

Foreword to *The Long Revolution* by Raymond Williams

by Anthony Barnett

After half a century, why should we still read *The Long Revolution*?

The immediate answer is because, from Cairo to Madrid, we live in revolutionary times. However, this customary use of the word 'revolution' is different from that in Raymond Williams' title of this peculiar and important book. Highlighting the contrast between the meaning of his term and the familiar one may be the best way for new readers to start to grasp the extraordinary relevance of what you are holding in your hand or sampling on a tablet. For it isn't really a book in the sense of a self-contained work that has a beginning, middle and end. Rather *The Long Revolution* is the cross-section of an argument that starts elsewhere, in particular in the last chapters of Williams' *Culture and Society* published in 1958, continues in other books and, naturally, has yet to conclude.

The book's title is a concept not a description. When he refers to the 'Long Revolution' Williams is theorising a different epochal process, not saying, 'Hey, this revolution is taking a long time' – as if the revolution referred to is self-evident and he is telling us about its duration. So his term Long Revolution (from now on I will use it with capital letters when I mean Williams' concept) is not an oxymoron or used with any sense of irony, let alone placing him on the side of those gradualists who claim to know better than believe in naïve hopes of fast, real change. On the contrary, Williams was utterly confident of the possibility of, and need for, decisive change and the creative capacity of working people to take charge of it if they have the chance. His term is a claim: that there is a historical process that is hard to comprehend because we are all within it, and it is that which he is attempting to articulate for the first time.

When on a clear night we look at the long cluster of stars that we call the Milky Way it is not obvious that what we are looking at is our own spiral galaxy from our position towards its edge. But the process of elementary astronomical knowledge and mental reorientation that such a recognition demands is simple compared to the understanding Williams is calling for. He argues that we are within a far-reaching transformation – one that brought forth the very terms such as 'democracy', 'industry', 'culture', 'art' and 'class' that we use to describe and measure it. Its transformation will take – has already taken – centuries. It is necessarily lengthy and multi-generational: 'Everything that I understand of the history of the Long Revolution leads me to the belief that we are still in its early stages'.

The concept of the Long Revolution brings together three of Williams' themes which are also defining aspects of it. Being prepared for these will make it easier to read Williams.

First, because we are within it and it is within us, shaping us in terms of our experience, our relationships with others, our differences from other generations, our work, even (as we have just noted) producing the very ideas we use to describe it, it is extraordinarily hard for us to comprehend the Long Revolution. This recognition of the difficulty of what needs to be attempted is central to Williams' argument and his method of self-awareness. We have to build into any understanding of our society that we are undertaking this work within an inherited framework of what it means to understand it, a framework that we must also

question. The recognition of such difficulty anchors his opposition to all easy answers that belittle us, whether in politics (especially on the left), in the market place or culture at large. His stress on the inner challenge of understanding links to what he regarded as the essential and also very demanding external effort of collaboration. It becomes almost a trope across his writings. He might well have named this book 'The Difficult Revolution'.

Second, the recognition of difficulty is related to the fact that the Long Revolution is a complex whole. For Williams the most important part of the Long Revolution is not a part at all: it is the interrelationships of all of its constituent parts to one another. Each needs to be understood for what they are, but it is the interaction, interpenetration and feedback – of industry, democracy and culture – that makes the transformation they entail. None does it on its own, whatever particular priority it may have. This emphasis on relationships and interrelationship is a great virtue of Williams' work (even if it does not make it easy to read, it gives it a reassuring integrity that he is not seeking a short-cut or a decorative flourish). There is a constant, gritty stress and working through of both the separate processes and their simultaneous shaping influence upon each other, which 'taken as a whole' releases the energy of change: 'What we are looking for, always, is the actual life that the whole organisation is there to express'. *The Long Revolution* might also have been titled 'The Whole Revolution'.

Third, as you can see from this characteristic claim, Williams understands the energy of the Long Revolution in terms of the way it is lived. This allows him to move seamlessly (as radicals of both left and right so often do) from sociology to agency: from analysis of what is happening to advocacy of what needs to be done. But in a way that is very interesting. In a section called 'Tragedy and Revolution' of a book on drama, *Modern Tragedy*, published five years after *The Long Revolution*, Williams turns to what it means to be a revolutionary. He dismisses out of hand Communists who dehumanise the victims of revolution as merely the 'class enemy'. But continues, 'I do not believe, as so many disillusioned or broken by actual revolution have come to believe, that the suffering can be laid to the charge of the revolution alone, and that we must avoid revolution if we are to avoid suffering. On the contrary, I see revolution as the inevitable working through of a deep and tragic disorder, to which we can respond in varying ways... We need not identify revolution with violence or with a sudden capture of state power. Even where such events occur, the essential transformation is indeed a long revolution.'

Here he bends his term back towards the familiar one of a political uprising, what he later refers to as 'the short revolution'. The point I want to stress is that by doing so in a way that rejects triumphalism and accepts the terrible personal costs that can accompany genuine change, he humanises the process – he recognises its full humanity both good and wicked. He then goes on to argue that 'the absolute test by which revolution can be distinguished, is the change in the form of activity of a society, in its deepest structure of relationships and feelings'. The mere 'incorporation' of new men into existing structures, even if accompanied by some improvements in 'material conditions' does not count as a revolution, rather 'A society in which a revolution is necessary is a society in which the incorporation of all its people, as whole human beings, is in practice impossible without a change in its fundamental forms of relationships' (his emphasis). He concludes, 'Revolution remains necessary, in these circumstances, not only because some men desire it,

but because there can be no acceptable human order while the full humanity of any class of men is in practice denied (my emphasis).' *The Long Revolution* could have been titled, 'The Human Revolution'.

While this argument is clearly a humanism it is not a liberal or individualist humanism. It echoes the republican argument, set out for example in Quentin Skinner's *Liberty before Liberalism*, that the liberty of others is essential to our own and that the presence of state despotism for any enslaves us all. Williams understood that his humanism pitted him against the dominant socialisms of his time, Fabianism and Stalinism, 'It has been the gravest error of socialism, in revolt against class societies, to limit itself, to the terms of its opponents: to propose a political and economic order rather than a human order'.⁵ Profoundly loyal to the potential humanity of his side but determined to repudiate the cynical inhumanity of its various political forms, whether mandarin paternalism, bureaucratic trade unionism or police-state Communism, perhaps the deepest motivation behind Williams' argument is his insistence upon the creative potential of self-government. In his introduction, as you can read, he describes the democratic transformation entailed by the Long Revolution as the 'rising determination... that people should govern themselves' while noting immediately that it will be 'very powerfully resisted', and the last part of the final section of the book opens with this particular adjective 'The human energy of the Long Revolution springs from the conviction that men can direct their own lives, by breaking through the pressures and restrictions of older forms of society and discovering new common institutions' (my emphasis).

These three constitutive features of our Long Revolution as conceptualised by Williams – its difficulty, its complex unity, its humanity – together form a theory of revolution that is not mechanical, determinist or reductionist. To develop this attractive insight would take me further than a foreword, but there are two revealing clues that can be quoted from related books by Williams and they reflect well on the spirit of the man. In 1958, in *Culture and Society* he writes in the chapter on 'Marxism and Culture', 'For, even if the economic element is determining, it determines a whole way of life, and it is to this, rather than to the economic system alone, that the literature has to be related'. And not just literature.

Twenty years later, debating Edward Thompson's advocacy of the socialism of William Morris, Williams says, 'The extent to which the idea of socialism is attached to... simplicity is counter-productive. It seems to me that the break towards socialism can only be towards an unimaginably greater complexity.'

This assertion goes flat against the preconceptions of the political left, that socialism is somehow a happy conclusion. Later, Williams argued that he didn't see why everyone presumed that socialism was a singular destination at all. Why shouldn't there be many varieties of socialism? By 1983, in *Towards 2000*, he is using the plural form, 'socialisms' and increasingly talks about livelihood. Informally, he considered simply replacing the term socialism, with its fixation on the state and production, in favour of 'livelihood' as this encompasses consumption as well as production, relationships between generations and care of the environment, and therefore makes a claim for a whole way of life.

I am quoting from the argument to which *The Long Revolution* belongs. The book itself began as the continuation of *Culture and Society* (1958), it continued in *Communications* (1962), is returned to in *Modern Tragedy* (1966), expresses its

insistence on the historical nature of regular ideas in *Keywords* (1976), is challenged and assessed in *Politics and Letters* (interviews with *New Left Review*, 1979) and is taken up again directly in *Towards 2000* (1983).

It all started in 1948 after the collapse of the short-lived magazine Williams co-edited called *Politics and Letters*. An attempt, drawing on literary resources, to create an independent critical space, it was asphyxiated by the pressures of the Cold War.

After growing up in the Welsh borders where his father was a signalman, Williams had become a student Communist in Cambridge but left the Party when he signed up with the Army in 1940 (at the time the Nazi-Soviet pact meant it was Communist Party policy not to serve). He became an officer in the Guards Armoured Division and commanded a four-tank unit which went ashore at the beginning of the Normandy landings and fought its way for nine months through northern Europe to Hamburg. He engaged in close personal combat in the countryside, as well as in urban warfare. The experience marked him deeply and is recounted in Dai Smith's biography of the first half of his life, *Raymond Williams, A Warrior's Tale*.

In 1948 as the Cold War set in and Williams' idea of becoming a writer in London foundered, he found himself crushed by the immense pressures to take sides. He wrote that while US anti-Communist hysteria was obviously 'distasteful' Stalin's regimentation of culture and thought was 'certainly the most serious'. The result was a journey of internal exile that laid the basis for the argument you find here: 'I pulled back to do my own work. For the next ten years I wrote in nearly complete isolation',¹¹ except for his wife Joy, with whom he argued his case 'line by line'. The approach and its overarching concept was then reworked across nearly thirty years. Indeed, he opens *Towards 2000* in 1983 by republishing the entire final section of *The Long Revolution*, 'Britain in the Sixties'. He then, to use his own words, reconsiders and reworks its four themes – of industry and post-industrial society, the forms of democracy, the institutions and technologies of culture, and class, politics and socialism – and proceeds to 'consciously revise' in a 'pivotal' fashion the national framework of his original overview, recasting the decline of Britain in its global context, examining the role of the West and the need to defeat the 'last enemy' of war. Finally, Williams wraps with an astonishing essay, 'Resources for a Journey of Hope'.

Here, he argues, 'the capitalist social order has... done its main job of implanting a deep assent to capitalism even in a period of its most evident economic failures'. The response to two key issues – ecology and the international economic order – will now determine everything. But the environmental argument has to be expressed in how we live not what we consume, as the latter accepts the deep logic of the market in treating everything, both people and the resources of the planet, as 'raw material'. As for the international economic order, most alarming of all, what Williams calls 'Plan X' moves towards a created future while the left has failed to assert an alternative 'general interest'. The left's natural presumption that it was the force of the future, while its reactionary opponents were conservative representatives of, at best, the status quo, has, he observes, been turned upside-down.

'Plan X' is not a conspiracy but rather 'the emerging rationality of self-conscious élites' – political, media, military, marketing, and financial specialists – who approach the future, 'A phase at a time, a decade at a time, a generation at a

time, the people who play by Plan X are calculating relative advantage, in what is accepted from the beginning as an unending and unavoidable struggle'. This was written five years before the end of the Cold War and the triumph of the west. Looking back it is impossible to re-read it without realising that we now know the name of Plan X: it is neo-liberalism.

Can we gain the confidence 'in our own energies and capacities' to displace it, Williams asks (the emphasis is his). Suppose, he suggests, that the odds are fifty-fifty, or even less. Why then, 'It is only in a shared belief and insistence that there are practical alternatives that the balance of forces and chances begins to alter'. And he continues: 'Once the inevitabilities are challenged, we begin gathering our resources for a journey of hope. If there are no easy answers there are still available and discoverable hard answers and it is these that we can now learn to make and share. This has been, from the beginning, the sense and the impulse of the Long Revolution.'

These were the last words Williams was to publish in a non-fiction book.

You can see in them the combination of his hallmarks: difficulty, complexity within wholeness and humanity. And I want to return briefly to *The Long Revolution* itself, now that I've set it in the lifetime of Williams' argument. It has three parts. The first, on the creative mind, the analysis of culture, individuals and society and images of society, continues directly the last three chapters of *Culture and Society*. In its concluding chapter to that book he has a memorable passage arguing that, 'There are in fact no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses'. The claim is, in effect, worked through in the opening section of *The Long Revolution* and the reader should be aware that it faces two ways. On the one hand it is directed at the patronising elitism and exclusions of the dominant, bourgeois society. In order to demonstrate how everyone has a claim on a society's culture, Williams develops a key concept: every period and generation has a 'structure of feeling'. He writes, 'Structure of feeling: it is as firm and definite as "structure" suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and intangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period, it is the particular living result of all the elements of the general organisation ... It is a very deep and wide possession, in all actual communities, precisely because it is on it that all communication depends. And what is particularly interesting is that it does not seem to be, in any formal sense, learned'.

Thus the concept of the 'structure of feeling' enables him to argue that all the communities of a society shape it and none can be excluded as 'mindless'. The Long Revolution for democracy, economic equality and access to learning and communication 'derive meaning and direction... from new conceptions of man and society which... can only be given in experience'. This is a class claim, that one man's experience is as good as another's. It runs strongly and personally through his writing as he identifies himself with the socially excluded and refuses to allow them to be written out by any self-serving élite.

At the same time this is an argument against his would-be comrades on the left who can also prove self-serving. He noted wryly in a public discussion to mark the publication of *Towards 2000* in 1984 'I can never get it out of my mind, the fact that when I started to work on communications, press, television, radio etc., in the fifties I was told off quite sharply by the political press.' He means left-wing papers and editors. They accused him, he continued, of indulging in a diversion from 'real politics'. By the 1980s, of course, you could hardly get the Labour movement to

stop banging on about 'the role of the media'. I quote this not to record his entirely deserved pride in his pioneering judgment on the material influence of communications, but to draw attention to the perhaps more surprising point that he should feel the need to tell a public meeting in 1984 that he could 'never get it out of my mind' that he was attacked by blinkered representatives of the old left in the 1950s.

I think it was because this was the argument that most mattered to him personally. He needed to put the powerful and 'distasteful' in their place, but the 'most serious' aspect of the argument was against his own side, although they always remained his own side. Just before Williams launches his devastating critique of the use of the term 'masses' in *Culture and Society*, in the conclusion to his chapter on 'Marxism and Culture' he blows Lenin out of the water. That he should engage with Lenin at all, alongside Burke, Arnold and Marx, was so shocking that the poor indexer could not manage to include him. Nonetheless, he is included. First, Williams scornfully dismisses Lenin's claim that while 'Every artist... has a right to create freely... Of course we communists cannot stand with our hands folded and let chaos develop'. There is no 'of course' about it, Williams notes. Then he takes on the more important issue. He quotes Lenin's claim that, 'The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively, by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness.' This slander draws a systematic, three part rebuttal from Williams, concluding, 'If the working people are really in this helpless condition... they can be regarded as "masses" to be captured, the objects rather than the subjects of power. Almost anything can then be justified'. And Williams knew full well that Lenin and his successors did indeed frequently refer to 'the masses'.

I say this at some length by way of a foreword as it is important to ask: against whom is *The Long Revolution* addressed? The answer is in the first place against the dehumanising traditions of the left and only second against the elitism and exploitation of the right. But his is not a facile third-way position-taking or version of 'neither Washington or Moscow'. The book's argument can face both ways because its foundation is positive not negative: its originality is Williams claim that people – his people – have the capacity to be self-governing as whole human beings.

To deliver on this claim, the middle section of *The Long Revolution* expands on lectures he gave that inquire into the long history of culture in Britain: its education system, the growth of the reading public, the popular press, the growth of Standard English and the history of dramatic forms (the latter would lead into his pioneering work on the genres of television). In undertaking this research he sets out a thorough assessment of the historical and material basis of popular influence within a culture.

This takes him to his concluding section where he attempts to map Britain's own structure of feeling as it enters the sixties. The depth of research and commitment ensured he never reneged on his belief in the need for new forms of 'communal, cooperative and collective institutions' while it provided strong enough foundations for him to recognise the triumph of 'capitalist thinking' and to insist upon the failure of the labour movement and the left to arrive at 'any accepted concept of the general interest'.

I leave it to readers new and old to reflect on what form our understanding of the general interest should now take and how it should be organised. A good place to

start is the challenge made to Williams by Perry Anderson in the last section of the book of New Left Review interviews, *Politics and Letters* (in which I participated). Williams was challenged on the 'deep ambiguity' and reformist logic of *The Long Revolution*. Doesn't the transition to socialism have to be inaugurated by 'an absolutely non-gradual process', the 'disintegration of the capitalist state', 'rival institutions of popular sovereignty', 'dual power' and a violent crisis that sweeps away the old order?

Williams concedes that he embraced the need for a 'short' revolution after long hesitation. But then he insists on the lack of preparation or understanding of what is involved (he puts it mildly) for a short revolution in advanced societies, 'Talking about the run-up to that situation is not a form of gradualism... I am always uneasy about the talk of the short revolution when the problems of the run-up to it have not really been appreciated... the simple notion of assaulting the citadel... is the wrong kind of military thinking'. And if the revolutionary left has shown little, well, no sign whatsoever of preparing for such a showdown it also suffers from having no idea what would follow should it win. But this is critical in persuading working people to take the risk of supporting any overthrow in the short run, however grim the crisis might be. Revolutionaries will have to show that they are 'quite clearly more democratic'. 'The whole future of the left' will depend on this. 'I think we shall have to show in very great detail why a socialist society would be more democratic, and this will involve being implacably clear about the failure of other kinds of democratic processes within socialist revolutions or labour movements... What I am concerned about now is the nature of the social order towards which these transitions are directed.' Later, and this was in 1979 when few had even seen a personal computer, he adds, 'The real complexity is an energizing challenge – and its means are becoming increasingly available if we can find the political forms in which to use them... the new electronic communications technologies have quite extraordinary capacity for this kind of self-government... some socialists... are stuck... They should go and look at some of the new technical possibilities... and realise how marvelously active, complex and mobile a socialist democracy could now quite realistically become.' The Long Revolution will be digital.

Perhaps I should end with recollections of my own relationship with Williams. I never heard him lecture when I was a student at Cambridge. But I was chairman of the University Labour Club in the Autumn term of 1964 when we knew an election was coming and we all expected Labour under Wilson to rid us of a loathsome, morally broken Conservative government headed by Home, pronounced Hume, who had been Chamberlain's assistant on his infamous trip to Munich to appease Hitler in 1938 and had temporarily stepped down from being a 13th Earl to take on the irksome task of Prime Minister. (*Private Eye*, the organ of satire, shares the same 50th anniversary as *The Long Revolution*.)

I invited Williams to give the opening talk of the term, to look forward to a Labour government with his experience of its predecessor. I have no record of what precisely he said but I recall the experience vividly. It was less a speech than a sigh; 'Here we go again... this time it had better work'. Recent praise from Ed Miliband's advisor Marc Stears for Attlee's 'reforming vision' and his government of 1945–51 does not marry to my experience of its long aftermath. What I recall, and what I think Williams' sigh referred to, was the expulsion of Bevan, architect of the NHS, from Government and the introduction of prescription charges, the reckless

commitment to the Korean War, the creation of vast bureaucratic nationalised industries without a breath of workers or staff involvement, a willingness to allow the Conservatives to win an election in 1951 though Labour had a massive popular majority because, in Attlee's words, it was time for the other side to bat... A keen moderniser, I organised a record turnout of student canvassers and cars to help elect Wilson, but I took Williams' warning to heart. When the new Prime Minister failed to devalue the pound I 'resigned' from the Party within a week of the election, and never joined any party again. (He himself stayed on until 1966.) Intellectually, however, though I bought the hardcover edition of *The Long Revolution* I was far too impatient to absorb its cadences or its argument. We bumped into each other once or twice but the next political occasion I recall was going along to a planning meeting of the *May Day Manifesto* in central London, probably around 1967. I was a backroom boy on *New Left Review*, livid with fury over the American war on Vietnam and enjoying the romance of high theory. I found an assembly of the old, parochial (I thought) *New Left Review* with Edward Thompson being theatrical and Raymond sitting quietly at the centre. The whole thing seemed to be about itself, I felt. Doubtless my quiet arrogance would have been reciprocated had anyone noticed, but May '68 was about to explode. Later, at some point in the seventies I was sub-editing NLR when an article by Williams came in. I got to work on the vast sentences, presuming I could cut them and found that each clause of his Germanic prose was a step in the argument, crying out for a full stop. This privileged experience left me with an awed respect for the rigor of his thinking, which previously I'd found bafflingly oblique. Then, at the end of 1975 a text on Williams came in from Terry Eagleton. At the editorial committee Francis Mulhern described it with scrupulous hesitation as 'parricide' and it was decided to publish. Anyone familiar with small political groups knows that father-relations are an important hinterland to their dynamics and I decided to read the manuscript which otherwise I'd have left to those with literary expertise. I was very disturbed. Eagleton captured the opacity of Williams' writing but seemed unbearably cruel: 'a thinker intellectually isolated to the point of eccentricity, driven consequently to certain sophisticated gambits of self-defence and self-justification, but nonetheless resolutely offering his own experience as historically representative'. Eagleton boasted that he had made a similar personal journey to Williams with whom he had worked and that the 'necessarily astringent criticisms which follow are made in that spirit of comradeship and good faith'. Good faith! Williams was 'idealist', 'academicist'. *The Long Revolution* was a book of 'idealist epistemology, organicist aesthetics and corporatist sociology'. Williams suffered from 'Romantic populism' (as I was later to publish, a less populist figure than Williams is hard to imagine). By criticising the term 'masses' he 'traded a theoretical instrument of revolutionary struggle for the short change of a liberal humanitarianism.' He was 'naively historicist', 'his work betrays a muted strain of anti-intellectualism'. Worse, 'The idealist bent of his political conceptions was the effect of the divorce of the left-reformist intellectuals from the working class; but it was also the product of the ideological character of the class itself, by which, despite that divorce, Williams' work remained contaminated.' On and on, the torrent of disparagement went. Williams is even attacked for his 'intuitive knack of pre-empting intellectual positions', i.e. for getting arguments right (presumably before Eagleton). Gravest of all, he had a 'reticent and ambiguous... attitude towards insurrectionary

organisation' while the poor man's 'rapprochement with Marxism is still, evidently, a fraught, dissentient, intellectually unclarified affair'. He remained in the phantom zone of criticism, its 'ideological prehistory' and had yet to enter 'the alternative terrain of scientific knowledge'.

Were I to read something like this now, I'd laugh and chuck it in the bin. But I was inside this argument at the time and it was being published in the Review, which was my cause, my substitute political group. Because of the references Eagleton made to it, I bought *Modern Tragedy* of which I'd not heard before. It changed my life.

At the time I was deep into working on a history of the Vietnamese revolution and the origins of its exemplary tenacity and the reasons for its supporters' capacity to withstand unimaginable suffering. I was unaware of Williams' wartime experience but it spoke through the pages of *Modern Tragedy*, which proposed a moral reckoning, neither refusing revolution nor denying what it means. The idea that Terry Eagleton should reprimand him for failing to enthusiastically embrace insurrectionary organisation could not be tolerated. Nor could Williams possibly be asked to reply. But there had to be a rebuttal of such vacuous Trotskyist posturing and if no one else would do it, I would, or I would have to resign.

I wrote a massive response that was rejected. I wrote a shorter, colder, authoritative demolition that was published at the end of the year. Although it is entirely framed from the perspective of Marxist orthodoxy, a short passage marks what was in fact a turning point for me. Working through Williams' arguments about democracy enabled me to put aside the Leninism that was my inheritance from the revolutionary turn of the sixties. I had been in thrall to the Review and Anderson. In the process of engagement with Williams I broke free from my subservience. It became, literally, a liberation.

My article proposes a critical assessment of his work and defended both Williams' originality and his honesty. As a repudiation of Eagleton it was generous but he lacked the capacity to agree I was right, or say that he had been wrong and acted as if it never happened. After my text was accepted, Edward Thompson struck, sensing that he might reclaim Williams from the *New Left Review* he submitted an essay on William Morris with an addendum that fired back at Eagleton, only to be told that he needed to adjust it a member of the Editorial Committee had replied directly. Something now needed to be done to integrate Williams back as a contributor and the idea of a book of interviews was conceived, which became *Politics and Letters* – an astonishing work of intellectual criticism, political interrogation, historical and contemporary reflection and autobiography – between two towering intellectuals, Williams and Anderson.

I was one of three *NLR* editors who participated and while I loved the experience of listening to Williams and gossiping after the interviews, I was only a witness to the exchanges between him and Anderson and to a lesser degree Mulhern. I was still in post-thralldom withdrawal. It was only reading the book later that I realised how much it was like a trial, challenging Williams about his deviations from a proper Marxist view and obliging him to give as much ground as he could to orthodoxy. I can see now that an opportunity was lost at that moment for the Review and for the left in this country to open out to the far more profound and interesting politics of democracy, and refusal of Marxist reductionism, that Williams pointed towards. Our next meeting was in 1983, when he summoned me to Cambridge. Anderson had decided that the Review was in danger of moving to the right. An internal

enquiry was established and after intense recriminations Fred Halliday and I resigned as active members of the Committee whereupon half the rest of its members, most of whom were inactive, left as well. Williams regarded it as outrageous that only a glancing mention was made in the magazine when such public intellectuals as Tom Nairn and Juliet Mitchell decamped after twenty years. He wanted to know what on earth had happened. What could one say? Was it a matter of character? Although the name of Trotsky was never mentioned in the memos and counter-memos, all those who stayed had enjoyed at one time or another a working relationship with the Fourth International and all of us who resigned had not. My most vivid memory of the visit was Williams showing me a colourful portrait of himself that John Bratby had painted. And my most pleasing that he told me he had bought more than half a dozen copies of *Iron Britannia*, my book on the Falklands war, and given them to everyone for Christmas. My last personal encounters were around 1984. I was asked to introduce and chair a discussion of *Towards 2000*. I took from it Raymond's insight that the left had lost its sense of the future whereas the right had gained one, and that the unspoken terms of politics had been reversed. (And I have a note from Williams that proposed a 'Project 2000' for a short-lived Socialist Society on how it should undertake its work 'of great current and future political importance'.)

A final memory, from January 1988. I was working on a TV film I had conceived and was being made by Hugh Brody, *England's Henry Moore*, and was going to have breakfast with the producer Chris Mitchell in Soho. When I arrived he was looking black with fury. Raymond had died suddenly he told me, and, he expostulated, it was not even on the front page of *The Guardian*, then a broadsheet. Williams' exile was upheld even after death.

Looking back now, I am struck by the many themes Raymond Williams identified which can help us unlock what is going on now: the material reality of experience, the centrality of communication, the importance of generations, the political need for modesty, the energy of complexity. This time, as I have gone back through some of his writing, his grasp of the crucial problem of representation in terms of democracy and self-government stands out more than ever before.

Given how critical this is to the Long Revolution I'm sure that were he around today he'd be examining representation in the age of the web, not least because of his abhorrence at the use of human beings as raw material. Are we representing ourselves on Facebook, as it heads towards its first billion registered users? Or are we offering ourselves up as raw material for its owners and advertisers, rather than enhancing our own ability to communicate? That we can ask such questions in terms that draw added authority from his analysis suggest that he wasn't wrong about the Long Revolution. Although he would have added that he had only started what others need to 'discuss, amend and support'.