

**Thoroughly Under the Skin:**  
**Raymond Williams, Structures of Feeling, and Affect Theory**

Political Science 390: Independent Research as Senior Honors Project

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## Abstract

This honors project examines the connections between literature and political theory. Specifically I will follow the journey of the British literary critic Raymond Williams. Williams had a very interesting life. He grew up in the Black Mountains of Wales as the son of a railroad worker: a life he memorialized in his autobiographical novel *Border Country* (1960). In his obituary of Williams in *The New Statesman* in 1988, Stuart Hall reminds us how Williams's deep sense of attachment to the Welsh working class border community of inhabited shared commitments in which he grew up. This community of shared commitments was understood as a "whole way of life." It was a sense of community that he never lost. While, I do not come from a rural area, coming from Woonsocket, Rhode Island, I can relate to Williams's socio-economic background. Woonsocket was once known as a striving industrial city, but as time passed industry moved out. However, Woonsocket is still home to a large working class population.

Williams went on to study literature and drama at Trinity College, Cambridge University, an education interrupted by World War II, where Williams served as a tank officer at Normandy Beach on D-Day, the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1944. He returned to complete his degree and doctorate at Cambridge, but refused call-up as an officer in the Korean War as a conscientious objector. He spent a decade teaching adult education classes at Oxford University, before being called to Jesus College as a Professor, where he was positioned in the offices once occupied by Samuel Coleridge. At the end of the 1950s Williams was a founding editor of the *New Left Review*. He never lost his commitment to the common man, the working class, and socialism because of his experiences. Emerging as one of the great Marxist literary critics, Williams ventured beyond structural Marxism on an intellectual journey towards cultural materialism.

Just as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin diverged from the typical economist interpretations of Marx, so too did Raymond Williams. His attraction to Marxism was not based on economics. He saw culture as equally significant. Williams would become attracted to but then moved away from the sociology of literature which was developed by Georg Lukács, and Lukács's student Lucien Goldmann. On his journey away from the sociology of literature, Williams foreshadows the transition among Marxist literary criticism -- in the Fredric Jameson-related Duke University literary criticism crowd -- to affect theory.

The key concept that Williams produces that starts this transition is "structures of feeling" which is at the heart of this project paper. Williams's concept of structures of feeling is a way to examine a work of art by looking at it in its present tense. By examining a work of art in its present tense, Williams argued that one can gain an understanding of lived experiences during the time period the art was produced -- studying the emotions/feelings which are generated in the work of art. Scholars such as Fredric Jameson have built upon Williams's concept of structures of feeling while moving towards affect theory.

Some questions my essay responds to are: What is the significance of Raymond Williams's struggle with the Marxist concept of ideology? How is this at the heart of the cultural Marxism of the *New Left Review*? How does this struggle lead to his rejection of the base/superstructure interpretation of Marx and in his study of sociology of literature and Gramsci whom the *New Left Review* features in the 1960s? How does Williams move to a concept of cultural materialism and how is his development of the concept of "structure of feelings" critical to his struggle, and eventually to the "affect theory" of Fredric Jameson's cultural Marxism? And how does Williams help generate a political sociology of symbolic world-making power and

legitimation struggles that come to be associated with the likes of Alain Tourain (1977) and Pierre Bourdieu (1980, 1988)?

## 1: Introduction

George Orwell wrote a wonderful essay about Charles Dickens. In his chapter dealing with Orwell from *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams quotes the following sentence from Orwell's essay, "[Dickens's work] is not so much a series of books, it is more like a world".<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Orwell's essay he examines Dickens's aesthetic world compared to the real world. He states that Marxists and Catholics view Dickens as an advocate for the poor, yet Lenin could not stomach Dickens's romanticized view of the middle class. In actuality Orwell argues that Dickens's was not a proletarian writer because all the action in his stories takes place in middle class surroundings, and there is only one agricultural character in all his stories, Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times*. Orwell also argues that Dickens was not a revolutionary writer as some people make him out to be. Dickens views the problems of society as moral issues, not as problems within the structural order of society. Thus, Dickens attacks human nature and not the structural order of society.

When examining Dickens, Orwell essentially partakes in the sociology of literature without really knowing it. The sociology of literature examines a literary text in order to see the influence a text had on society, and how society influenced the creation of a text. He views the aesthetic world of Dickens and connects it to the real world. However, Orwell is not the only person to engage in the sociology of literature. There have been many others, such as Georg

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<sup>1</sup> Orwell, George. "Charles Dickens." *A Collection of Essays by George Orwell*. New York: Double Day Anchor Book, 1954. Print.

Lukács, Lucien Goldmann, Terry Eagleton, and Raymond Williams who have formed some sort of connection between the aesthetic and actual world.

In many ways Raymond Williams is more important than Orwell because Williams delves deeper than Orwell into the connection between the aesthetic and physical world. While Williams admired Orwell, even Williams admitted that Orwell had his limits. In *Culture and Society*, Williams points out that Orwell's greatest limitation is that he was a journalist. Since Orwell was a journalist he had the tendency to be too general, and untheoretical, when examining literature.<sup>2</sup> Williams, on the other hand, was a literary critic, and he was far from general when examining texts. For example, Williams presents a critique of Dickens in *Culture and Society*, which is slightly different from Orwell's essay, "Charles Dickens". Much like Orwell, Williams sees Dickens focusing on human nature rather than social improvement. Yet, unlike Orwell who only briefly mentions Stephen Blackpool of *Hard Times*, Williams focuses on Blackpool's stating "'Aw a muddle!'"<sup>3</sup> From this quote Williams examines he comes to the conclusion that Dickens saw working class people as a suffering and hopeless people. Therefore, Williams delves deeper than Orwell into the text of *Hard Times*. Also, Williams viewed Orwell as a product of the upper-middle class. Williams felt that when Orwell was writing about the working class he was sort of *slumming* like Fifth Avenue "swells" going up to the Cotton Club in Harlem to hear jazz. Even Christopher Hitchens talks of Orwell's shock in his own experiences among the proletarian brigades in Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War. For Williams the working class was his own people. He was not just portraying them for literature. He was feeling there every joy, and every hurt.

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<sup>2</sup> Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid pg. 96.

This is also an example of the early development of Williams's idea of structures of feeling, a theory in which one examines different levels of consciousness. Structures of feeling is one of Williams's most important concepts. The contemporary concept of affect theory has roots in Williams's theory of structures of feeling. These concepts apply to politics because as we all know politics has different levels of consciousness. Structures of feeling as well as affect theory's engagement into the depths of consciousness can help people understand politics by going thoroughly under the skin.

Raymond Williams as the leading editor of *New Left Review* strove to get beyond reductive and economic readings of historical materialism where a determined base shapes a culture understood as a superstructural effect. Culture was not seen as a secondary social activity. Instead, culture was understood materialistically, as a form of material practice. Williams focused on the lived and constitutive nature of cultural practices which he understood following Georg Lukács, the Frankfurt School and Antonio Gramsci as "mediation" between economic forces and forms of consciousness.

Specifically, Williams's growing understanding of the 1920s *Prison Notebooks* of Antonio Gramsci brings clarity to the material ways which humans comprehend the world. Williams's reading of Gramsci emphasizes the material ways with which we use and signify, comprehend and define our sense of the world and our struggles within it, with which we form relationships, and in the values and beliefs which we live our experience. Ideas are understood as being produced and revealed in our material practices. While forces of nature and production logic constrain humanity, we in turn constitute the physical universe in our material culture. In his method of *cultural materialism*, Williams uses a fulcrum concept "structures of feelings." Here he attempts to integrate objective and subjective dimensions as a form of signification

expressing how social experience is felt and lived as well as known cognitively. How we signify in material practice, as well as being signified by large organizing principles defining the totality of socio-economic relations.

## 2: The Journey of Raymond Williams

My sympathetic involvement and appreciation of Raymond Williams's intellectual struggles and then creations start in the Black Mountains. Williams was born in the Black Mountains which is a rural area situated between Wales and England. Williams's was a member of a working class society. The Black Mountains is home to many coal miners and farmers. However, Williams's father was a railroad signal man. Williams's background was extremely influential on his work and life. "Questions of class, culture, politics and education presented themselves to him in spontaneously personal terms, inseparable from the very stuff and problem of individual identity".<sup>4</sup>

When Williams finished grammar school he enrolled at Cambridge University but temporarily ceased his education and served for the British military officer commanding a battalion at D-Day in Normandy during World War II.<sup>5</sup> Prior to the war Williams considered himself a pacifist. However, once he was engaged in battle he realized that military force was necessary to have a successful revolution.<sup>6</sup> Williams would later state that he understood the aims and the methods of the Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions because of his wartime experiences.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Eagleton, Terry. "Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams." *New Left Review*. 1.95 (1976): n. page. Web.

<sup>5</sup> Hall, Stuart. "The Life of Raymond Williams." *New Statesman*. 5 Feb 1988: n. page. Web.

<sup>6</sup> Blackburn, Robin. "Raymond Williams and a Politics of the New Left." *New Left Review*. 1.168 (1988): n. page. Web.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



Upon his return he continued his education at Cambridge University where he would later become a Professor of Drama in 1961. According to Williams, “Cambridge was ‘one of the rudest places on earth...shot through with cold, nasty and bloody-minded talk’”.<sup>8</sup> During the period in which Williams was coming into his own as a literary scholar, literary criticism was a somewhat elitist profession. Literary critics did not believe that literature should be shared with common people. Williams, on the other hand, was far from elitist. Terry Eagleton saw Williams as “the kind of man you had to work very hard on to make him feel negatively about someone”.<sup>9</sup>

Williams was what Antonio Gramsci would call an “organic intellectual”<sup>10</sup>. Even though Williams taught at Cambridge he was always attempting to help those who shared a similar working class background. As a matter of fact, Williams was heavily influenced by Gramsci as well as Georg Lukács because he believed that lived experiences form values and meanings. This is evident in Williams’s understanding of base and superstructure. In traditional Marxism the base is considered the mode of production, the forces of production. The superstructure is the state, and systems of thought and belief such as religion, ethics, education, and culture. It is the superstructure that reflects the base. Williams does not agree with this formation of base and superstructure because he did not believe in a fixed base; instead he saw the base as a process. Williams states, “We have to revalue ‘superstructure’ towards a related range of cultural practices, and away from a reflected, reproduced or specifically dependent content... we have to revalue ‘the base’ away from the notion of a fixed economic or technological abstraction, and

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<sup>8</sup> Eagleton, Terry. "Resources for a Journey of Hope: The Significance of Raymond Williams." *New Left Review*. 1.168 (1988): n. page. Web.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> “Organic Intellectuals” are people who express the interests of certain class. In Williams’s case the working class.

towards the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships...”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Williams does not see culture or class consciousness reflective of the base.

Williams was a key figure in forming the socialist journal, the *New Left Review*. The *New Left Review* emerged during the Hungarian Revolution. The founders of the *New Left Review*, which included intellectuals such as E.P. Thompson and Williams, did not condone the Soviet Union’s involvement in the Hungarian Revolution. Thus, they wanted to form a new Western Marxism which eventually develops into Cultural Marxism. Thompson and Williams were not structural Marxist; they were more interested in the experiences of the working class. In C. Wright Mills’s *Letter to the New Left*, Mills emphasizes that the old left became a complex mechanical reproduction Marxism. Also, Stalinism forgot the moral core of Marxism. Thus, the New Left was formed in order to separate from the old left. Overall, Williams wrote eighteen articles for the *New Left Review*.<sup>12</sup> Williams was also the editor of the Mayday Manifesto which was “an attempt to formulate a socialist alternative to Harold Wilson’s grimly technocratic vision”.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Williams, Raymond. "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory." *New Left Review* 1.82 (1973): n. page. Web.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Hall, Stuart. "The Life of Raymond Williams." *New Statesman* 5 Feb 1988: n. page. Web.

According to Robin Blackburn, “Williams sometimes declared that he preferred to think of himself as a revolutionary socialist or communist and historical materialist than as a Marxist”, which is evident in his objection to the concept of base and superstructure.<sup>14</sup> Terry Eagleton actually finds it fascinating how many academic disciplines Williams delved into throughout his career. Eagleton states, “In the end it was impossible to give his project a name; it was not quite sociology or philosophy or literary criticism or political theory, and it was quite as much ‘creative’ and ‘imaginative’ writing as academic work”.<sup>15</sup> While Eagleton in 1976 disagrees with Williams on many subjects, he eventually admits by 1988 that Williams was significantly ahead of the curve, and it was only recently that he and other Marxist critics began to catch up with his ideas. Therefore, while Williams’s ideas may not have transformed the world, his ideas have had a significant impact on Marxist thought.

### 3: Forms

A form is something that is durable and possibly eternal. Forms are extracted from contingencies of the world. An example of a form would be art. For Williams forms are utilized in attempt to interpret and grasp reality. Thus, humans utilize art such as literature, sculptures, and paintings in an attempt to understand reality.

Immanuel Kant’s perception of forms is similar to that of Plato<sup>16</sup>. Kant categorizes realms into two separate entities. He states that there is the phenomenal which is the way in

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<sup>14</sup> Blackburn, Robin. "Raymond Williams and a Politics of the New Left." *New Left Review* 1.168 (1988): n. page. Web.

<sup>15</sup> Eagleton, Terry. "Resources for a Journey of Hope: The Significance of Raymond Williams." *New Left Review*.

<sup>16</sup> Plato believed that forms were a part of a different realm distinct from the universe that humans live in. In *The Republic*, Plato argues that art is merely a representation of a representation that is attempting to replicate an ideal object that was placed upon earth by god. For example, god placed a chair on earth. There is a carpenter who replicates god’s chair, and even though the carpenter’s chair may look like god’s chair, the carpenter’s chair is not

which humans perceive apparent things. It is the empirical world. Then there is the noumenal world which is the world of ultimate principles and essences. However, humans can only understand objects in the phenomenal sense, meaning, humans can only understand objects through how they appear, not as they are.<sup>17</sup> The sociology of literature eventually attempts to disprove Plato's and Kant's perceptions of forms.

Max Weber created the notion of the ideal type in his essay "Objectivity' in Social Science". An ideal type basically outlines the main ideas of an historical event in order to give an ideal perspective of the event. The combination of relationships and events of an historical life create an ideal type. It is a utopian thought because only essential events and relations that truly characterize an historical experience are emphasized. These characteristics of the relationships and events are clear and understandable. As Weber points out an ideal type "is not a *description* of reality, but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description".<sup>18</sup> Since, an ideal type only emphasizes the essential events and relationships of an historical event, an ideal type is not reality because there are other events and relationships to an historical experience which are omitted from an ideal type. A person may consider these characteristics as non-essential. Another aspect which is important to understand about ideal types is how they are conceived. "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view...."<sup>19</sup> Thus, there is one specific population which creates an ideal type. Therefore, the ideal type follows what the specific population deems to be essential characteristics in order to give an ideal perspective of an historical event.

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an exact replication. Then there is the artist's chair which is merely a replication of the replicate chair that the carpenter made; therefore, it is far removed from the perfect chair that god created. Thus, the ideal form of art is not in an earthly realm.

<sup>17</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Henry G. Bohn, 33. eBook.

<sup>18</sup> Weber, Max. "Objectivity" in *Social Science*. pg. 90. eBook.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid pg. 90.

Another important theory on forms was originated by Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein's theory is form of life. The form of life is how humans unconsciously engage with the world through language. Humans interact with each other through language which is produced in a social context. In order to explain his theory of forms of life, Wittgenstein uses an example of two construction workers communicating. In Wittgenstein's example there is communicator A and B. Communicator A is the construction worker calling for the building materials, and communicator B is the construction worker passing the materials to communicator A. Thus, if communicator A yells to communicator B "slab", communicator B will bring communicator A the slab. However, if a person who is not used to a construction site hears communicator A yelling "slab" to communicator B, he or she may think that communicator A is simply yelling the word slab and associate slab with its definition. However, communicator A is not simply yelling the word slab but instead he is requesting one. The yelling of "slab" in this case constitutes as a sentence meaning "Communicator B, bring me the slab". Thus, communicator A and B in this specific social context understand "slab", while the foreigner may have a totally different understanding.<sup>20</sup>

Georg Lukács considered reification as a distorted form. For Lukács reification occurs when social relationships take the appearance of relationships between objects. This takes place objectively and subjectively. Objectively because "a world of objects and relations between things spring into being..."<sup>21</sup> Then Subjectively because "a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer

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<sup>20</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953. Web.

<sup>21</sup> Lukács, Georg. *History and Class Consciousness*. Merlin Press, 1923. Web.

article”<sup>22</sup>. There is a predominant form by which life is typified, and it defines a totality which is exchange value relations. Exchange value relations are how humans commodify a relation. The main reason for reification is because humans want to dominate over other humans. Thus, if a human takes a form and distorts it, he or she can gain dominance over a specific group of people. Objectification in which there is disconnect creates stereotyping. Essentially, reification is a stereotype, and stereotypical thinking leads to false consciousnesses. Ideologies are derived from false consciousnesses.

#### 4: **The Sociology of Literature**

Georg Lukács was a key contributor in the development of the sociology of literature. Lukács believed that the greatest artists were the ones who could capture the essence as form of the whole way of human life and produce that essence into their artwork. “In a society where the general and the particular, the conceptual and the sensuous, the social and the individual are increasingly torn apart by the ‘alienations’ of capitalism, the great writer draws these dialectically together into a complex totality”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore the fiction which the writer creates imitates the society of the writer. Lukács dubs this form of literature as realism.

Realist literature is based upon a “set of relations between man, nature, and history; and these relations embody and unfold what for Marxism is most ‘typical’ about a particular phase of history”.<sup>24</sup> Similar to Weber’s ideal types, the ‘typical’ is what Lukács believes to be the undeveloped forces of a society which are “historically significant and progressive, which lay bare the society’s inner structure and dynamic”.<sup>25</sup> A ‘typical’ character represents the common

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. eBook. pg. 27-28.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pg 28.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

crisis of a certain historical period.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, a ‘typical’ character represents a general problem in society, which also places upon the character what Lukács called ‘world-historical’, which is the immanence of form. The character essentially becomes an imminent representation of the general problem of society immanent within the unfolding of a historical totality. For instance, in Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, Oliver Twist represents a general problem of 19<sup>th</sup> century British society because he is an orphan. Plus, readers can study Oliver in an historical context because Oliver is a representation of the problem of orphans in 19<sup>th</sup> century British society.

Lucien Goldmann is George Lukács’s greatest disciple. “Goldmann is concerned to examine the structure of a literary text for the degree to which it embodies the structure of thought (also known as ‘world vision’ or what Karl Mannheim referred to as *Weltanschauung*) of the social class or group to which the writer belongs”.<sup>27</sup> Goldmann believed that literary works were not the creations of the writer but rather of a social group which shares the same aspirations, values, and ideas. Goldmann called this theory the “trans-individual mental structures” and world view. The greatest writers are those who place the “trans-individual mental structures” into their art in a “unified and translucent way”.<sup>28</sup>

Goldmann’s main theory was that of genetic structuralism. Terry Eagleton defines genetic structuralism in the following manner:

*Structuralism*, because he is less interested in the contents of a particular world vision than in the structure of categories it display. Two apparently quite different writers may thus be shown to belong to the same collective mental structure.

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<sup>26</sup> Suvin, Darko (1986-1987). “Lukács: Horizons and Implications of the “Typical Character”, *Duke University Press*. pg. 104.

<sup>27</sup> Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. eBook. pg. 32.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*.

*Genetic*, because Goldmann is concerned with how such mental structures are historically produced-concerned, that is to say, with the relations between a world vision and the historical conditions which give rise to it.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it is important to study structure because by examining the structures of works of literature one can gain an understanding of the world view of the social class. In Goldmann's theory two different writers of the same social class will have the same structure to their novels because they have the same world vision. Goldmann also wants to examine how the world vision of a social class affects history in order to see if the world vision brought about any significant changes in society.

Shortly after Lucien Goldmann's death Raymond Williams wrote an article published in the *New Left Review* entitled "Literature and Sociology: In Memory of Lucien Goldmann". Williams had great admiration for Goldmann. Williams describes in his article a time when Goldmann gave two lectures at Cambridge. He was so impressed with Goldmann that he invited him back to Cambridge in order to exchange work with him. Unfortunately, Goldmann passed away before Williams could see him again.

While Williams was writing some of his earlier works in the 1950s and 60s, he was unaware of the works of Lukács and Goldmann mainly because their works were not published in English.<sup>30</sup> However, when Williams discovered the works of Lukács and Goldmann, he was very surprised and excited because they were engaging in many of the same ideas and concepts that Williams was studying. Williams had great admiration for Lukács and Goldmann's concept of reification. Lukács and Goldmann theorized that economic activity dominated "all other

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Lukács wrote in German, and Goldmann wrote in French.



forms of human activity,” and they gave historical explanations which supported their theory.<sup>31</sup>

“In modern organized capitalism this dominance...was increasing, so that this reification...was more thoroughly penetrating every other kind of life and consciousness”.<sup>32</sup>

For Williams, Goldmann’s idea of structure and consciousness is vital to the merging of literature and sociology. In Goldmann’s theory there are two types of consciousnesses. The first is the actual, manifest, consciousness, and the second is the latent, possible consciousness. According to Goldmann the real consciousness is “what people actually think”, and the possible consciousness is “not what a group thinks, but [rather] what changes are likely to occur in its consciousness in the absence of modification in the group’s essential nature”.<sup>33</sup> Essentially, what Goldmann says is that in the present there is an actual consciousness which is what people are thinking. However, through the imminent, possible consciousness, one is not analyzing what people are currently thinking, but rather what transformation could occur through the thought process of a social group. Goldmann gives an example of the Russian Revolution to emphasize his theory. In 1917 the majority of Russians were loyal to the Tsar. However by the end of 1917 after information was conveyed to the peasants regarding the social structure of Russia, their consciousness was transformed, and they were no longer loyal to the Tsar.<sup>34</sup> There is a maximum limit to a social group’s possible consciousness. Once a social group reaches its maximum possible consciousness, the only way the group can go further is by surpassing itself or changing into a new social group.<sup>35</sup> Goldmann believed that the greatest works of literature

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<sup>31</sup> Williams, Raymond. "Literature and Sociology: In Memory of Lucien Goldmann." *New Left Review* 1.67 (1971): n. page. Web. 5 Nov. 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Goldmann, Lucien. *Cultural Creation in Modern Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977. eBook. pg. 32

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, Raymond. "Literature and Sociology: In Memory of Lucien Goldmann." *New Left Review* . 1.67 (1971): n. page. Web. 5 Nov. 2013.

are those which are well written and expose the maximum possible consciousness of a social group.<sup>36</sup>

While Williams admired Goldmann's theory, he does not necessarily agree with it. He finds that there is too wide of a gap between the idea of consciousness and the actual literary elements which structures the text. Williams does not believe that an author has the wherewithal to necessarily see the world view, nor can Williams always distinguish the possible consciousness from a piece of literature. It is from the distance between the consciousness and literary structure which Williams was inspired to form one of his greatest ideas which he called structures of feeling.<sup>37</sup>

### 5: *Culture and Society and The Country and the City*

Williams's first major work published in 1958 was *Culture and Society*. In this book Williams examines the development of culture from 1780 through 1950 and comes to the conclusion that culture is a whole way of life developed from democracy, art, and industrialization. "The idea of culture is a general reaction to a general and major change in the conditions of our common life."<sup>38</sup> Thus, shifts in democracy, art, and industrialization between 1780 and 1950 have formed Williams's idea of culture as a whole way of life.

Williams attended Cambridge University, a university situated in the city. While attending Cambridge, Williams disagreed with professors and fellow students about their views of the city and country. Thus, in 1973, Williams wrote a book entitled *The Country and the City* in which he gave his perspective of rural life compared to the city. According to Williams most people believed,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. pg. 295. Print.

“...the country [had] gathered a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue... [while] the city [had] gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness, and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation”.<sup>39</sup>

While a few of the common assertions are credible in some respects, Williams disproves many of the common viewpoints people have of the city and the country. Williams also delves into the history of British cities and rural areas through the use of literature in order to inform the reader that cities and countries are not as different as commonly believed, and they are in fact intertwined through capitalism.

While people usually connect capitalism with urban areas, the country’s impact on capitalism cannot be overlooked. According to Williams the industrial revolution “...was based on a highly developed agrarian capitalism...”.<sup>40</sup> In the eighteenth century there were approximately eight million people living in rural England, and out of those eight million people four hundred owned “...a quarter of the cultivated land”.<sup>41</sup> Since such a small percentage of the population controlled a decent amount of land, new social relationships developed. The classical notion of peasantry diminished, and new social relationships between wage-labourers and tenant farmers developed with the land owners. The land owners “...lived by a calculation of rents and returns on investments of capital, and it was the process of rack-renting, engrossing and enclosure which increased their hold on the land”.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid pg. 1

<sup>40</sup> Ibid pg. 2

<sup>41</sup> Ibid pg. 60

<sup>42</sup> Ibid pg. 60

In novels of the eighteenth century a reader can observe how economic prosperity compared to other values. Williams uses two novels, *Tom Jones* written by Henry Fielding and *Clarissa* written by Samuel Richardson, in order to explain how economic advantage compared to the value of love. In both novels the families arrange marriages in order to combine land and improve their economic well being. In *Tom Jones*, the first marriage between Sophia Western and Blifil is proposed in order to unite neighboring lands. Blifil was not in love with Sophia; it was ““Her fortune and her person [that] were the sole objects of his wishes...””.<sup>43</sup> Likewise Sophia was also not in love with Blifil which is evident when she states, ““Oh! Sir, such a marriage is worse than death. He is not even indifferent; I hate and detest him””.<sup>44</sup> In the end of this novel everything turns out fine because the two people who are really in love, Tom Jones and Sophia, get married because Tom eventually inherits Allworthy’s estate. If Tom did not inherit Allworthy’s estate, the marriage in all likelihood would have never happened. Hence, the reader can see how the marriage was not based on the value of love, but rather on the capitalist value of money and property.

The enclosure of land has been occurring since the thirteenth century and really took off in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>45</sup> The growth of enclosures is important because more enclosures meant less open-field villages and common rights. With less open-field villages and common rights that meant more economic stress on small owners and small tenants. In the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century enclosures, which were a capitalist social system, were enacted by parliament by representatives who represented the land owning class. Thus, the results of agrarian capitalism was the owner-tenant relationship and the increasing number of landless people. Landless people eventually moved and worked in industrial towns.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid pg.63

<sup>44</sup> Ibid pg.64

<sup>45</sup> Ibid pg. 96

The lives of the poorer people were dramatically altered by Parliament enacting enclosures.

Arthur Young in 1801 stated, “All I know is, I had a cow and Parliament took it from me.”<sup>46</sup>

However, Parliament enacting enclosures merely put the finishing touches on the agrarian social structure which was developing years before the enclosures were enacted. The social structure began forming during the periods of open-field village. In a typical open-field village,

“There are three hundred souls. Of these, nearly two hundred are cottagers and labourers and their families, indoor servants, and the unattached poor – widows, orphans, the aged. Some seventy are the copyhold tenant farmers and their families. Some twenty are the freehold farmers and their families. The ten or twelve others are the squire and his family and the parson and his family”<sup>47</sup>

Thus, enclosures enacted by Parliament simply solidified the social order of the “three classes: the gentry; the small entrepreneurs; the unpropertied poor” which the open-field village created.<sup>48</sup>

Of course the urban and rural areas fed off each other. By 1820 London was easily Britain’s largest city with 1.25 million people. “Eighteenth century London was the astonishing creation of an agrarian and mercantile capitalism, within an aristocratic political order”.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the city life of London went hand in hand with country life. Many people from the country went to London and other cities as a last resort to find jobs. Also, urban and rural areas relied on one another because cities would buy food from the country. When merchants in London started trading for cheaper food from other nations, the country’s economy slightly declined. However,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid pg. 99

<sup>47</sup> Ibid pg 102

<sup>48</sup> Ibid pg. 102. Also see here Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon, 1944.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid pg. 146

the decline was not too dramatic because eighty percent of the food was still homegrown, and Britain exported some of its goods to other nations.<sup>50</sup>

Typically one sees a country village as a tight knit community while the city is filled with people who are separated from one another. However, Williams examines the writing of Charles Dickens and comes to the conclusion that inhabitants of the city are not as separated as one may think. Williams states that in Dickens's novels there at first seems no connection between characters. The characters may pass each other on the street, but they do not converse in normal ways. Rather they speak at the other character. However,

“...as the action develops, unknown and unacknowledged relationships, profound and decisive connections, definite and committing recognitions and avowals are as it were forced into consciousness. These are the real and inevitable relationships and connections, the necessary recognitions and avowals of any human society. But they are of a kind that are obscured, complicated, mystified by the sheer rush and noise and miscellaneity of this new and complex social order”.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, while it seems that rural areas create the most social connections, the city in its own unique way also creates social connections. (Touraine and Bourdieu understand these connections as *rappports* more than relations.)

After reading Raymond Williams *The Country and the City* it became clear to me that the city and country are not as different as they appear to be. Once one delves into the history of the country, one can see that farms were set up in the same way as a capitalist society. While rural areas give the impression of the simple life, it is really not that simple. People put money over

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid pg. 187

<sup>51</sup> Ibid pg. 155

everything else just as they do in the city. In the city people seem disconnected, but in while examining Dickens, Williams notices that people are connected subliminally and materially. Overall the city and the country are not as different as their typical stereotypes make them out to be.

## 6: Structures of Feeling

Raymond Williams began to develop his concept of structure of feelings in a *Preface to Film* in 1954. From this time until Williams's death in 1988, the idea went through a good amount of development. Therefore, I will explore the development of structures of feeling through two of Williams's major works, *The Long Revolution* and *Marxism and Literature*.

### *The Long Revolution*

In *The Long Revolution* Williams understood that he could study certain aspects of life throughout history, but he found that it was difficult to grasp an understanding of the “quality of life” in a specific society. He believes that the best way humans can learn about the quality of life in a society is through art. For Williams,

art... can be seen as expressing certain elements in the organization which, within that organization's terms, could only have been expressed in this way. It is then not a question of relating the art to the society, but of studying all the activities and their interrelations, without any concession of priority to any one of them we may choose to abstract.<sup>52</sup>

Society is always changing, and one can examine this through the differences between generations which is evident through societal artifacts of culture such as language and art. Each

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<sup>52</sup> Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian, 2011. p. 66. Print.

generation has its own uniqueness in which they have their own unique issues, own unique artwork, and own unique language, etc. For instance language develops over time. The word google is unique to this current generation; prior to the founding of Google no person ever used the word google. Williams's states that structure of feeling is "in one sense...the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization. And it is in this respect that the arts of a period, taking these to include characteristic approaches and tones in arguments are of major importance".<sup>53</sup> It is in these characteristic approaches and tone that structures of feeling will be expressed, often times in a non-conscious manner. It represents both the linguistic turn as well as the affectual turn in critical theory.

Williams admits that not every member of a society will have the same exact feelings, but there is a general feeling amongst the community because of communication. This general feeling is what Karl Mannheim called a *Weltanschauung*, also known as a world view.<sup>54</sup> For Williams the structure of feeling is not entirely learned. For instance, one generation may train another generation but that generation who is in the process of learning from the other generation will develop their own structures of feeling. These structures of feeling appear to come out of nowhere but in actuality structures of feeling are simply a way for a generation to respond to the world around them. Eventually, when the "carrier" of a structure of feeling dies then we have to examine the relations through cultural documentations (literature, paintings, fashion, etc). in order to gain a sense of the quality of life during that "carrier's" period of existence.

In order to fully understand structures of feeling it is important to understand that Williams believes that there are three levels of culture. "There is the lived culture of a particular time and place, only fully accessible to those living in that time and place. There is the recorded

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid p. 69

<sup>54</sup> Mannheim, Karl. "On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*." George H. Wolff. *From Karl Mannheim*. . 2nd. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993. 136-188. Web. 19 Mar. 2014.



culture, of every kind, from art to the most everyday facts: the culture of a period. There is also, as the factor connecting lived culture and period cultures, the culture of the selective tradition”.<sup>55</sup> Williams’s first level of culture is what Edmund Husserl would call the “lifeworld”.<sup>56</sup> However, rather than a phenomenological approach to the lifeworld, Williams opts for the vitalist approach of Henri Bergson (1911) -- the winner of the 1927 Nobel Prize for Literature—had with its emphasis on *élan vital* and *durée* great influence on writers and artist in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

“Selective tradition’ is very important to understand why structures of feeling are accurate. It is through selective tradition in which “the survival of [cultural documents] is governed, not by the period itself, but by new periods, which gradually compose a tradition”.<sup>57</sup> “Selective tradition” begins during the period in which the artist is living. It is the interests of the members of society of the given period which places emphasis on what are the best works of art of the time. As time goes on the reason why the number of works reduces is because all periods have at least three generations within it and changes occur within the generations which reduce the number of works that embrace a given period. Therefore as time progresses there will be some who will state that specific elements which are important to them were neglected, but these people will not argue against the changes because they tend to be the ones who brought them about. As time passes the list of best works further reduces until there is only a certain number which are deemed the best works to study of a specific period. As time progresses and historical changes occur documents are selected because of these historical changes. These works are select documents that are used to help human growth and are used for historical

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<sup>55</sup> Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian, 2011. pg. 70. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970. Print. pg. 108

<sup>57</sup> Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian, 2011. Pg. 70. Print.

reconstruction. Therefore, “the selective tradition creates at one level, a general human culture; at another level, the historical record of a particular society; at a third level, most difficult to accept and assess, a rejection of considerable areas of what was once a living culture”.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Marxism and Literature***

Williams argued that people have a difficult time understanding cultural activity because they look at the cultural activity as a finished product, a product of the past.<sup>59</sup> Thus, by examining cultural activities in the past they become fixed products. Instead of seeing cultural activity simply as a fixed product, Williams wants to understand cultural and social activity in the present, as a defining product. Thus “if the social [and cultural activity] is the fixed and explicit- the known relationships, institutions, formations, positions- all that is present and moving, all that escapes or seems to escape from the fixed and the explicit and the known is grasped and defined as the personal: this, here, now, alive, active, ‘subjective’”.<sup>60</sup>

Williams finds that the main issue in Marxism is that too many critics, when analyzing art, reduce the social into fixed forms. “Thus we speak of a world-view or of a prevailing ideology or of a class outlook, often with adequate evidence, but in this regular slide towards a past tense and a fixed form suppose or even do not know that we have to suppose, that these exist and are lived specifically and definitively, in singular and developing forms.”<sup>61</sup> In other words the forms reify, become concrete. Also, this is similar to Wittgenstein’s “forms of life”, social forms can only become social consciousness when they are lived out through inter-communicative relationships.

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<sup>58</sup> Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian, 2011. Pg. 72. Print.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print. pg. 128.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid pg. 128

<sup>61</sup> Ibid pg. 129

Throughout history society is constantly changing. Williams compares society to language in that “no generation speaks quite the same language as its predecessors”.<sup>62</sup> In social life again no two generations have the same fashions, activities, transportation devices, etc.

Williams is attempting to define:

a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period. The relations between this quality and other specifying historical marks of changing institutions, formations, and beliefs, and beyond these the changing social and economic relations between and within classes are again an open question....<sup>63</sup>

Changes in social life are not necessarily as a result of changed institutions, formations, and beliefs as well as social and economic relations amongst classes. Neither one of these takes precedence over the other because they are equally important. Also, the changes are not a matter of personal experiences; instead these social changes occur because of social experiences.<sup>64</sup>

These changes are social in two ways. The “first, in that they are changes of presence... second, in that although they are emergent or pre-emergent they do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action”.<sup>65</sup> These social changes are the transformation process of structures of feeling.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid pg. 131

<sup>63</sup> Ibid pg. 131

<sup>64</sup> Ibid pg. 131

<sup>65</sup> Ibid pg. 132

<sup>66</sup> Ibid pg. 132

Williams argues that with structures of feeling we are interested in the characters's present ideals within the text.<sup>67</sup> A reader can locate these ideals and standards by examining characters interactions and experiences. Specifically a reader must examine "characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness<sup>68</sup> of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity".<sup>69</sup> The elements previously mentioned are considered the structure of the text. The goal is to define a social experience in the present tense.<sup>70</sup> Williams claims that "a 'structure of feeling' is a cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand elements and their connections in a generation or period...".<sup>71</sup> Therefore a reader can gain an understanding of specific social classes by focusing on how certain social and cultural activities and events affect a character.

Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* lends itself well to examination by Williams's theory of structure of feeling. In *Jude the Obscure*, Jude is an orphan who lives in the country with his aunt. The family is of the working class. When Jude is young he takes great interest in gaining knowledge. His goal in life is to go to university in the city of Christminster. Jude is probably just as intelligent as those who attend the university because he knows languages such as Latin and Greek, plus he is an avid reader. However, when Jude applies to the different universities of Christminster all but one university responds to him. The university representative who responds to him states, "Sir,-I have read your letter with interest; and judging from your description of yourself as a working-man, I venture to think that you will have

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid pg. 132

<sup>68</sup> For Williams "practical consciousness is what is actually being lived, and not only what is thought is being lived". Ibid. pg. 130-131

<sup>69</sup> Ibid pg. 132

<sup>70</sup> Ibid pg. 132

<sup>71</sup> Ibid pg. 132

a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course...”.<sup>72</sup> With most of the universities not responding to Jude, a reader sees that the upper class attends the universities and have a sense of superiority over the working class. The tone of the letter sent to Jude only emphasizes this point.

Next, there is Jude’s reaction to the rejection letter. The narrator states, “This terribly sensible advice exasperated Jude. He had known all that before. He knew it was true. Yet it seemed a hard slap after ten years of labour, and its effect upon him just now was to make him rise recklessly from the table and, instead of reading as usual, to go downstairs and into the street. He stood at a bar and tossed off two or three glasses...”.<sup>73</sup> Jude does not take well to the letter even though he is well aware that he will more than likely be denied because of his class. He worked hard for ten years as a stone mason and studied for his entire life. Jude is so angry that he goes to a bar and attempts to drink his pain away, and that is only his first bar of the night.

Between Jude’s first and second trip to the public house, he stops at the walls of the university that denied him acceptance. On the wall he writes a biblical message, “‘I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?’-Job xii. 3.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, Jude wants the university to realize that even though he may be from a different class it does not mean that he is inferior to those who attend the university. Thus, the denial from the university kills all of Jude’s hopes and dreams, and it torments Jude for the rest of the book. While, this specific event is only one of the many sorrows throughout Jude’s life, if Jude is accepted into university there is a good chance that Jude’s life would be much better. Actually, if Jude is accepted, regardless of his social class, there would probably be no story

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<sup>72</sup> Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. New York: Signet Classic, 1999. Print. pg. 115

<sup>73</sup> Ibid pg. 115

<sup>74</sup> Ibid pg. 117

because there would be no conflict between classes, and Jude would be able to achieve his dreams.

As one may be able to tell, the main difference between Williams's concept of structure of feelings in his earlier work *The Long Revolution*, and his later work *Marxism and Literature* is that Williams's gradually shifts from mainly focusing on the development of society throughout specific periods to the examination of society at its present time. In an interview entitled "Affect's Future" with a scholar of cultural studies, Lawrence Grossberg in *The Affect Theory Reader*, Grossberg states, that Williams "redefine[s] the structure of feeling in radical ways and critiques his own earlier notions of the structure of feeling as the statement of homologies across the various dimensions and regions of social life. Now, the later work is much more interesting to me, where the structure of feeling is apparently more concerned with 'the emergent'".<sup>75</sup> Therefore, in Williams's earlier notion of structure of feelings he is focused on the development of social life throughout periods as where in his later work he is focused primarily upon what is emerging in a given period.

Humans have what John Searle labeled "casually emergent system features".<sup>76</sup> For example, a child may have a casually emergent system feature such as good height and athleticism which indicates that this child will develop into a great basketball player in his or her teenage years and possibly beyond. Searle considers "consciousness a casually emergent system feature" derived from neurons.<sup>77</sup> For Searle, "consciousness can be explained by the casual interactions between elements of the brain at the micro level, but consciousness itself cannot be deduced or calculated from the sheer physical structure of the neurons without some additional

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<sup>75</sup> Grossberg, Lawrence. "Affect's Future." Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Print. pg. 317.

<sup>76</sup> Searle, John. *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. MIT Press, 1992. eBook. Pg. 111.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid pg. 112

account of the casual relations between them”.<sup>78</sup> Overall, emergent features are those which are produced through the interaction of certain elements.

Searle then goes on to state that there is a higher level of emergent properties. Yet, Searle cannot give an example of this higher level of emergence. However, the Brown University epistemologist Jaegwon Kim describes this higher level of emergence as strong supervenience. Kim defines strong supervenience in the following manner, “if mental properties strongly supervene on physical properties the relation between specific mental properties on which they supervene are guaranteed to be stable over possible worlds.”<sup>79</sup> To use an example that Kim uses to describe strong supervenience, “P realizes M” thus “M is emergent from P”.<sup>80</sup> Thus, it is important to understand that when discussing Williams, he is utilizing this higher level of emergence.

Affect was important in the social sciences long before it was important in literature. Ideology is rooted in language, and ideology is a tool that is utilized because humans fear the truth. Take for example *embourgeoisement*; in embourgeoisement the working class begins to think that they are part of the middle class, and they do not associate themselves with the working class. Prior to embourgeoisement the working class saw themselves as pawns to the middle class because the middle class owned the working class’s labor. However, with embourgeoisement the working class views themselves as equals to those in the middle class. When one digs deeper into embourgeoisement they can find that a new group of people emerged

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid pg. 112

<sup>79</sup> Kim, Jaegwon. "Downward Causation" in Emergentism and Nonreductivism Physicalism ." Ansgar Beckermann. *Emergence or Reduction?: Essays on the Prospects of Nonreductive Physicalism*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1992. Print. pg. 133

<sup>80</sup> Ibid pg. 133

which André Gorz calls the neo-proletariat which is a non-class.<sup>81</sup> Neo-proletariats are people who have part-time jobs, temp jobs, or no jobs at all. Thus, the issue of emergence is important because there is an the emergence of a class consciousness, but this class consciousness is not real; it is merely an ideological front. However, what is important is that there is an emergent sensibility where the working class forms a new perception that they are part of the middle class. An emergent sensibility is important because it shows that people do not have to do certain things just because they learn to, instead they can follow their instincts and create their own identity.

In *The Long Revolution* Williams states, “we find [in a structure of feeling] a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression, through which the characteristics of our way of life that an external analyst could describe are in some way passed, giving them particular and characteristic colour.”<sup>82</sup> In *Marxism and Literature* Williams develops structures of feelings when he states,

We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis...has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies.<sup>83</sup>

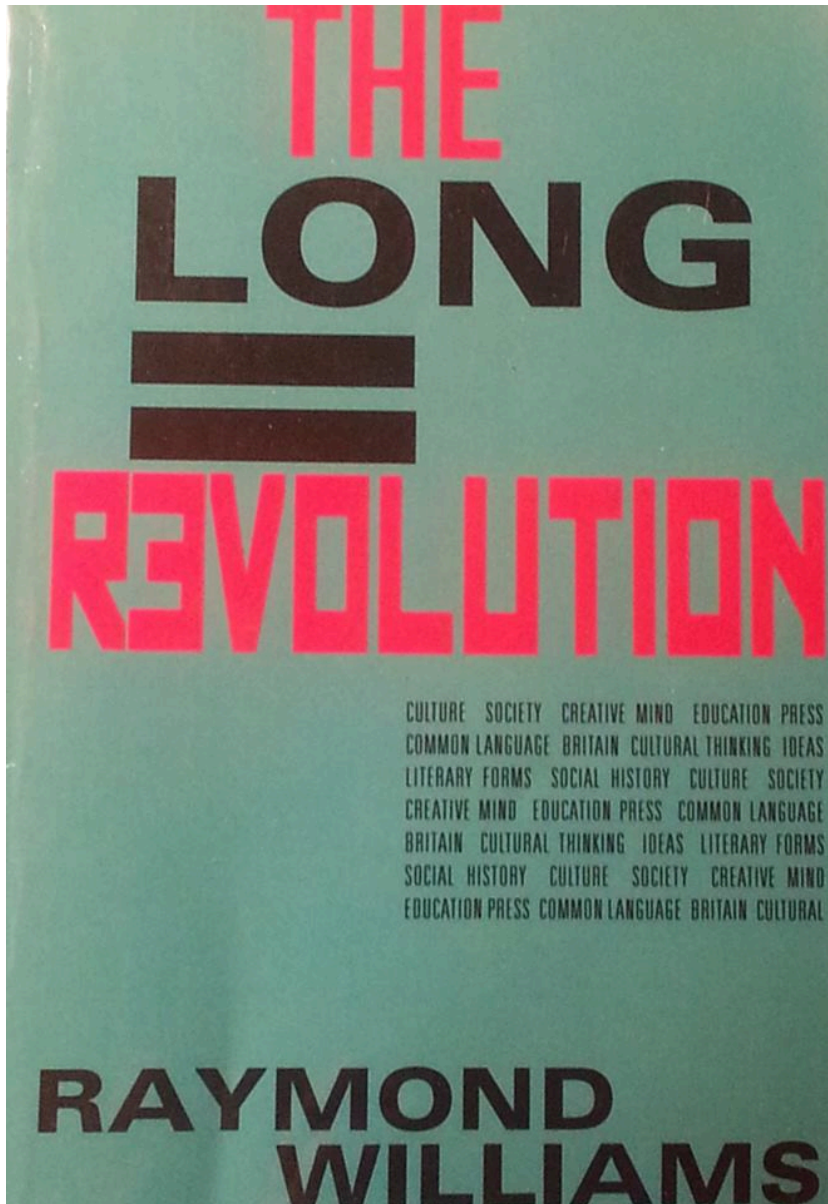
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<sup>81</sup> Gorz, Andre. *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-industrial Socialism*. London: Pluto Press, 1997. Print. pg. 69

<sup>82</sup> Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian, 2011. Pg. 68. Print.

<sup>83</sup> Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. Pg.132. Print.





These quotes exemplify the main difference between Williams's early understanding of structure of feelings and his later understanding of structures of feeling. In both cases he is attempting to gain a better understanding of lived experiences. However, in *The Long Revolution* Williams does not emphasize examining a text as if it is in the present. In fact he gives the notion that the forms are reified because the lived experiences are in the past. In *Marxism and Literature* Williams still agrees

with his previous statements that structures of feeling still involves structure in that there is a shared feeling amongst the community. However, he changes the process of examining structures of feeling. No longer is he looking at structures of feeling in the past, but instead he believes that the structures of feeling are “still in process” in literature.<sup>84</sup> Characteristics are now

<sup>84</sup> As stated on page twenty six of this paper, Williams also states that “reducing the social into fixed forms” is the biggest mistake many Marxist make.

described as “emergent”, whereas before they were examined in the past. The later Williams views the past as continually with us as predispositions hence, affect.

In essence Williams’s structures of feeling is studying perceptions. He has a sense that there is something beyond language, yet he would never use a word like ineffable. Even though through structures of feeling one is going beyond words, one still needs words in order to describe feelings.

Now one may be asking, who cares whether one examines a text in the present or the past, does it make any significant difference? The answer is yes. There is a major difference. For Williams social forms can only “become social consciousness only when they are lived, actively, in real relationships which are more than systematic exchanges between fixed units”<sup>85</sup> The easiest way to explain this is by comparing Williams’s notion of structures of feeling in *The Long Revolution* to examining literature as if it is a history text book, while in Williams’s developed concept of structures of feeling in *Marxism and Literature* he is examining literature as if it were a time machine. Williams’s states in *The Long Revolution* that what makes art different from history text books is that one can gain an idea of the lived experiences of a time. Yet, when describing how to examine a text using structures of feeling he is practically treating art as a history text book. In a history text book one can gain a sense of the past, but one is unable to gain a full understanding of lived experiences because unless a person is actually present in a specific period it is nearly impossible to understand lived experiences. Therefore, in Williams’s later work he treats the text as if it were a time machine taking a reader back in time to examine lived experiences as if they were actually being lived. When traveling in a time machine one can gain a full sense of the experiences a certain period went through because the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid pg. 130

person is actually in the present living with the people whom he or she is studying. Thus, by examining a text in its present one can gain a better understanding of lived experiences.

## 7: Affect Theory

Dealing with the present structure of feelings helps bring about “affect theory.” For instance in Brian Massumi's "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact", he describes how President Bush justified the war in Iraq because as Massumi states "in the past there was a future threat".<sup>86</sup> Therefore, President Bush acted out of fear to start the Iraq war because he was afraid that even if Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction there was a real threat that they could develop them and attack the United States. Hence, Massumi's idea is much like Williams's structure of feelings because he is examining how from the then present feeling of President Bush's fear of Iraq having nuclear weapons emerged the war in Iraq. In literature feelings causing reaction maybe not always to the extent of starting a war, but one can gain an idea of the experiences of certain social groups; for instance, Jude studied all his life to get into university because he was happy with studying, and he thought studying would bring about a better life. Yet all of Jude's studying does not bring about a better life because he is denied acceptance to university due to his social class which brings about a horrible life for Jude. Overall, Jude gets denied acceptance into university, hence he feels angry and decides to get drunk. From Jude's anger, because of his denial into university, emerges his reaction to get drunk, and his anger and sorrow because of his denial leads to a horrible life in general (See Image Below). For Bush he was afraid of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. As a precaution he goes to war, and his fears are erased. There is a sort of dialectical motion which goes on between feelings and their effects. For example, Jude's

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<sup>86</sup> Massumi, Brian. "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat ." Melissa Greegg and Gregory J. Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Print. pg. 53.

happiness studying eventually brings about his denial into university because he will never be able to get in because of his social class, and this denial brings about his anger and sorrow. President Bush's fear of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, President Bush goes to war, President Bush's fears are put to an ease.



Overall, Williams's structure of feelings is a way to understand a particular time period by examining art as if the person examining the work of art were present in the period the work of art was produced, and through the examination of that work of art the examiner gains an understanding of lived experiences by analyzing how they emerged from certain feelings/emotions.

In Patricia Clough's "The Affective Turn" (2007), she defines affect as "pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act..."<sup>87</sup> For Clough, there is a re(turn) to affect in light of the changing configuration of bodies with technology – especially post-photographic and post-cinematic new media. The body is understood –following Bergson again --as the site of creative vibrations. Here we understand the emergence of 'biopolitics' in recent decades in terms of Gilles Deleuze's *Bergsonism* (1966) rather than the approach of Michel Foucault. These "pre-individual" or "pre-subjective" forces are meanings, values, norms that are – again following Bergson -- perceived rather than conceived. These forces are understood intuitively by percepts rather than ideationally by concepts.

Affect is pre-cognitive and pre-reflective. This is the imperceptible in-between dimension of meanings and values that energize and trigger vitality, that is, the power to act. This is a deeper inner space than consciousness and exceeds it as a constitutive force in human symbolic world-creating acts. Therefore these forces are what make a person act. Affect is the intensity of percepts which energizes humans to act. If a person has no bodily intensity then that person will not act. The intensity flows in a trajectory and swells – eventually overturning boundaries of preconceived worlds.

Affect is pre-subjective disposition (what Bourdieu refers to as *dispositifs*). It is pre-cognitive and pre-reflective Affect-laden signs embodied as meanings, values, and norms when affected impact what Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*. *Habitus* is a "structured disposition", a way of life that a person is used to.<sup>88</sup> For Rene Descartes the human body embodies emotions, affect, and memory (through signs and images). Thus, the body connects to the mind because the mind also stores signs and images. For instance say a person hears a funny joke, and he or

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<sup>87</sup> Patricia Clough, "Introduction," in Patricia Clough and Jean O'Malley Halley, eds. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007

<sup>88</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1980. eBook.

she starts laughing. The laughter produced by the body may bring about a memory of another joke that that person once heard.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, there is a clear connection between the mind and body which show that that these affect signs influence the way humans act. These memory images of human action that are embodied within humans combined with perceptions are what Henri Bergson would call *durée*. *Durée* is the feeling of duration in stored and embodied memory images and dispositions. It is experience duration and durability of the felt experience of memory which governs the relation between the past and present for the future

Therefore in regards to Williams, structures of feelings are essentially the structure of affect-laden signs and meanings and how we experience them. Williams does not specifically state that meaning and values bring about structures of feelings. However, Williams is studying how society affects characters in order to understand lived experiences of social classes. When the habitus of a specific character is violated by society then the character acts. Again, Jude valued his education, and society did not allow him to pursue his education, hence he acted because his habitus was violated.

Affect theory is a new movement in which scholars are attempting to study how to understand responsive expressions which come about from unconscious emotions. This is beyond a focus on ideology. As a matter of fact, affect comes before ideology. Human bodily nerves are inclined by external affect which consist of non-conscious intensities, and these intensities go beyond verbal expressions which involve non-representational understanding. Affect can be reduced to any signifying representation, but it cannot be captured by cognitive definitions. Affect goes beyond the conscious awareness, for example physical reactions such as dilated pupils.

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<sup>89</sup> Bergson, Henri. *Laughter*. Trans. C. Brereton. Rockville: Arc Manor, 1900. Print.

In Fredric Jameson's book *The Political Unconscious* he lays out three semantic stages in which a reader should approach literature. Jameson is concerned with the interpretive structure of how the text was created. Also, he focuses on authors' unconscious use of historical literary interpretive practices.

The first stage deals with political history. Political history examines the ascent and descent of political regimes as well as social fashions. The text coincides with individual literary work, and Jameson considers the individual text as a symbolic act. Essentially the text is an imaginary resolution to a real contradiction. In order to interpret the text one must examine descriptions of the formal, but the description "must be a description already pre-prepared and oriented toward transcending the purely formalistic... by construing purely formal patterns as a symbolic enactment of the social within the formal and the aesthetic".<sup>90</sup> A text's symbolic effectiveness is constructed from formal descriptions which see symbolism as a resolution to a contradiction.

The second stage is the social. In this stage the text is no longer considered an individual work, but rather the work of a collective social class. The text is still considered as a symbolic act, but it is enlarged to fit the values of an entire social class. However, there is an issue in that most text which survive have dialogue which is merely the voice of a hegemonic class. Thus, a reader must reinterpret the hegemonic voice back to the voice which was ultimately transformed by the hegemonic class. In order to reconstruct a text a reader must examine the text with what Jameson calls ideologemes. An ideologeme is "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially

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<sup>90</sup> Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1981. eBook. pg. 77

antagonistic collective discourses of social classes”.<sup>91</sup> Thus, an ideologeme is a pre-conceptualized idea of a belief system or a “ultimate class fantasy about the ‘collective characters’ which are the classes in opposition”.<sup>92</sup>

The last stage is the mode of production which transcends both the political and the social. Sign systems from different modes of production restructure the text. The restructured text creates what Jameson calls “the ideology of form, that is, the determinate contradiction of the specific messages emitted by the varied sign system which coexist in a given artistic process as well as in its general social formation”.<sup>93</sup> These sign systems trace the modes of production. At this point form is considered content, and for Jameson forms are constantly in motion.

Ironically, Jameson in his writings in the 1990s spoke of the postmodern epoch as characterized “by the waning of affect.” Now in his 2013 book *The Antinomies of Realism*, he argues in a Bergsonian mode for the collapse of the framework of past-present-future, and quotes the German film-maker/philosopher Alexander Kluge to emphasize how the “insurrection of the present against the other temporalities’ is the realm of affect”.<sup>94</sup> Further, he recognizes more how affect eludes language, and the significance of the emergence of new forms of life and symbolic world-creation, as well as increasing emphasis on the cultural materiality of bodies themselves and their capabilities for performative action.

Beyond ideology, the affective turn confronts the intensity of the bombardment of images on an accelerating number of screens. Jameson and Eagleton are catching on to what Raymond Williams was working for decades: confronting the extent to which ideology is comprehended as a static form. Like Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School (*Minima Moralia*, 1951), Williams

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid pg. 76

<sup>92</sup> Ibid pg. 87

<sup>93</sup> Ibid pg. 98

<sup>94</sup> Jameson, Fredric. *The Antinomies of Realism*. London: Verso. 2013 pg. 10



explored affective responsiveness: what Adorno would call a self-reflexivity.<sup>95</sup> There is a reflex back from conscious experience, not into the childhood subconscious or unconscious, but into the stored memory images we conserve and are automatically reactivated and triggered.

Further, affect theory – stimulated by Deleuze’s revised Bergsonism – is turned to in helping to engage principles of Derridean and Foucauldian post-structuralism that have seemed unable to rise to the level of signification.

For contemporary political sociology, structures of feeling and affect theory offer new paths with which to confront postmodern power “after ideology.” Certainly ideology is still very much with us; however it is increasingly fragmented, no longer globally encompassing. The hyper-media of the twenty first century -- beyond and beneath ideology –is confronted with continual aggressive *flow* of ambient affect. The trajectory is more and more affective than cognitive, even if it is still as Williams noted in his work on television (1974) a communicative one. Politicians waffle, lose their feel and confront the melting of their message.

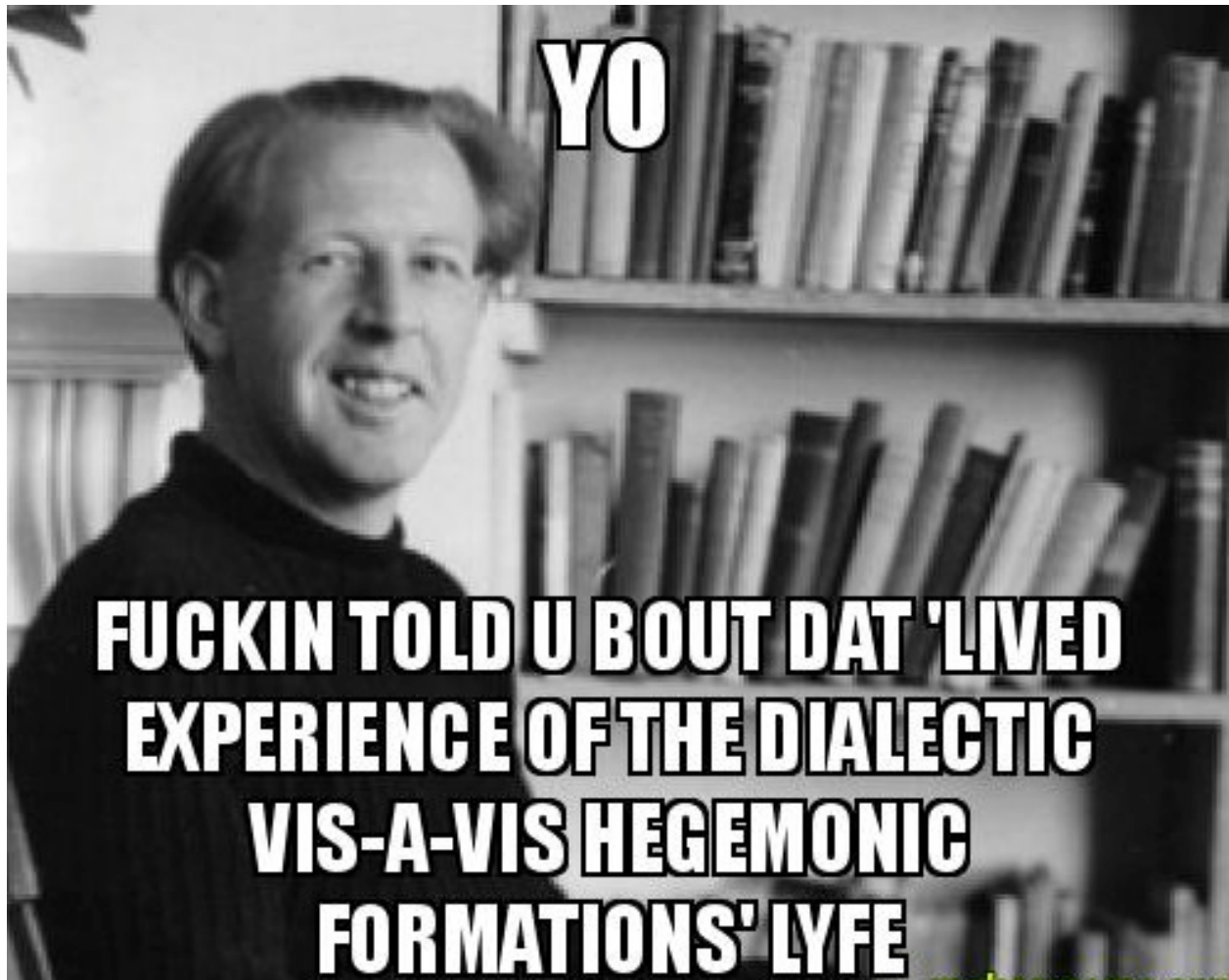
## 8: Conclusions

After the published translations of the writings of Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács which appeared in the *New Left Review*, Raymond Williams had come to focus on the lived and constitutive nature of cultural practices mediating between economic forces and forms of consciousness. Material cultural practices are no longer understood as secondary or super-structural forces. They are lived, signifying and affecting. Hence, Williams’s rejection of the classical Marxist base and superstructure model.

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<sup>95</sup> Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. London: Verso, 2005. eBook.

Williams understood structure of feeling: as a feeling experienced by a whole of society, a group, or subculture during a particular period of consciousness. Affect is what energizes humans to act, it is present in everything we do. There is always a reason why humans act in a certain manner, and this is usually when a person's habitus is violated. Williams understood this and developed his concept of structures of feeling which enabled him to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of social classes through art. Yet, affect can be studied in other disciplines besides art. For instance, even public policy may be infused with an "affective register." The issues for political sociologists beyond the political and literary theorizing is to help us comprehend how such affective register -- as Third Generation leader of the Frankfurt School Axel Honneth (1995) describes -- is mutually recognized and shared. It fits well with First Generation Critical Theorist Walter Benjamin's distinction in the 1920s for a "philosophy of historical experience" rather than a "philosophy of history."



**YO**

**FUCKIN TOLD U BOUT DAT 'LIVED  
EXPERIENCE OF THE DIALECTIC  
VIS-A-VIS HEGEMONIC  
FORMATIONS' LYFE**

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