

Long Revolution



The Long Revolution is an idea, a formula even, Raymond Williams used to describe what he saw as a steady democratising effort toward a more egalitarianism society that he identified as happening across modern history. As such it encapsulates what he saw as a significant feature of the modern period, a movement from the rigidity cast by the long shadow of the medieval world toward greater democratic equally made potentially possible by the

industrial revolution. Published in 1961, *The Long Revolution* was the title of one of the books that propelled Williams into the public's attention. Williams himself wrote of there being three books that he set himself to write, *Culture and Society* 1958 and *Border country* 1960 being the other two. At the start of *Culture and Society* Williams provides a 'map' containing five words, Industry, Democracy, Class, Art and Culture. Communication would come to be an important further word. The book, *The Long Revolution* is in part a theoretical working out of these words but more importantly here is that they are 'Keywords' in mapping the process of a long revolution. Williams wrote of change over time in education, reading, the press and elsewhere that were parts of a widening vision as a greater range of the population was brought into focus, going on to encompass a whole society. It is then both a record of what has happened and a manifesto for the direction in which we should move.

Long revolution goes with other Williams' ideas, such as replacing the ladder image of society wherein individuals move up and down with one where the whole class moves in effect negating itself in a common culture shared by a whole society. In short, long revolution is Raymond Williams' formula for movement beyond a society divided by separate classes to one where differences are held within a 'culture in common' in which all can be active citizens. As such it typifies Raymond Williams cultural and political thought, a radical democrat who viewed as valid present class cultures but wanted to fuse these into a single complex whole. It is the idea of a genius who both understood well the direction of modern history and sought a vision of where that process might lead us.