian Books Blog*, 8 March 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2012/mar/08/neglected-women-writers-class-issue>.
- 4 Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Summer Will Show* (1936; New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2009).

Reviews

Kelly Matthews, *The Bell Magazine and the Representation of Irish Identity: Opening Windows*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012. x + 208 pp. €45 hb. ISBN 978-1-84682-323-7.

A couple of years ago I went in search of the burial place of perhaps the most important public left-wing intellectual of post-independence Ireland, Peadar O'Donnell. Even in the small County Mayo town of Swinford, which is home to the shared grave of O'Donnell and his wife Lile to whom he dedicated his firsthand account of civil war in Iberia, *Salud! An Irishman in Spain*, there are few who know the location. The name on the headstone is now as worn as the general Irish public's memory of this Donegal novelist, firebrand and editor. It is one of the strengths of Kelly Matthews's new study of *The Bell* (1940–54) that she gives due respect to O'Donnell's role as founder and second editor, after the more celebrated Seán O'Faoláin, of this most successful literary magazine of the Irish twentieth century.

There is no doubt that O'Faoláin, who edited *The Bell* from its foundation in 1940 to O'Donnell's accession in 1946, was the more visible, more hands-on and more literary of the two. Matthews refers to a 1945 Vivian Mercier article in which the young critic worries about the shadow cast by the magazine's first editor. 'For Seán O'Faoláin is *The Bell*', wrote Mercier. 'He is not just a figurehead – he is the magazine, as you find out after, or before, you have written one article for it.' For almost every one of the issues he oversaw, O'Faoláin wrote a lengthy, often combative, editorial – these pieces on their own provide a very useful insight into Irish liberalism at a time of conservative, Fianna Fáil dominance. The opposite approach to micromanagement was true of O'Donnell, so much so that assistant editors like Anthony Cronin and Val Mulherns – usefully tracked down and interviewed by Matthews – voice concerns about the Donegal man's increasingly cavalier attitude to his duties as the 1940s became the 1950s, concerns employed to comic effect by Cronin in his 1964 novel *The Life of Riley*, where O'Donnell becomes the ineffectual editor of *The Trumpet*, Prunshios McGonaghey.

Prior to the establishment of *The Bell*, O'Faoláin and O'Donnell were both successful novelists, published by the fashionable London firm of Jonathan Cape – they had been introduced by their reader and editor at Cape, Edward Garnett. While they had both been members of the IRA during the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–21, their political trajectories changed markedly with independence. O'Faoláin moved quickly away from republican radicalism, which he renounced as overly romantic; we see this determination to move

Reviews

from romance to realism reflected in both his fiction and in his editorship of *The Bell*, where he champions the sort of documentary realism evident in British magazines of the 1930s such as *Left Review* and *Fact*. As early as 1931, we see O'Faoláin worrying in a letter to Garnett about O'Donnell's preference for politics over literature. On asking O'Donnell if he were given the choice, never to be able to write a line or never to be able to take part in politics, O'Donnell replied that 'there wouldn't even be a conflict ... not a moment's hesitation. I wouldn't need even to think'.

So, in many ways, the two key men behind *The Bell* made a rather odd couple: you have O'Faoláin, supersaturated in the literary greats, with his propensity to quote French at every opportunity and his profound fear of ever being thought a peasant among his Bloomsbury friends, set against O'Donnell who gloried in his wild, rural background and mistrusted the bourgeois outlook unto death. But the partnership somehow worked and the journal became a great success, launching or sustaining the careers of a wide variety of writers from Brian Friel to Brendan Behan to Patrick Kavanagh. While O'Faoláin and O'Donnell were the engine room of *The Bell*, they gathered around them a circle of writers and thinkers who became the successors to Yeats's Revival generation. Among those to have an editorial role over the fourteen-year run were Frank O'Connor, Louis MacNeice, Ernie O'Malley, Maurice Walsh and Geoffrey Taylor. Not everyone appreciated the coming of these new young guns into literary Dublin. The playwright Louis D'Alton, in a 1941 letter to Sean O'Casey, describes the old Cork friends of O'Faoláin and O'Connor as 'a sort of literary Marx brothers'. 'They want to be claimed men of supreme genius', he goes on, 'but the world at large is not to be coddled'.

And it was not just from the older generation that *The Bell* and its circle took flak; there were all sorts of internal strains too. O'Faoláin and O'Connor's slapstick act did not last long, with O'Connor quickly getting fed up of his old companion's pretensions and demands. O'Faoláin would also, eventually, fall out with O'Donnell, and Matthews is particularly good on this parting of the ways, pointing towards a difference of opinion on the question of Zionism in Palestine. Broadly speaking, O'Faoláin was more sympathetic to the Arab position than O'Donnell, and when O'Donnell editorialised that Jews would be welcome to settle in his native Donegal, O'Faoláin wrote privately to Hubert Butler that 'the brutal dishonesty of such a statement revolts me'. The spat ended O'Faoláin's role as Books Editor which he had taken on after stepping down as editor. But if there was bad blood it did not last long, and in later years the two men were eager to credit each other with the achievement of *The Bell*. Writing to *The Irish Times* in 1970, O'Faoláin credited O'Donnell with 'what may fairly be called, in his name, a one-man Little Magazine'.

If Peadar O'Donnell's grave still awaits its due, the magazine he worked so hard to found and sustain now, at last, has an appropriate memorial. Kelly Matthews is to be congratulated on producing a highly readable, well researched and interesting account of this key moment in Ireland's cultural history.

Frank Shovlin
University of Liverpool

Adrian Barlow, *Extramural: Literature and Lifelong Learning*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2012. 204 pp. £19.50 pb. ISBN 978-0-7188-9279-1.

Extramural education has a long history. Back in 1112, the Lincolnshire Abbey of Croyland, a European centre of Benedictine learning, sent monks out across the Fens to give lectures in local barns and, according to tradition, the first extramural lecture on philosophy was delivered by a Croyland monk in Cambridge. So Cambridge began its university life as an extramural outpost of Croyland (14).

The genesis of extramural studies in its modern sense stems from the 1870s and had its origins leading out from Cambridge, when James Stuart, Fellow of Trinity College, gave a lecture entitled 'University Extension' to the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association. He began his lecture: 'The object of all education is to teach people to think for themselves' (16). Stuart was following in the footsteps of Cardinal Newman in stating the case for 'Liberal studies' (a free and liberating education) which was based, interestingly, on the idea of *self-education*. People who are self-educated are likely – in words taken from Newman's *The Idea of a University* – 'to have more thought, more mind, more philosophy, more true enlargement, than those earnest but ill-used persons, who are forced to load their minds with a score of subjects against an examination' (17). And so University Extension lecturers from Cambridge, venturing out far and wide (to Victorian industrial towns and cities especially) with this mission, began a tradition which led, with the birth of the WEA in 1903, to the growth of joint courses with Boards and Departments of Extramural Studies. English Literature was always popular, especially with women students, in 'the great tradition' of twentieth-century adult education.

Adrian Barlow presents evidence and argument, eloquently and richly illustrated from his teaching experience, for the continued relevance of adult education – which at its best has always been radical and challenging. He quotes Williams and Hoggart not just to support the 'liberal adult education' arguments but as two among the best known full-time extramural tutors, whose own outstanding academic work and writing was nourished by teaching adult students 'beyond the usual frontiers' (36).

Reviews

Barlow is clearly a fine teacher of English Literature and this book, giving accounts of his lecturing and teaching between 2005 and 2011 mainly at Madingley Hall, the home of the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education, merits a late addition and placing to enhance the library record of 'Extramural' work. His talents, based on wide interests and erudition, are evident throughout. A particularly good example is the lecture he gave on Alan Bennett and *The Habit of Art* at Madingley Hall in 2010. The play, which centres on an imagined reunion, late in their lives, between W.H. Auden and Benjamin Britten, was very well received by full houses at the National Theatre in early 2010. The NT had announced that it would beam a live performance from the Lyttleton Theatre to screens and theatres around the world. Barlow's lecture, planned with this exceptional promotion in mind, takes on all the big issues and themes with a *tour de force* survey embracing the complexities of Auden and Britten's friendship, as interpreted through a 'drama about drama' within which consideration of Bennett's own biographical and artistic concerns are interwoven. This chapter explores a complexity of lives, art, literature and language which could itself be used as a stimulus for an ambitious residential adult education course.

Similar qualities of learning, teaching and writing are found in the book's three parts. In Part 1.2: 'On Course: Teaching Literature in Lifelong Learning', he relates how he spent much of a two-hour class studying George Herbert's sonnet 'Prayer', exploring in particular the line 'Heaven in ordinarie, man well dress'd', and, using the *OED* and Empson, weighed the merits of eight different meanings of 'ordinarie' (35). In the same section he describes in detail, over four pages, a weekend course he taught on T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* which led to a further two courses on 'Four Quartets in Context' – all fascinating, and insightful. Part 2 is devoted to the texts of lectures given mainly to literary societies supporting authors of the 'Great War' period, but also to lectures on Trollope and Thomas Paine. The lecture on the latter, entitled 'Tom Paine's Plain Words' given in June 2009 to mark the two hundredth anniversary of Paine's death, focused on Paine's awareness of language, helping 'create the very language of politics' (63). This awareness, especially of the contrast between *rhetoric* and *argument*, gave strength to Paine's own oratory and writing. Part 3 is essentially a blog, 'World and Time', which Barlow began to write in 2009, working best 'when prompted by [...] some book I have been reading, some lecture I've just delivered or class I have taught' (11). Here the tendency towards dilettantism (present occasionally in Parts 1 and 2) has freer rein, but comments on Stefan Collini, Frank Kermode, and especially Aminatta Foma's novel *The Memory of Love*, raise Barlow's thinking and writing back to levels consonant with the *Extramural* opening theme.

A major disappointment with the book flows from its title *Extramural*, because although the author refers to this important word being ‘now out of favour’ (13), he fails to place the teaching, students and culture of Madingley Hall and all it stands for (exceptionally high fees and consequently an increasingly narrow social range of students) within an analysed historical context. It would have been helpful for one so acutely aware of nuances in language (those eight different meanings of ‘ordinarie’) to explore why the change of words, from ‘extramural’ to ‘continuing education’, from ‘adult education’ to ‘lifelong learning’, from ‘adult students’ to ‘adult learners’, has taken place. This surely reflects a crucial shift in social and political priorities, with vital educational implications, determining the demise of ‘adult education’ (and ‘extramural departments’) and in the process leaving millions of adults to develop their own informal learning. The richness of expert and professional literature teaching, within a residential context, portrayed in *Extramural* – now so sadly lacking elsewhere – underlines a deep crisis not just for adult education but also in English education generally.

Derek Tatton

Raymond Williams Foundation

Dougal McNeill, *Forecasts of the Past: Globalisation, History, Realism, Utopia*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012. xvi + 278pp. £40 pb. ISBN 978-3-0343-0875-5.

This is a strikingly ambitious book that seeks to test and ultimately vindicate the author’s claim that ‘realism is the missing component in the post-globalisation revival of Marxism’ (8). At the heart of his project is a challenge to Fredric Jameson’s claim in his *Archaeologies of the Future*, that realism is an expended form, and that it now falls to science fiction to offer reliable insights into contemporary reality. Instead, McNeill’s first chapter argues that it is realism in an ‘embattled, residual-emergent, “minor”, oppositional form’ that produces such knowledge (21). This claim rests on the assertion that the conspicuously global crises and movements that characterise the era of globalisation, including the ‘war on terror’, the popular uprisings in the Arab world and the ongoing financial crisis, require a return to totalising concepts and categories if they are to be understood. McNeill contends that this ‘return of totality’ should entail a return to realism, the literary mode Marxist criticism has traditionally associated with it. The text succeeds in maintaining a genuinely productive dialogue with the work of Jameson and Georg Lukács, while offering for the most part convincing and original readings.

Reviews

The suggestions outlined above are tested by readings of realist novels published between the late 1970s and 2004, 'across the decades of globalisation' (53), by David Peace, Pat Barker, Kerstin Hensel, James Kelman and Maurice Gee. In Chapter 2, Peace's novel of the miners' strike of 1984–85, *GB84*, is used to explore the problems of representation strikes present for the realist novelist. Although the miners' strike has been a common enough feature of the British novel in the ensuing period, its representation has been marked by what McNeill calls a 'curious reticence' about its collective aspects, so that 'the strike is either plot or background, either collective experience or personal memory but never both' (63). McNeill considers *GB84* to stand against these approaches, and to explore instead another possibility: 'collective transformation as subject matter and theme' (64). He dispels the criticism of the novel as pessimistic or defeatist by suggesting that, while the novel, as a realist text, must and does acknowledge the defeat of the strike, its political potency lies in its narration of the conspiracy of historical forces that produced it.

The third chapter pursues the methodological question of realism's ability to represent the globalised city through readings of Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal* and James Kelman's *How Late it Was, How Late*. These novels narrate the struggle for survival of marginalised characters, in cities that are themselves marginal: Kelman's Glasgow, chief city of a nation with a strained relation to its state; and Hensel's Leipzig, emerging uncertainly from the collapse of the GDR. The experiences of Kelman's and Hensel's characters expose a central truth of globalisation: for most working people in industrialised countries, the last three decades have been marked by a decrease in opportunities and choices available to them, not a proliferation. It is realism, McNeill proposes, that is the means by which these crucial facts can be disclosed. The work on Kelman becomes polemical as a consequence of the author's understandable impatience with much of the critical material on the novel, but the reading of *Tanz am Kanal* seems convincing and makes one wish an English translation were available.

The fourth chapter discusses one of Marxist criticism's classic objects of study, the historical novel. McNeill's analysis of Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy aims to defend its intertextual strategies against the assumption that they make it an example of postmodern 'historiographic metafiction' (153). Since Barker's use of those techniques never calls into question the reality of the history she depicts, McNeill argues, they are part of a realist, not a postmodern, aesthetic. This is a useful intervention against the assumption that realism is necessarily aesthetically conservative. However the author's claim that Barker's trilogy succeeds in depicting the class relations of the First World War depends on an underdeveloped comparison to Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* and Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*. The argument that Ford's exclusive focus on

the upper class and Gibbon's on the workers prevented those writers from depicting the class aspects of the war is not fully substantiated and does not do justice to either work.

Chapter 5 discusses the *Plumb* trilogy by the New Zealand novelist Maurice Gee. McNeill proposes the useful term 'marginal realism' to describe Gee's work. This marginality describes New Zealand's position as a former white settler colonial state, economically and politically independent, but for much of its history culturally attached to former imperial powers (190). McNeill reads the trilogy's discursiveness about its own textual processes and its omissions of significant events in New Zealand's history not as departures from realism, but as innovations that work towards a realism capable of expressing this history. McNeill's broader contention, which merits further inquiry, is a proposed recuperation of the idea of 'marginality' as against Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's assertion that Empire – the globalised world – is a marginless 'smooth space' (194).

McNeill's final chapter seeks to dislodge periodising arguments that consider realism redundant in the contemporary world, and asserts instead the need to 'return the attention of the aesthetic to labour, suffering and the social' in defiance of globalisation's insistence on endless leisure and luxury, on the one hand, and endless austerity on the other (232). One problem here is an attempt to distinguish between 'oppositional realism', as represented by the texts McNeill discusses, and the realism of contemporary writers such as John Updike. This distinction seemed underdeveloped and open to attack as ideologically skewed, and a clearer definition is in order if this potentially useful concept is to have wider application. If *Forecasts of the Past* occasionally falls short of the admirable ambitions it sets itself, it is nonetheless a stimulating and confident declaration of the validity of the realist novel in the age of neoliberalism, and of the continuing relevance of Marxist literary scholarship.

Elinor Taylor
University of Salford

Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xii + 396 pp. £35/\$55 hb. ISBN 978-0-19-979457-7.

This book is a welcome contribution to the literature on the interwar political pilgrimage to the USSR, a phenomenon justifiably defined in the Introduction as 'one of the most consequential encounters of the twentieth century' (1). Three aspects of this work define its value: the extensive use of Russian archival sources; an analytical framework based on discourses of superiority

Reviews

and inferiority; and perhaps most significantly, a focus on the complexity of interactions between foreigners and the USSR. Not content with elucidating the 'techniques of hospitality' (discussed in Sylvia Margulies's 1968 *The Pilgrimage to Russia* and in Paul Hollander's 1981 *Political Pilgrims*) employed by the Soviets, nor with exploring Western intellectuals' attempts to circumvent the problem of only seeing what 'they' wanted you to see, nor indeed with an exposition of statements of apostleship or apostasy resulting from Westerners' visits, this book demonstrates the 'hall-of-mirrors quality' (21) that characterised interactions between Russia and the West, showing not only the influence of the USSR on Western visitors, but also the ways in which attracting and hosting Western visitors played a crucial part in the construction of the new Soviet state. From this account, the domestic and the foreign emerge not as polar opposites but as mutually implicating. Western visits to the USSR are read in relation to travel by Soviets involved in foreign cultural operations, giving a clear picture of the close organisational relationships between inward and outward travel. The account of the infamous 'Potemkin Village Dilemma' in the third chapter demonstrates that model sites and institutions which foreigners visited also played an important role for their domestic Soviet audiences. The fourth chapter explores the importance of a high-profile domestic traveller's account: Gorky's 1929 travelogue *Around the Union of Soviets* represents 'a milestone in the direct transfer of methods first developed for foreign visitors to domestic Soviet audiences' (142). David-Fox's study encompasses discussion of a range of practices of cultural diplomacy and exchange, including the creation and functioning of VOKS and its eventual displacement by Intourist; the establishment of 'friendship societies' in various countries, sometimes initiated from within the USSR and sometimes the host country; and Soviet participation in Western cultural events such as the Paris World Fair of 1937. Along the way, visits of key Western intellectuals are discussed in detail, including Theodor Dreiser, Romain Rolland, André Gide, Henri Barbusse, Leon Feuchtwanger, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw, Malcolm Muggeridge, and H.G. Wells. Chapter 7 shows how the Soviet regime even wooed its enemies – right-wing foreign nationalists and fascists – as potential friends, taking the example of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft zum Studium der Sowjetrussischen Planwirtschaft*, or Arplan, a vehicle for the study of the Soviet-planned economy by the German fascist Right. This substantial yet readable book brings a range of original perspectives to bear on the history of interactions between 'Russia and the West'.

Angela Kershaw
University of Birmingham

Lisa Regan, *Winifred Holtby's Social Vision*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012. x + 230 pp. £60 hb. ISBN 978-1-84893-132-9.

This compelling study of Winifred Holtby (1898–1935) is the first literary-critical monograph on this important interwar writer, best known for her last novel, *South Riding*, published posthumously in 1936. The recent television adaptation of this novel by Andrew Davies, shown on BBC1 in 2011, has, as Lisa Regan notes, brought Holtby to the attention of a new generation (180), and one of the strongest impressions to emerge from Regan's book is that Holtby's 'social vision' – in particular, her 'transnational perspective' (168) and her 'socialist commitment to alleviating social deprivation and exclusion' (178) – remains profoundly relevant today.

Regan's central argument is that Holtby's 'social vision' disrupts 'that "consolidated vision" which Edward Said identifies as the reaffirming imperialist ideology of nineteenth century realism' (21). At once 'a continuation of nineteenth century realism', Holtby's fiction also questions, Regan argues, the extent to which individuals and communities are (in Raymond Williams's formula) 'knowable' (13) through 'modes of seeing' (22) more commonly associated with modernist writers of the period. Regan advances her analysis of Holtby's social vision through close and perceptive readings of Holtby's seven novels, supplemented by readings of Holtby's writing in other genres: drama, short fiction and journalism.

The beginnings of Holtby's social theory, Regan suggests (40), can be found in her first novel, *Alderby Wold* (1923), a re-working of the nineteenth-century industrial novel set in prewar Yorkshire which (through its Irish subplot) 'bring[s] colonial conflict into the English rural centre' (38). In her second novel, *The Crowded Street* (1924), Regan identifies the development of Holtby's specifically feminist social vision through its modern, independent heroine. This vision is extended in her third novel, *The Land of Green Ginger* (1927), through its female traveller characters who generate 'new angles of vision' (56). According to Regan, this is 'the starting point for Holtby's wider social vision' and promotion of 'transnational affiliation' (66). Regan attributes significance to the fact that this novel was begun during Holtby's voyage home at the end of a six-month lecturing tour of South Africa for the League of Nations Union. As other scholars have recognised, this experience had a profound influence on Holtby, motivating her lifelong work for racial equality in Africa and against racism in Britain. It also marks, Regan observes, a new 'emphasis on detachment' in Holtby's writing (82), which found its fullest expression in her satirical novels *Poor Caroline* (1931) and *Mandoo, Mandoo!* (1933). In the latter, she argues, Holtby elaborates a 'cosmopolitan' vision which injects critical reflection on the imperialist project with 'global responsibility' (130).

Reviews

With *South Riding* Holtby returned to the Yorkshire landscape, and in a fresh reading of this novel Regan argues that Holtby's concerns about 'global interdependence and individual responsibility' explored in her Africa novel 'permeate and defamiliarise the regional landscape' (135). In particular, she shows that Holtby's feminist concern in this novel with issues of maternity and of women's rights to work and education is framed by 'a transnational perspective' that places threats to women's autonomy in the context of the rise of European fascism (168). Regan concludes: 'Holtby's was a social vision ever mindful that each individual's rights to full participation and self-expression within local, national and global communities must be fought for, and the lure of homogeneity and consensus resisted' (180). It is a vision that continues to resonate profoundly today.

Catherine Clay
Nottingham Trent University

Andrew Milner, *Locating Science Fiction. Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies* 44. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012. x + 244 pp. £70 hb. ISBN 978-1-84631-842-9.

Andrew Milner's *Locating Science Fiction* skilfully combines two subjects: science fiction and its criticism. If Raymond Carver had written this study, it would no doubt have been called *What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Science Fiction*. Milner first considers propositions relating SF to modernism, and here one of the great strengths of his study begins to emerge. When discussing leading figures in the field of SF criticism such as Darko Suvin or Fredric Jameson, Milner skilfully brings out their covert value judgements. In trying out an initial positioning of SF within the cultural field he draws on Pierre Bourdieu to map out the relation between different cultural products and also on the still inadequately recognised writings of Raymond Williams. Bourdieu is useful for a spatial representation of differences and similarities, but with the attendant drawback that it is difficult for a map to represent process and change rather than hypostatising relations. This issue does not emerge with Raymond Williams, whose critical writings stand behind Milner's discussion as a model of socially engaged analysis. Indeed the ideal companion volume to *Locating Science Fiction* would be *Tenses of the Imagination*, Milner's 2010 collection of Williams's writings on SF, utopia and dystopia (Peter Lang, *Ralahine Utopian Studies* 7). Williams's cultural materialist approach functions as a helpful reference point throughout Milner's discussion, allowing for a critical analysis informed by the material conditions of cultural production and the complex interplay between interest groups. Williams helps Milner to distance himself from a reductive

Marxism on the one hand and cultural idealism on the other. It also sharpens the latter's ability to spot signs of the old high literature/mass culture opposition in figures like Jameson and Suvin, which leads them to be strikingly exclusive, not to say downright hostile to a surprisingly large amount of SF.

A second strength to Milner's study lies in his capacity to move easily from general theoretical discussion to examination of specific writers. Thus he addresses the striking increase of overt social commentary in postwar American SF (Frederik Pohl, Ray Bradbury and others), connecting that development with the Futurians' utopian movement of SF writers. Again, following Williams's writings on television, Milner makes out a convincing case that radio SF drama has been unjustly neglected. It is, he argues, a medium which needs 'much more effort' (75) on the audience's part to conjure up its world, a point reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's account of 'hot' media. Comparing Orson Welles's famous dramatisation of *The War of the Worlds* with the original text, Milner argues that the radio play erases the novel's anti-imperial ironies and exploits the different conventions of radio, partly as a hoax. Different radio dramas tend to open with scenes enacting spatio-temporal estrangement and to develop their action through a series of speeches about the possibilities of utopia and similar issues.

One of the key sections of *Locating Science Fiction* examines the complex, shifting relation of SF to utopias. Here again critical commentators come in for perfectly justified criticism. Baudrillard's account of postmodernism, for instance, is taken to task for basing itself on a sudden shift into simulation, whereas throughout his study Milner quietly insists on the gradual nature of cultural change. He is democratic too in casting his net right across the cultural field, describing *Star Trek* as a 'military utopia' emerging from a whole tradition of military organisations in American utopian writing as far back as Edward Bellamy. Milner shrewdly pinpoints a persistent hostility among SF critics towards dystopias – perhaps from their projection of hostility to the Left on the writers concerned. This has led to misreading of some classics, and Milner rightly stresses that the endings of many dystopias are more complex than is generally thought. John Savage's suicide at the end of *Brave New World* carries no general implication because he is a figure of parody, not the protagonist; Newspeak has not yet been fully introduced in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; and humans are not quite extinct in Karol Capek's *R.U.R.* The point, Milner argues, is not whether the endings are positive or negative, but rather how the works speculate on 'what would have happened if?'.

The last sections of *Locating Science Fiction* concern themselves with the longer and broader views of SF. Thus Milner questions a retrospective extension of SF into antiquity, sometimes in an attempt to bolster the status of the genre. Instead, he sees the nineteenth century as the formative period

Reviews

where SF comes into being through an extended dialogue between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Turning his attention to postcolonialism, he stresses SF's ambiguous relation to empire, and specifically questions Gayatri Spivak's political interpretations of *Frankenstein*. One of the issues which has constantly resurfaced in SF criticism is whether it constructs the Other against what are implicitly European norms. Without getting into this complex question, which would require a whole study in its own right, Milner considers instead the relation of centre to periphery in SF, discussing the translation and promotion of SF in Eastern Europe. It is not surprising that Milner, an academic based for years in Australia, concludes with a comparison between Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, described as the quintessential 'paradigmatic nuclear war dystopia' (190), and George Turner's account of climate change in *The Sea and Summer*. *Locating Science Fiction* gives a consistently thoughtful account of its subject, which is not to define SF so much as to approach it from different cultural angles. The result never flags in offering constantly interesting insights into SF which do justice to its rich diversity.

David Seed
University of Liverpool

Matthew Caswell, *Menashi's Boy: Collected Short Stories*. Kibworth Beauchamp: Matador, 2010. viii + 208 pp. £8.50 pb. ISBN 978-1848762-268; ***Voices of the Arab Streets*.** Kibworth Beauchamp: Matador, 2013. x + 170 pp. £15 pb. ISBN 978-1780881-584.

Until the middle of the last century there were over one hundred thousand Jews in Baghdad, which was, as Matthew Caswell says, 'a Jewish metropolis in the sense that New York was talked of as a Jewish city' (66). The schoolteacher Menashi was one of them; as was his son, the centre and circumference of this collection of historical, ancestral and personal reminiscences. Though profoundly autobiographical, these stories are pervaded by the fabular, as the opening tale, 'Ifrit (The thousand and second night)', suggests, calling up that text forever associated with the world's oldest city, and alerting us to the fictionality implicit in all narrative. The story tells of an abandoned car possessed by a 'good Ifrit' (genie), which repeatedly refreshes and upgrades itself, in the process seeing off an evil dragon. The apparently inconsequential yarn prefigures the metamorphoses by which a young, leftist, non-Zionist Jew with Sunni and Shia friends, 'secularists, progressives, socialists' (59), is transformed into the totally anglicised narrator who, after forty years at the English Bar, brings together this fascinating, improbable assemblage of stories. Starting with medieval Arabic tales of slavery and legendary anecdotes

of brigandage, the book moves in its final section to various legal cases in which the author was actually involved, including that infamous miscarriage of justice which sent Stefan Kiszko, a psychologically retarded but 'completely innocent man of unimpeachable character' (185), to jail for child-murder, before the Court of Appeal, sixteen years later, quashed his conviction.

Caswell's comment that 'Injustice often arises from the fact that a plausible lie is more attractive than an implausible truth' (185) indicates what links this section, 'The Scales of Justice', to those histories of 1940s nationalist violence, persecution and pogrom ('Farhood' [pillage], 'Crackdown' and the title-story itself) depicted in the book's opening section, 'Baghdadi Tales'. The soul-scarring crises of loyalty, betrayal and guilt which pervade the book all come back to questions of story-telling. Its middle section, 'Where You From?', focuses those issues of identity and allegiance by which it is haunted. Leaving his job in a Baghdad bank in 1950 to study in Paris and London, fraternising in the depths of the Cold War with leading figures of the British Communist Party, Menashi's boy encounters a more subtle prejudice than the murderous bigotries he left behind. 'Digs' sees him phoning around London for lodgings. Asked 'Where you from?', he says Iraq, to be told that all rooms are taken. Hearing a heavy East European accent at the other end of the line, he rings back and asks whether it makes a difference that he is Jewish, and is immediately told the rental price. His one-word comment to himself is brutal: 'Judas'; but he takes the room.

Menashi's Boy is a book of large sympathies and wide generosity, eloquent testimony to how the continuities and decencies of selfhood can survive the most disorienting transitions of time, place and cultural circumstance. Its author's affection for the world he left, and for the oral tradition as a form of truth-telling, is displayed to vivid effect in *Voices of the Arab Streets*, which draws on the colloquial poetry of the Baghdadi popular poet and Shī'ite nationalist 'Abbūd al-Kharkī (1861–1946), the scourge of foreign exploitation and domestic corruption, whose xenophobia towards Westerners, Nestorians and Jews also extended, ecumenically, to all non-Iraqi Arabs. Nevertheless, Caswell affirms, al-Kharkī's *Dīwān*, a record in verse of the political, social and cultural conditions of an Iraq emerging to modern statehood, is 'a treasure house of the Baghdadi language of the street, and of the saws, epithets, proverbs and epigrams used by the common man' (ix). It is lucidly and lovingly translated here, with a scholarly introduction which explains the relation of Classical Arabic, the *fuṣṣḥā*, to the various vernaculars with which it coexists on the Arab street, the demotic *āmmī*.

Stan Smith
Nottingham Trent University

Notes on Contributors

Catherine Clay lectures in English at Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK. Email: catherine.clay@ntu.ac.uk

Tony Crowley is the Hartley Burr Alexander Chair in the Humanities at Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA. He has published widely in the area of language and cultural theory and his latest work is *Scouse: A Social and Cultural History* (Liverpool University Press, 2012). Email: tony.crowley@scrippscollege.edu

Stephen Groening is Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA. He has published in *New Media & Society* and *Visual Culture*, and has articles in the anthologies *Useful Cinema* and *Taking 'South Park' Seriously*. His book on inflight entertainment is under contract with British Film Institute Publishing. Email: sgroenin@gmu.edu

Ben Highmore is Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. His most recent book is *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (Routledge, 2011). His new book *The Great Indoors: At Home in the Modern British House* (Profile Books) is due to be published in 2014. Email: b.highmore@sussex.ac.uk

Catherine Johnson is Associate Professor at the University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK. She is the author of *Branding Television* (2012) and *Telefantasy* (2005) and the co-editor of *Transnational Television History* (2012) and *ITV Cultures* (2005). She is currently researching the promotional screen industries. Email: Catherine.Johnson@nottingham.ac.uk

Angela Kershaw lectures in French at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK. Email: a.kershaw@bham.ac.uk

Kate Lacey is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. Her publications include: *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (2013) and *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio and the Public Sphere 1923-1945* (1996). Email: k.lacey@sussex.ac.uk

Richard Maxwell is Professor and Chair of Media Studies at Queens College, City University of New York, New York, USA. His most recent book is *Greening the Media* (2012, with Toby Miller). Email: richard.maxwell@qc.cuny.edu

Jim McGuigan is Professor of Cultural Analysis at Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK. He has published several books, including *Cool Capitalism* (2009) and *Cultural Analysis* (2010). In addition to the articles that Jim has written about Raymond Williams and cultural materialism over the years, he has recently edited together a collection of Williams's most sociological writings, *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society*, and also prepared an updated republication of *Towards 2000* under the new title, *A Short Counter-Revolution – Towards 2000 Revisited*, both with Sage. Email: J.T.McGuigan@lboro.ac.uk

Toby Miller is Professor of Cultural Industries at City University, London, UK. He is the author and editor of over thirty books and his work has been translated into Spanish, Swedish, German, Chinese, Portuguese and Turkish. His latest book is *Blow Up the Humanities* (2012) and you can follow his adventures at tobymiller.org. Email: toby.miller.1@city.ac.uk

Tom O'Malley is Professor of Media at Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, UK. His publications include: *Moral Panics, Social Fears and the Media Historical Perspectives* (2013) edited with Sian Nicholas; *The Peacock Committee and UK Broadcasting Policy* (2009) edited with Janet Jones; Tom O'Malley and Clive Soley, *Regulating the Press* (2000). He co-edits *Media History*. Email: tpo@aber.ac.uk

David Seed holds a Chair in American Literature at the University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK. His main publications include studies of brainwashing, cinematic devices in fiction and the narrative impact of the atomic bomb. He edits the Science Fiction Texts and Studies series for Liverpool University Press and is currently completing a study of Ray Bradbury. Email: Dseed@liverpool.ac.uk

Frank Shovlin is Senior Lecturer of Irish literature in English at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK. He is author of *The Irish Literary Periodical 1923–1958* (2003) and *Journey Westward: Joyce, Dubliners and the Literary Revival* (2012). He is currently a Leverhulme Fellow at NUI Galway, working on the John McGahern archive. Email: fshovlin@liverpool.ac.uk

Stan Smith is a retired academic.

Notes on Contributors

Derek Tatton is chair of both the Raymond Williams Society and the Raymond Williams Foundation.

Elinor Taylor is a doctoral student in English at the University of Salford, Salford, UK. Her research concerns left-wing writing in Britain from 1934 to 1939. She has interests in working-class writing, historical novels and genre fiction. Email: e.m.taylor@edu.salford.ac.uk

Raymond Williams Foundation (RWF)

The prediction made at the 2012 AGM of severe difficulties for adult education, voluntary organisations and charities has, unfortunately, turned out to be accurate, generally, but also in relation to the closure of the residential college so closely linked to the RWF and our aims. Representations to the City of Stoke-on-Trent Council for re-opening the College as an independent educational trust continue but we are not hopeful despite the former Wedgwood Memorial College buildings remaining empty at considerable cost to tax-payers.

Even so, it has been an exceptionally productive and successful year for the RWF. Notably:

- * the largest turn-out for any RW residential course ever with seventy at *The Adelphi Hotel*, Liverpool in November 2012 in partnership with the RWS which held its AGM and Annual Lecture on Saturday 24 November. These *reading/research/writing/discussion retreat* events were assisted by a grant from the Westham House Fund;
- * continued growth of RWF web links and an ever-widening range of global visitors;
- * steady growth of 'life members', with a modest but healthy number of annual members;
- * although failing to save and re-open the WMC, a number of former WMC courses have run successfully at other venues, especially Shallowford House, mid-Staffs; Wortley Hall; and the Adelphi Hotel, and Stoke schools courses have run at the YHA Centre, Hartington;
- * the *savewmc.org* group has developed, via a *wmcLtd* proposal, into *raymondwilliamscollegeLtd* which is now registered as a *Community Benefit Society* – Cooperative. This is a dedicated web-based 'virtual' college, promoting courses as above and other RWF/WEA social, political, philosophical and cultural courses within our growing informal network. It seems ambitious, but is actually consolidating what is already being done;
- * work has continued to rehouse most of the former WMC library within the *Sylvia Pankhurst Library* at Wortley Hall, with assistance from the Westham House Fund. The library project is ongoing, see www.raymondwilliamsfoundation.org.uk.
- * the 25th annual RW residential at Wortley Hall (8–10 May 2013) was on the theme of 'Democracy – the Future of Political Parties'. The forty-seven participants were most positive about the educational experience (see evaluations on website at www.raymondwilliamsfoundation.org.uk);

Raymond Williams Foundation (RWF)

- * all the above achieved with the RWF bottom-line financial assets actually increasing because of donations and grants (with £9k incoming money from the former Friends of WMC);
- * two RWF grants have assisted a very successful Day Conference (on 16 May 2013) at the *Working Class Movement Library* in Salford, and pub discussions in Derby; new links with the *RMT Education Centre* in Doncaster with three RWF assisted weekends planned from June to November this year;
- * problems and priorities remain, however – gaining younger participants and broadening the voluntary activist base of RWF.

Derek Tatton
www.raymondwilliamsfoundation.org.uk

Style Notes for Contributors

Presentation of Copy

Key Words is an internationally refereed academic journal. In the first instance typescripts for prospective publication should be submitted as an email attachment to the Contributions Editor Dr Catherine Clay, Nottingham Trent University, at catherine.clay@ntu.ac.uk. Articles should normally be no longer than 6,000 words; reviews should typically be between 1,500 and 2,000 words. Articles should be double spaced, with generous margins, and pages should be numbered consecutively. For matters of style not addressed below, please refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edn or <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html>. Contributors who fail to observe these notes may be asked to revise their submission in accordance with them.

Provision of Text in Electronic Format

Key Words is prepared electronically. Consequently, contributors whose work is accepted for publication will be asked to supply a file copy of their work to the Contributions Editor. The preferred word processing format is Microsoft Word (any version).

References and Bibliographic Conventions

Notes should be kept to a minimum, with all discursive material appearing in the text. Citations in *Key Words* appear as endnotes at the conclusion of each contribution. Essays presented for prospective publication should adopt this style. Endnote markers should be given in arabic numerals and positioned after, not before, punctuation marks, e.g. ‘1.’ rather than ‘1.’. With no bibliography, full details must be given in a note at the first mention of any work cited. Subsequent citations can then use the short form or a cross-reference. Headline-style capitalisation is used. In headline style, the first and last words of title and subtitle and all other major words are capitalised. Titles of books and journals should be formatted in italics (not underlined).

Please cite books in the following manner:

On first citation: Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954).

On subsequent citations: Williams and Orrom, *Preface to Film*, 12.

Style Notes for Contributors

Please cite journal articles in the following manner:

Patrick Parrinder, 'Politics, Letters and the National Curriculum', *Changing English* 2, no. 1 (1994): 29.

Chapters in books should be referenced in the following way:

Andrew McRae, 'The Peripatetic Muse: Internal Travel and the Cultural Production of Space in Pre-Revolutionary England', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, ed. Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 41–57.

For internet articles:

Raymond Williams Society Executive, 'About the Raymond Williams Society', Raymond Williams Society, <http://www.raymondwilliams.co.uk/> (accessed 26 March 2012).

Please refer to newspaper articles in the following way:

John Mullan, 'Rebel in a Tweed Suit', *The Observer*, 28 May 2005, Features and Reviews section, 37.

A thesis should be referenced in the following manner:

E. Allen, 'The Dislocated Mind: The Fictions of Raymond Williams' (PhD diss., Liverpool John Moores University, 2007), 22–9.

Conference papers should be cited in the following style:

Dai Smith, 'Translating Raymond Williams' (paper presented at the Raymond Williams's Culture and Society@50 conference, Canolfan Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea, 7 November 2008).

Quotations

For quotations use single quotation marks, and double quotation marks for quotations within quotations. Punctuation is used outside quotations. Ensure that all spellings, punctuation, abbreviations etc. within a quotation are rendered exactly as in the original, including errors, which should be signalled by the authorial interpolation '(sic)'.

Book Reviews

Book reviews should open with full bibliographic details of the text under review. These details should include (in the following order): in bold type, first name(s) and surname(s) of author(s), or first name(s) and surname(s) of editor(s) followed by a parenthetical '(ed.)' or '(eds)'; in italics, the full title of the volume followed by a period and a hard return; then, in regular type, the place of publication, publisher and date of publication; the page extent of the volume, including front papers numbered in Roman numerals; the price (where available) of the supplied copy and an indication of 'pb.' or 'hb.'; and the ISBN of the supplied copy.

For example:

Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale*. Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2008. xviii + 514 pp. £24.99 hb. ISBN 978-1-905762-56-9.