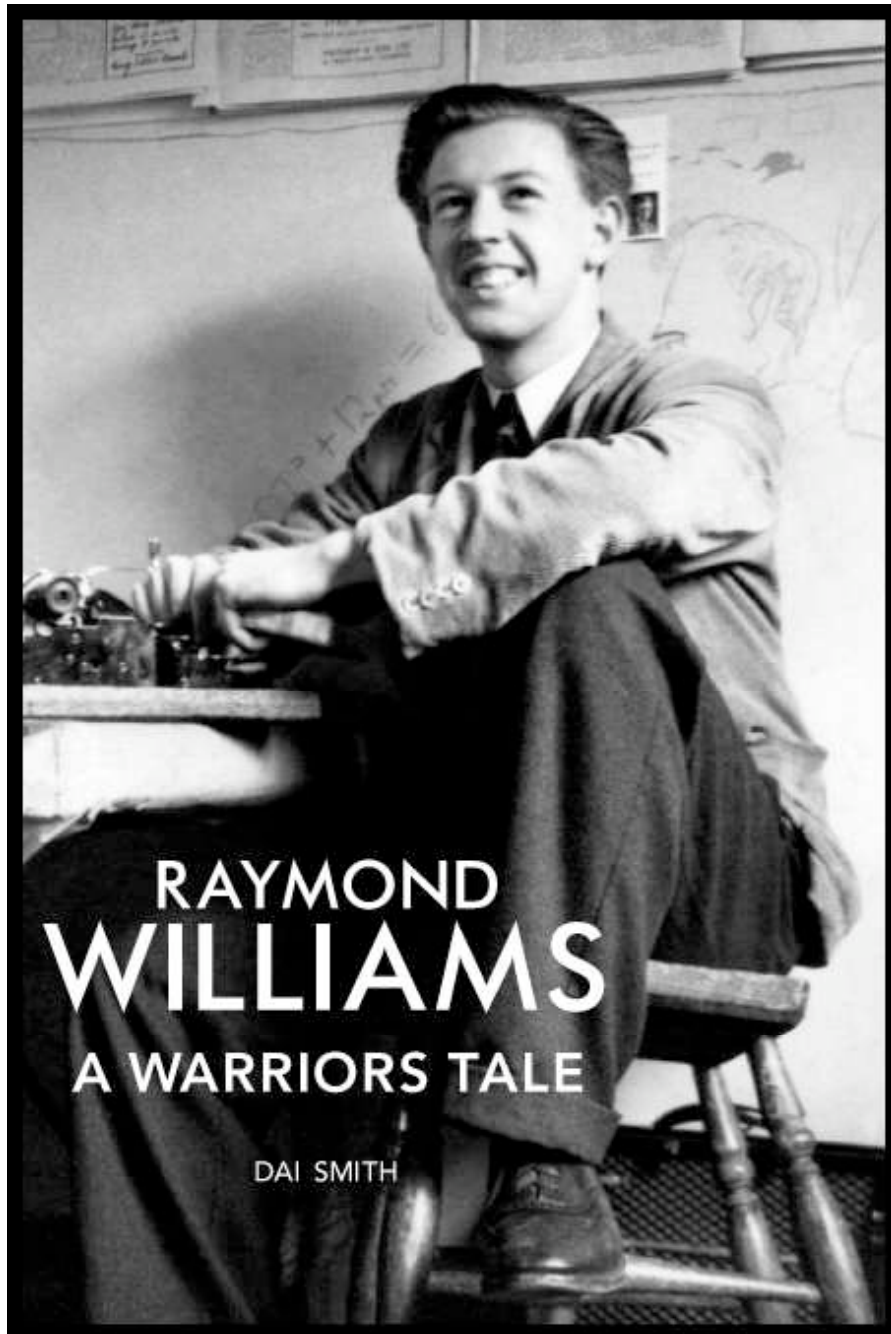


RWS

Raymond Williams Society
Newsletter



No 4 Spring 2008

Raymond Williams Society Newsletter

No 4 Spring 2008

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Raymond Williams *A Warrior's Tale*

Raymond Williams A Warrior's Tale is the culmination of research undertaken over a long period and includes material hitherto unseen by all except those closest to Raymond Williams. The result is that *A Warrior's Tale* takes the reader to an understanding of Raymond Williams not previously possible.

The book covers the years from childhood to the later fifties, ending with the appearance of *Culture and Society* and the finishing though not yet publication of *Border Country*. As such we are led through the formative years and the important time spent as an adult education tutor in England. However we start where we must, in Wales with the circumstance of the southeast in the 1920s, and the large railway centre of Abergavenny, the product of a frantic industrialisation that had transformed the country over the previous half-century and more - and then Pandy with its border location, facing one way to the valleys with their pits and steel works, and another way to the depopulated hills of rural mid Wales. In this setting we follow Raymond Williams out, not to Cambridge, but to the real crossing, the Grammar School and Abergavenny. Later, and central to Dai Smith's account, are the war years, and we can get an insight into a time and a world completely alien to those born in later decades. Captain Williams was a front line tank commander and the mix of confused battle, destruction, rest and troubled reflection, are detailed from pains taking research across western Europe.

Difficulties of a different order are the subject of another chapter as we learn of the unsettled life of *Politics and Letters* and beginning as a tutor with the Oxford Delegacy and Workers' Education Association. From here there is a change of emphasis and the real heart of Dai Smith's book becomes the writing of what eventually would be *Border Country*. Many readers of this Newsletter will

engage here with the complex work of how through drafts, some completed as books in themselves, Raymond Williams writes himself and the novel. Three processes are joined here: the problem of the Welsh novel in English; Williams's own forging of his relationship with Pandy and with Wales; and Smith's articulating of these in the writing of the biography. The first problem, Welsh fiction in English, exercised Williams for the rest of his life, as it has in a different way, Dai Smith's.

Throughout, *A Warrior's Tale* is always contextual. Raymond Williams is not an isolated figure, but a person reflecting and acting on circumstance. His own usage of 'pressures' and 'limits' later in life, may come to mind here. *A Warrior's Tale*, particularly the first half, is a record of times, places and people - a history out of which historical biography can be written. This, it is fair to say, is a new Raymond, one more rounded and even complex than existing accounts allow. One reason is simple; *A Warrior's Tale* has come out of thorough research of these years. Beyond that, the writing is of a manner subtle enough to grapple with its subject following Williams into the personal and historical dilemmas that constitute the years in which he matured. However, finally it is because Dai Smith is able to start from the right place, Pandy, on the borders of industrial and rural, Wales and England, which makes *Raymond Williams A Warrior's Tale* the biography we have waited for.

Stephen Woodhams

Two books that may be read to advantage with Dai Smith's biography are Daniel Williams (ed), *Who Speaks for Wales*.

John McIlroy & Sallie Westwood (eds), *Border Country*.

DAI SMITH & ERIC HOBSBAWM

will be in conversation

to mark the launch of

*RAYMOND WILLIAMS
A WARRIORS TALE*

DAI SMITH
CHAIR of the ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES

welcomed by

MERRYLN WILLIAMS

at
BIRKBECK
room 532

on

SATURDAY 10 MAY
at
2pm

followed by
book signing and buffet in the student bar
on the fourth floor extension

RAYMOND WILLIAMS A WARRIORS TALE
PARTHIAN
2008
ISBN 978 1 905762 569
£25

contact steve woodhams at parmod.w@ntlworld.com

Mair Francis, Up the DOVE, ICONAU, 2008



Up the DOVE is the story of commitment and renewal. Published with the support of ICONAU *Up the DOVE* refers to the Dulais Opportunities for Voluntary Enterprise, yet as the story quickly demonstrates the name conceals more than it reveals. Situated in the Dulais valley, DOVE grew out of activities in support of miners during the 1984-5 strike. From the start the DOVE workshop and co-operative has been at the heart of networks involving voluntary, local authority, educational, National Assembly and European agencies, and throughout the book stress is laid on how co-operative links have been the mainstay of the work. Chief component of that work has been education and training, with emphasis toward accreditation in recognition of a marketisation of learning. Indeed there is a discernable shift in language in *Up the DOVE* as the workshop became integrated with 'responsible' authorities.

A feature of miners' support groups had been the lead given by wives, and DOVE was for several years primarily concerned to enhance access for women to learning and work. Deliberate under-development left the valleys no alternative when the only employment available was closed. DOVE women astutely recognised the future economy would be totally different, and information technology classes ran alongside handicrafts like knitting. The Banwen Branch of the WEA was developed in 1989 and in 1993 DOVE with DACE (Department of Adult and Continuing Education) at Swansea began the CUV (Community University of the Valleys)¹, and the range of courses in terms of subjects and levels expanded

further. Beyond 'introductory' courses there was now Access to Higher Education, and through CUV, a part-time degree programme which, as the name community university suggests, could be followed locally rather than at Swansea. Extended geographical provision made it possible for people otherwise excluded, to access a progressive learning route. In Dulais valley, DOVE's own mini-bus ensured an essential means of transport without which participation on courses would have been physically difficult. *Up the DOVE* records that the key dimension was access, classes being held at its centre in Banwen where an all day crèche steadily expanded and a mini-bus ensured transport in the valley. One initiative proving increasingly popular was the production and screening of independent films, some based on life in the valleys. Funded by West Welsh Arts, films provided another set of courses which allowed people gain technical skills in recording and editing.

Welsh Assembly support and European Objective funding means continued expansion with a healthy eating cafe and linked community vegetable garden playing an integral part in DOVE's self-sustainability. If, given its roots in the miners' support movement, women's opportunities were the focus, this is less obvious toward the end of the book, with community wide projects supported by DOVE'S now substantial nursery. *Up the DOVE* is a remarkable story of resistance and perseverance. The valleys had suffered the worst ravages of a politically motivated de-industrialisation and the concluding biographical sketches are a demonstration of how out of the terrible experience of the mid 80s, people are remaking their community and their lives.

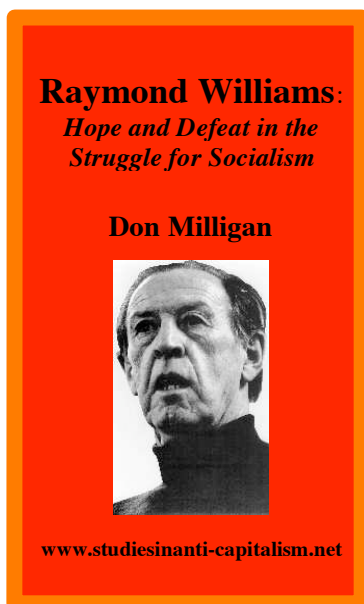
Steve Woodhams

1. Further supported by NAICE Cymru the CUV sponsors an annual Raymond Williams Lecture and future Newsletters intend to carry news of this event.

Raymond Williams, Cultural Materialism and the Socialist Vision

Raymond Williams: Hope and Defeat in the Struggle for Socialism, by Don Milligan, published by Studies in Anti-Capitalism at www.studiesinanti-capitalism.net 2007

As signalled by the subtitle *Hope and Defeat in the Struggle for Socialism*, Milligan situates his analysis of the body of Williams's writing and criticism within the broader context of what he identifies as the struggle for and eventual defeat of socialism in the twentieth century. This contextual basis shapes and colours Milligan's work, throwing into relief aspects of Williams's approach that are not as heavily emphasized in other more biographical or literary accounts of his life and work.



We see this in particular in Milligan's account of 'Williams's socialism', which though evidently a central and formative factor in William's life and writing, takes on a new role in this study as Milligan argues that an investigation of William's socialist stance allows us an insight into the failure of organized socialism more generally. Milligan sees Williams's socialism as centred around the values of popular participatory democracy, solidarity, community and common sharing, which stand in direct contrast to, and gain their

significance from their opposition to, the negative features of capitalism. According to Milligan, Williams never made these values the subject of critical scrutiny but instead deployed them as the unquestioned cornerstone of the socialist political project which underpinned and drove his critical writing. Milligan claims that Williams's version of socialism failed because this adherence to the values of solidarity, participation and sharing led him to badly misread the actual development of society and, crucially, 'to attempt to combat the startling material development and consolidation of capitalism in the West after 1945 by seeking adjustments in the realm of ideas – changing ways of writing and thinking – combating the realities of capitalist development with an ideal of social solidarity, popular democracy and common sharing' (p. 11-12). Williams's socialism, it is argued, is driven by 'hope', that is, by an unshakeable faith in the 'socialist analysis – the critique of capitalism and the aspiration for solidarity and social sharing' (p. 12-13). And while this hope operated as a creative and productive force in Williams's work, it is argued that it was in the end his downfall, as it blinded him to the empirical realities of life under an increasingly aggressive capitalism, (mis-)directing his focus instead to the realm of ideas.

In considering Milligan's argument, it is worth perhaps taking into account that Williams wrote prior to or on the cusp of the radical restructuring of capitalism that has occurred and gathered momentum since the 1970s, and which has so effectively foreclosed upon both real and imagined socialist alternatives. This has been – as Boltanski and Chiapello¹ have so effectively shown – an ideological coup as much as an economic one: it has only been through winning the hearts and minds of ordinary people – i.e. by actually *achieving* adjustments in the realm of ideas – that capitalism has secured the popular acquiescence necessary for its continued and increasingly virulent development. Perhaps therefore we should draw a distinction between Williams's methodological approach and his socialist vision, and suggest that the

inaccuracy of the latter does not imply the failure of the former. Milligan may well be correct in his assertion that Williams misread the shape that contemporary societies would develop, and this is certainly an important point for a broader project of achieving socialist change in contemporary capitalist societies. However, I suggest we cannot conclude from this that Williams' emergent methodological approach – cultural materialism – was also flawed. In fact, it seems that only in revisioning the relationship between base and superstructure, and rethinking the ways in which the 'cultural' – in the sense of the patterned, ordinary yet meaningful ways we think and things we do – becomes material, can we understand how it is and continues to be the case that the individualist, competitive, 'choice' and profit driven ethos of consumer and corporate capitalism has achieved such easy and unchallenged consensus, and why it is that socialism has become almost unimaginable today. And it is only in understanding this, and in seeking counter-adjustments in the realm of ideas, that we can have any hope of challenging the dominant ideology that free-market capitalism is in the interests of all, and of thus moving towards alternative and more egalitarian ways of organizing social relations. So while the 'hope and defeat' of Milligan's title perhaps most appropriately refers to the organized struggle for socialism, it seems Williams himself more accurately sums up his *own* relationship to hope and defeat, and thus the grounds on which he should be assessed, when he said that 'To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing.'

Marie Moran

A critical dialogue between Don Milligan and a reviewer will be published in the forthcoming edition of *Keywords*, edition 6.

¹ Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. (2007) *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

PRAXIS Communiversity: part of the long revolution...

PRAXIS Popular Education Circle is a recently established group in Ireland made up mainly of working class community activists and supported by a number of academics and other individuals interested in working collectively to reinvigorate popular education in Ireland. The group has been established with a firm belief in the concepts of critical reflection, dialogue, social and political action, and the central role of popular education in achieving a society based on equality and social justice. With the intent of linking lived experience to theory and challenging oppression, the primary objective for PRAXIS is to establish a network of such popular education circles where ordinary people can use the process of transformative education to critically reflect upon and explore ways of effecting social change.

This network of education circles will in essence form a popular education model for Ireland in the shape of a PRAXIS Communiversity. The term communiversity itself is not new but the application of this term to popular education in an Irish context is not only novel and necessary but perhaps even revolutionary. A PRAXIS Communiversity is necessary because it offers a space for dialogue and critical action amidst a growing culture of silence in Ireland whereby community activism is fast becoming subservient to the neo-liberal agenda of the state. A PRAXIS Communiversity is revolutionary because it is a model of social action very much in line with Williams's idea of the long revolution; it is rooted in the understanding that the cultural is political and it gives voice to human experiences which are usually not the concern of 'ivory tower' academics. And as part of a long revolution, it is important at this embryonic stage of PRAXIS for us to have critical hope whilst remaining conscious and committed to the difficult struggle ahead.

Margaret Crean

Further information available from
margaretcrean@ireland.com

Contemporary Music and Cultural Production

Briefly, and in general terms, my research can be characterised as the exploration of theoretical ways of approaching a reflexive materialist interrogation of the social contingency of a particular repertoire of contemporary music. This repertoire is a body of works which has often been disregarded as overly simplistic or reductive, but whose complexities I wish to show are not necessarily structural. The research is therefore designed to address recent debates in musicology which have worked to *show* the social contingency of 'autonomous' music, but have yet to close the door on *how* this is to be examined. In tackling these central areas of interest, I make use of the work of American musicologist Rose Rosengard Subotnik, Raymond Williams, and Pierre Bourdieu.

Subotnik's work approaches this area in explicit relation to Adorno's critical musicology. Her work explores the epistemological nature of the relationship between music and society, and the problems involved in understanding musical meaning in this context. I felt that despite the brilliance of this work the problems of Adorno's culture industry thesis remained. The formulation of this thesis constitutes a serious block for the theorizing of contemporary music or society in Adorno's work. It is here that we most clearly encounter his struggles to formulate either a positive conception of culture beyond the autonomous paradigm, or a conception of 'modern' communications media that is able to move beyond an understanding of 'mass manipulation'. I was interested to see if a model from within this critical tradition could be extended that resolved some of these problems, and the relationship this may have to the more dominant current intellectual preoccupation with post-structuralism.

This led to my reading of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu. Williams's later projects (I focus particularly on *Marxism and Literature, Culture, Towards*

2000 and The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists) are compelling because of the extent to which they deploy an extended Marxian production paradigm in relation to culture, closely paralleling some of the theoretical moves made by Adorno. This, alongside Williams's attempts to integrate this production thesis with the cultural situation of late capitalism, opens up a useful theoretical debate with the potential to interrogate some of the limitations of Adorno's musicological work. Further, Williams's commitment to a deepening educated and participatory democracy allows for the development of an emancipatory ideology critique which is able to rethink some of the more elitist aspects of Adorno's critical theory and offer the potential for a reworked critical position.

I read Bourdieu (focusing particularly on *The Rules of Art* and *The Field of Cultural Production*) as a theorist who addressed remarkably similar problems to Williams, but from within a radically different tradition. I therefore hoped to develop a practice that would allow the critical reading back and forth between two alternative views of 'cultural production' and so generate some interesting multiple readings. The theoretical considerations of the thesis are tested through a series of general musicological reflections and methodological comparisons, through a case study of the record label ECM, and some more specific consideration of the music of the Estonian émigré composer, Arvo Pärt.

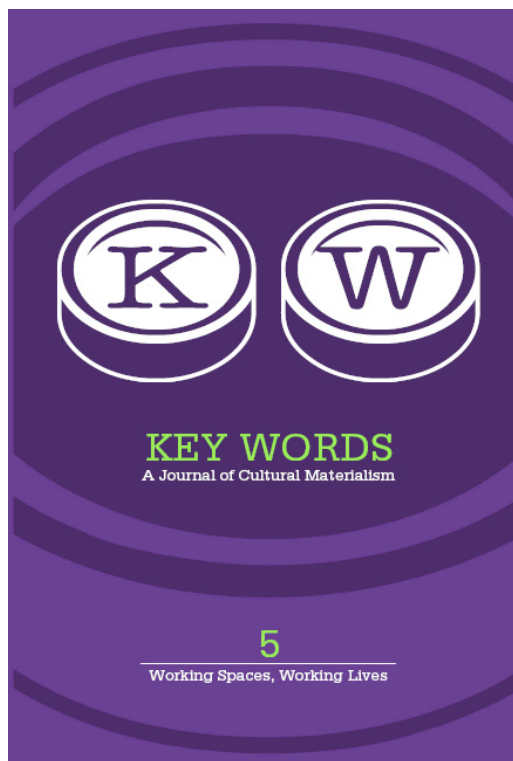
I would value any feedback or comments, and can be reached at t.p.begbie@exeter.ac.uk

Tom Begbie,
Dartington College of Arts

Key Words{PRIVATE }

A Journal of Cultural materialism

5
(2007-8)



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

Editors' Note

In its first number in 1998, *Key Words* set out its intention to develop Raymond Williams's project within the terms of a cultural materialism 'always subject to redefinition', alert to the historical and social agency of language and the role of literary, media and cultural forms and institutions. It took its cue from Williams's own method in framing a 'vocabulary of culture and society' in *Keywords* (1976, rev. 1983). With this present issue, we re-launch the journal and renew this project in very much the same spirit. However, just as the first issue acknowledged that 'Raymond Williams's time is not our time', so our times too have changed across a dramatically transformed political scene and complex set of social and ideological themes and discourses. Williams was

certain that the future, if nothing else, would always be more complex than the present, and we believe that his work can remain a powerful inspiration in our attempt in the Journal, as in the associated activities of the Raymond Williams Society, to frame a new critical vocabulary and cultural agenda for our own times.

Key Words 5 is dedicated to the memory of Charles Swann, long-time associate of Williams, socialist, and expert literary critic, who died in October 2006.

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In Memoriam Charles Swann, Terry Eagleton

I. M. Charles Swann, 18 December 1943 – 13 October 2006, Stan Smith

Introduction, Nicola Wilson

The Representation of the People and Our Mutual Friend, Ruth Livesey

Politicising the Home in Ethel Carnie Holdsworth's This Slavery (1925) and Ellen Wilkinson's Clash (1929), Nicola Wilson

Gender and Community in 1930s Working-Class Writing, Joseph Pridmore

Raymond Williams, Cultural Materialism and the Break-Up of Britain, Hywel Dix

'Committed to paper': Vacated Spaces and Phallogocentrism in Magnus Mills's *The Restraint of Beasts*, Ian Haywood

Organising Space: Clutter, Storage and Everyday Life, Tracey Potts

An Interview with Richard Hoggart
Sean Matthews

Reviews and Previews

The Raymond Williams Memorial Fund

NOTICES AND EVENTS

Resources of Hope

20th Annual Raymond Williams Weekend
Raymond Williams Memorial Fund
2-4th May 2008
WEDGWOOD MEMORIAL COLLEGE



Resources of Hope, published in 1989 is a collection of essays and lectures on an exceptionally wide range of themes. This special 20th Weekend will engage with these as below, seeking to make accessible and clear the relevance of Williams' project.

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Derek Tatton,
WEA Leek and West Midlands Region.

PROGRAMME

Friday 2 May

19.45 '*Culture is Ordinary*' Keynote Lecture by Terry Eagleton

Saturday 3 May

09.30 Group discussion: '*Culture is Ordinary*'
11.30 *Socialism and Ecology*, Andy Dobson
14.15 RWMF AGM
16.45 *History - women, old Labour and new social movements*, Karen Hunt
19.45 Extracts from films: *Border Crossing* and *The Country and the City*

Sunday 4th May

10.00 *The State - the Arts and Architecture*, Mark Fisher MP
11.30 *Resources of Hope*, plenary debate.
12.30 Conclusion - review of w/end and next year's programme

Further enquiries:

The Office Manager

Wedgwood Memorial College

Tel: 01782 372105/373427 Fax 01782 372393

E-Mail: wedgwood.college@staffordshire.gov.uk

It is intended that copies of *Raymond Williams a Warriors Tale* will be on sale at the Keynote Lecture on the Friday evening.



Institute of Historical Research

Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture

Convenors: Warren Carter (UCL), Andrew Hemingway (UCL), Esther Leslie (Birkbeck), David Margolies (Goldsmiths College), Steve Edwards (Open University) and Frances Tracey (UCL).

Venue: Wolfson Room, IHR

Time: Friday, 5.30pm

London Socialist Historians Group Summer Term Seminars

Monday April 14th:

Still Militant? Rock Against Racism 30 Years on
Red Saunders and others

Monday April 21st

No Bombs and No Bosses. CND and the Left- 50 years on.
Stan Newens

Monday May 12th

The View from Beyond the Boundary. The Left and cricket,
Mike Marqusee; David Renton, Andrew Smith

Monday May 19th

1968 40 Years on, a European Perspective.
Gerd Rainer-Horn

Monday June 3

Moncure D. Conway (1832-1907), Rationalism, and the Abolition of Slavery
Ellen Ramsay

Senate House,

Malet St London WC1

Pollard Room at 5.30pm.

Attendance is free without ticket.

More details: www.LondonSocialistHistorians.org

Contact 07803 16726

NOTICES AND EVENTS

HISTORY & POLICY: THE SECURITY STATE

19 June 2008. 7 pm to 9pm
Free; advance booking required.

Venue: Bishopsgate Institute, Bishopsgate,
London EC2 (just across from
Liverpool Street Station)

In this discussion, historians Jane Caplan (co-author of Documenting Individual Identity) and Edward Higgs (author of The Information State) meet with three security experts - Ross Anderson (Security Engineering, Cambridge), Sandra Bell (Royal United Services Institute), Richard Norton-Taylor (Guardian security correspondent) - to explore the rise of the security state and its implications for us today.

To book a seat, please email events@bishopsgate.org.uk or phone 020 7392 9220. Seating is very limited, so book now in order not to be disappointed.

Organised by the Raphael Samuel History Centre, in partnership with Bishopsgate Institute. For more information on the RSHC, go to www.raphael-samuel.org.uk

Deleuze, Marx and Politics

A SEMINAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST
LONDON

Hosted by the School of Social Sciences,
Media and Cultural Studies
28 May 2008 1:00pm - 5:00pm

Keynote Speaker: **Nicholas Thoburn**,
Respondent: **Jeremy Gilbert**

A discussion on Deleuze and the possibilities
he offers for communist politics.

Thoburn's **Deleuze, Marx and Politics** can be
read online at
<http://libcom.org/library/deleuze-marx-politics-nicholas-thoburn-intro>

Registration is free and all are welcome but
advance registration is advised.

The Orwell Prize

*'What I have most wanted to do... is to make political
writing into an art'*

**The Longlist for this year's Orwell Prize
for books has now been announced.
Over 150 books, spanning a remarkable
variety of political topics and themes
have been submitted.**

The entries include *Luck and The Irish*, by
historian **Roy Foster**; *What's Left?* By
journalist **Nick Cohen**; *Two Caravans* by
academic and author **Marina Lewycka**; and
The Blair Years by **Alistair Campbell**.

There are also twelve journalism entries for
this year's journalism award, including **Martin
Bright**, political editor of *The New Statesman*,
and **Bronwen Maddox**, chief foreign
commentator for *The Times*.

The Orwell Book and Journalism Prizes are
awarded to those judged to have best
achieved George Orwell's aim to '**make
political writing into an art**'.

This year's judges are **Professor Jean
Seaton** (Chair), **Annalena McAfee** (founder of
Guardian Review), **Albert Scardino** (Pulitzer
Prize-winning journalist) and **Sir John Tusa**
(former head of the BBC World Service).

The winners will be announced at an awards
ceremony on the 24th of April.

Socialist History Society

Saturday 17 May 2008

1.00 p.m. Socialist History Society AGM, to be
followed at 2.00 by **Gareth Stedman-Jones**
speaking on his biography of Marx.

Venue: Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green,
London EC1. Nearest tube: Farringdon.
Admission to the public meeting: £1.50

See www.socialisthistorysociety.co.uk for
further detail

THE RAYMOND WILLIAMS SOCIETY

SOCIETY MATTERS

The society AGM was held on 17 November 2007 since when the Exec. Committee has further met. The AGM minutes are available at <http://www.raymondwilliams.co.uk/>, but highlights include the election of a new Secretary in Carl Thompson with much thanks expressed to Sean Mathews for all his work. While Society finances were in order, the need for increased membership was emphasised. Peter Brooker reported successes including the re-launch of Keywords with issue 5 - all the editors to be congratulated, and the Society's support of three events. He also indicated his willingness to pass on the responsibility of Chair. Future activities include an examination of *Culture and Society* and its potential 50 years on, proposed for Autumn 2008 and to coincide with the next AGM. The Exec. meeting in February appointed Mac Daly as Membership Secretary in recognition of the need to develop the Society and moved to raise subscriptions to £20 (£10 low income).

Visit the Society website

The Raymond Williams Society website is at <http://www.raymondwilliams.co.uk/>. The website is the first place to look for up-to-date information on the society and the events it sponsors and promotes (try the 'Forthcoming Events' link on the homepage). You can also contact us via the website and send us information on any event you think we should be associated with. Other facilities on the site allow you to make a donation, to join our mailing list and to access an archive of materials. It is also possible to pay annual membership fees online via the site's 'Membership of the Society' link and to buy copies of the Society's publications likewise (via the 'Publications' link). Full electronic texts of issues 1 and 3 of *Key Words* are available free of charge on Society's website, <http://www.raymondwilliams.co.uk/>

Your Newsletter

Responses to any items in the Newsletter are welcomed by the editors together with suggestions for future items. The next issue of the Newsletter is planned for September and contributions in the form of notices, articles, reviews and photographs should be sent as early as possible to the editors at newsletter@raymondwilliams.co.uk

HOW TO JOIN

Membership of the Raymond Williams Society is by Annual Subscription.

There are two ways of paying:

1. via the Society website where a PayPal facility is available.
2. by cheque made out to 'Raymond Williams Society' and sent to:
Steve Woodhams, 103 Coopers Lane, London, E10 5DG

Membership enquiries should be addressed to:

membership@raymondwilliams.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUE FOR 2008

This Newsletter is published twice a year. The next issue will appear in Autumn 2008.

Newsletter editors: Marie Moran and Steve Woodhams

Typeset and printed by John Goodridge