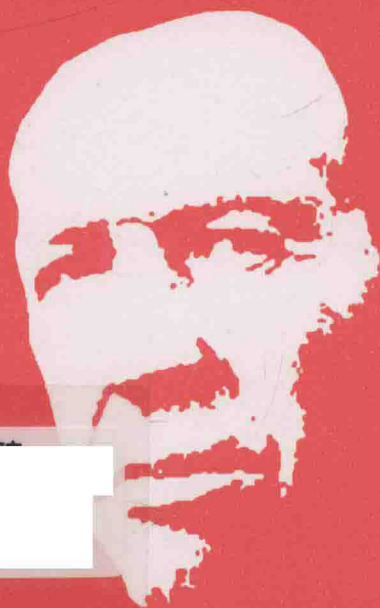


# RAYMOND WILLIAMS

A SHORT COUNTER-REVOLUTION  
- TOWARDS 2000 REVISITED

EDITED WITH ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY

JIM MCGUIGAN



图书馆



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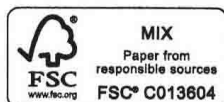
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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Raymond Williams** (1921–1988) came from a working-class background in the Welsh Border Country and became a professor at the University of Cambridge. He was a tank commander during the Second World War. In the 1950s he worked in adult education, during which time he published his most celebrated book, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1958). He published many non-fiction books and wrote several novels, including *Border Country* (1960) and *Second Generation* (1964), and also plays. One of the leading socialist intellectuals in Britain from the late 1950s until his rather early death in the late 1980s, Williams was a master of thought comparable to great European continental theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Jürgen Habermas, with both of whom he had a great deal in common. During his career, Williams's work became increasingly interdisciplinary, branching out from the humanities and into the social sciences, especially sociology. He was also a major inspiration for the development of cultural studies and media studies. Especially notable among his later books are *Television – Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), *Keywords* (1976), *The Country and the City* (1975), *Marxism and Literature* (1977), *Culture* (1981) and *Towards 2000* (1983). Williams eventually named his distinctive perspective on modern culture and society 'cultural materialism', of which there are a great many exponents around the world today.

**Jim McGuigan** is Professor of Cultural Analysis in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. He has written several book chapters and articles on Williams's work and edited *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society* for Sage. With the permission of the Williams Estate, Jim has changed the title of *Towards 2000* to *Raymond Williams – A Short Counter-Revolution: Towards 2000 Revisited* and added a chapter that updates the original book with a survey of developments since 1983, particularly concerning the impact of neoliberalism, a phenomenon that was sighted early by Raymond Williams and named 'Plan X'. Jim's other books include *Cultural Populism* (1992), *Culture and the Public Sphere* (1996), *Modernity and Postmodern Culture* (1999, 2006), *Rethinking Cultural Policy* (2004), *Cool Capitalism* (2009) and *Cultural Analysis* (2010).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In September 2011 the University of Brighton and the Raymond Williams Society hosted a conference at the university's centre in Hastings to commemorate the centenary of Robert Tressell's writing of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* in the town and the coincidental fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Raymond Williams's book, *The Long Revolution*, which had also been written in Hastings, incidentally whilst Williams was an Oxford University Delegacy Adult Education Tutor there. Williams had himself once pointed out that Tressell intended to call his great novel of English socialism *The Ragged Arsed Philanthropists* but the bourgeois publishing sensibility of the time would not permit such vulgarity.

I delivered a paper at the Hastings conference and very much enjoyed meeting up with old friends. However, I felt that we should have been talking about *Towards 2000* instead of *The Long Revolution* because it still speaks to the plight of the world today, in the 2010s, whereas the earlier book, important though it was in the 1960s, is now very much dated and mainly of historical interest. So, I was alarmed to discover at the conference that Williams's sequel to *The Long Revolution*, *Towards 2000*, which had been published in 1983, five years prior to Williams's death in 1988, was out of print.

Because of my conviction concerning the enduring contemporaneity of *Towards 2000*, in spite of its unfortunate title and one or two other details, I approached SAGE's splendid editor, Chris Rojek, with a proposal for republication. Some adjustments to the text would necessarily have to be made and I knew that permission must be sought from Raymond Williams's literary executive, his daughter, Merryn. As it turned out, Merryn was pleased with the idea and agreed to my changing the title to *A Short Counter-Revolution* and replacing the second chapter with a new chapter that surveyed developments over the past thirty years.

I was able to present a paper on the project at the American Cultural Studies Association conference in Chicago in May 2013 and I was invited to deliver the annual Raymond Williams Society memorial lecture in November of the same year. Both events helped me sort out my ideas, particularly in the excellent discussions that

occurred after I had shut up. I am especially grateful to Marie Moran for organising the Williams session in Chicago and, for facilitating my memorial talk with such an expert and engaged audience, I thank Derek Tatton and Jennifer Birkett most warmly.

Jim McGuigan  
Leamington  
March 2014



# FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editor and the Publishers would like to express their thanks to the following for permission to reprint the works of Raymond Williams.

*Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5* – From Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000*, Chatto & Windus, 1983, Penguin, 1985, pp. 83–101. Reprinted with kind permission by The Random House Group Limited and the Estate of Raymond Williams.

# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Raymond Williams's last major work of sociocultural analysis, *Towards 2000*, was originally published in 1983. It was the sequel to his influential book of 1961, *The Long Revolution*. In fact, Williams chose to republish the final chapter of *The Long Revolution*, 'Britain in the Sixties', as the second chapter of *Towards 2000*. We have left that second chapter out of this second edition of the book since it no longer makes sense to retain it. As is clear from the generic titles for the following parts of the book, Williams wanted to 'reconsider' his analysis of over twenty years previously, 'extend' the analysis under very different historical conditions and identify what he considered to be contemporary 'resources of hope'. The later and much larger section of the book has hardly dated over the past thirty years, which does not mean that everything has simply remained the same. Much has apparently changed over the past thirty years in world affairs. Perhaps most obviously, communism no longer represents 'really existing socialism', in the old Soviet-bloc terminology, and, furthermore, 'communist' China has turned onto the capitalist road since Williams's death in 1988. Other significant changes have occurred as well, often indeed for the better, since Williams first wrote *Towards 2000*. Yet, in certain respects, it can also be argued, surprisingly little that is really fundamental has improved during the interim period and some things have actually worsened, like the scale of inequality, for instance. The rich are not only still rich; they are obscenely richer. And many of the poor are, in point of fact, poorer. Never the less, the book could hardly have been republished in the second decade of the twenty-first century without some updating and discussion of salient developments since the 1980s. The task of doing so has fallen to me. I have tackled this daunting challenge in a manner that I believe is sympathetic to Williams's general approach though, of course, I have not sought to imagine exactly what he might have thought and said or tried to mimic his distinctive voice. This replacement chapter for the original 'Britain in the Sixties' chapter, entitled 'A Short Counter-revolution', is quite definitely my own take on what has happened over the past three or four decades; so any mistakes in it are mine alone.

Also, I have taken the liberty of changing the title of the book. The original title, *Towards 2000*, would probably give a misleading impression read now, that this book was only ever about the closing years of the twentieth century and, therefore, scarcely of any interest to readers, especially younger readers, in the early years of the twenty-first century. This is certainly not so. It is the present writer's firm conviction that in many respects this book is just as fresh and insightful today as it was over thirty years ago. In my opinion, *Towards 2000* was strangely prophetic about the prospectus *in*, not just *towards*, the *twenty-first* century. I have adopted Williams's own telling phrase, 'a short counter-revolution' for the title of the second edition and for my replacement chapter. It situates *Towards 2000* precisely in relation to its prequel, *The Long Revolution*, and also, in effect, signifies the alarming story that Williams was telling about the drift of history, represented particularly by his concluding discussion of 'Plan X', with its nihilistic purpose, as a new hegemonic principle in the world.

Jim McGuigan  
January 2014

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# TOWARDS 2000

## 1

We all think about the future, but in very diverse ways. In what we call the Western world, we are approaching one of the fascinating rounded numbers: 2000. This already has more than a numerical significance, for by the reckoning of the Christian era it is the second millennium, and such counting by thousands of years is loaded with cultural significance. The first millennium brought many expectations of the ending of the world and the second coming of Christ. In the extending irrationalities of our own time, many of them flourishing in the most developed centres of advanced industrial civilisation, we can already see some signs of this happening again, as the arbitrary date approaches. The danger of nuclear war is widely described, within an old scheme and vocabulary, as the threat of 'apocalypse'. Orwell's *1984*, a numerical inversion from 1948 when he was writing his book, has become a date with tyranny. And beyond those who believe or half-believe in these arbitrary numerical significances, there is the deep habit of using some mark in time – a new year, a birthday, a millennium – to reflect and to look forward, to try to see where we are.

The arbitrariness has still to be noted. We are counting 2000 by the scheme of a Scythian monk of (by the reckoning he established) the sixth century Anno Domini. The chronologies of a developed industrial world still follow Dionysius Exiguus. Yet the dominance of this Western Christian dating coexists with the different numbering of other cultures: the Jewish sixth millennium; the long Chinese dynasties; the alternative Muslim era; and others. In the great diversity of recorded schemes for measuring time, there is still, however, a recurrence of significant periods and cycles. Schemes of history and of the future are made to emerge from the widely alternative numerical systems.

The millennium, within Western culture, has taken on secular as well as religious significance. Some millenarian visions by religious movements, breaking free of ties to an exact numbering, predicted and confidently expected the coming of Christ's kingdom on earth. Many were significantly active in times of major social disturbance and instability. There is then a clear cultural link to the secular millenarian visions, of the establishment of social justice, of liberty and plenty, in the world. Deep and stubborn beliefs in this coming time are easily mocked, as the dates pass and pass again. But perhaps more is lost than is gained when yet one more of the arbitrary dates is approached, by so many, as much with fear or hopelessness as with expectation. The settled pessimism of so much of the culture of the late twentieth century is in effect an absolute loss of the future: of any significant belief that it can be both different and better. The projection of dates is now more often an anxious calculation of the possibilities of mere survival.

We have again to remember the arbitrariness of the numbering. Beyond Dionysius Exiguus or any of the other traditional schemes, we have the modern reckoning of very much longer periods of development and of history. Thus we are in perhaps the thirty-seventh millennium since men and women quite like ourselves came into our kinds of land. We are in the always recalculated thousands of millennia since the development towards humanity began and can be visibly traced. The intense cultural interest of our own period in these longer spans of human time, which are so much more significant and more moving than any of the traditional schemes, is a new kind of assessment of the basic meanings of human history. The assessment is complex and self-conscious but also often anxious. Some people find reassurance in this long past, in which so much has been achieved, in so many different forms, and so many dangers and limitations have been surmounted. Others, in effect, escape into it, spinning time backwards from what they see as a hopeless present and a short and disastrous future.

There is little point in any recall of the millenarian spirit, though if we renounce the terms of its positive expectations we ought also to renounce the terms of the most common negative expectations. There are discovered and discoverable reasons, of a fully objective kind, for intense concern about the future of industrial civilisation and, beyond even that, about the future of the species and of the planet, under destructive forces that are already loose. But there are also discovered and discoverable reasons for a kind of hope which

has accepted the facts underlying these fears and which can see ways beyond them which are fully within our capacity. A major element in what is going to happen is the state of mind of all of us who are in a position to intervene in its complex processes, and at best to determine them for the general good. It is these ways of thinking about the future, in their real sense as ways of making it, that we should now examine.

## 2

In intellectual analysis it is often forgotten that the most widespread and most practical thinking about the future is rooted in human and local continuities. We can feel the continuity of life to a child or a grandchild. We can care for land, or plant trees, in ways that both assure and depend on an expectation of future fertility. We can build in ways that are meant to last for coming lives to be lived in them.

It is true that all these ways have been weakened by particular kinds of society and economy, which set alternative priorities of quick satisfaction and return. Yet their impulses are still very strong. Beyond the snappy formulas of an instant and enclosed individualism; beyond the profitable fast exploitation of resources; beyond the market schemes of obsolescent durables; beyond the widespread and reckless borrowing from the future to solve some current difficulty without discomfort: beyond all these powerful and identifiable forces, these deeper impulses and reckonings persist. Yet just as they are often most actual in directly relating and local ways, so they can in practice be specialised to these: a family, a farm, an institution; getting these right, even if the world outside them is going to hell. What begins in a strong faith and a devotion to continuity can become at best isolated, at worst a form readily exploited by quite other feelings and interests.

There is no useful way of thinking about the future which is not based in these values of close continuity in life and the means of life. All the practical problems begin when these have to be related to other lives and other means, in an unavoidable and necessary diversity, and under the stresses of actual change. Most ways of thinking about the future jump from this practical level, where substantial feelings are deeply engaged, to what seem more realistic objective assessments, based on selected versions, often in fact contradictory, of these primary needs and desires.

This is most evident in a group of ways of thinking about the future which are now dominant in our culture. We can distinguish, within this group, between the forecasting model and the political programme. The former is apparently more objective. It is typically based on extrapolations from known laws or regularities. It projects, in what are often locally sophisticated ways, indices of general production, of employment and unemployment, of inflation, of demand. That there are rival and often significantly different forecasts in a fact about the type, but at another level no more than an indication of its inherent difficulty. It is common now to mock these statistical modes, and the diverse uses made of them by rival schools of economists, while at the same time in practice drawing general conclusions from them. This is unreasonable. It has been a fact about our kind of society, especially since the industrial revolution, that there are certain areas of reality which only statistics can recognise. Many events are too complex, too numerous, and too protracted to be seen at all, with any adequacy, by what some believe to be more reliable kinds of observation.

Much depends on the kinds of fact which are selected as statistically manageable. Similarly, the models of regularity or interaction which are applied for extrapolation are not often verifiable with anything like the precision of the founding records. Thus the past is littered with unrealised projections, in population figures and in production. The present is confused by sharply diverging forecasts, in a range of colours from black to pale grey or even the occasional white. Yet it would be folly for any of these reasons to renounce or to neglect the mode itself. The real questions about it relate to the models of regularity and interaction from which the forecasts are made. Interaction, especially, is an unusually obscure area, with comparatively sparse empirical data in its inevitably complex field, and carrying some of the most difficult theoretical problems.

It is then significant that the heaviest investment in the mode has been in terms of the existing kind of corporate market economy, neglecting wider forms of social interaction. It is for the investment decisions of productive corporations, or for the financial calculation of various kinds of unearned or indirectly earned income, that most of these forecasts are commissioned or compete. Thus the area of facts which they include is in the main ideologically determined. At the same time, because of their practical connection with actual dispositions of resources, many of these forecasts become plans and investment programmes, and can up to a point be self-fulfilling. New steel plants and tanker fleets and power stations materialise, on



extrapolations which, however, later forecasts may revise or discard. In forms tied to this limited mode, there is often no real future but only a wasted present and past.

Yet some form of economic forecasting has been found to be necessary in the most widely divergent kinds of modern economy and society. It is obviously necessary in centrally planned economies, where it is integrally linked with centralised decisions about general provision and production. It is equally necessary, though with a different set of indices, in what are misleadingly called free economies, in which the most basic decisions are taken by various institutions of state and corporate power. The old kind of market, in relatively stable conditions with relatively few commodities, has been so largely replaced by the new kind of market, in which demand and preference have to be inquired into, predicted and where necessary (through advertising) formed, that a range of public and commercial forecasting is positively required.

The same or similar techniques are then applied, in capitalist societies, to the electoral system, through opinion-polling and issues-research. It is a fact against the centrally planned economies that except in certain standardised forms of production (such as basic electricity supply) a monopoly of research and prediction interlocks with a monopoly of decision-making to discredit and more seriously to limit planning itself. The inherent difficulties of prediction and forecasting are maximised by the fact of monopoly. It should be a central principle of any socially planned economy that there are always, as a matter of course, a number of model forecasts to be examined and publicly discussed, but this can only happen if there is no longer monopoly in the most general political decisions. Thus both the limited and the more extended forms of forecasting and planning are congruent, at every level, with the most general structures of a society. This is obvious, if only from the evidence of certain recurrent failures, in centrally planned economies. The forms of congruence in economies planned by a mixture of state and corporate power are equally close but less easy to see.

One significant form is the political manifesto, now one of the most widely distributed kinds of apparent thinking about the future. In its modern forms this is different from older kinds of manifesto which were typically statements of general principle and intention. The more usual form, in contemporary party politics, is much nearer a commercial prospectus. It retains, in a general way, the rhetoric of principle and intention, but in substance it is a series of specific plans