



i s r f b u l l e t i n

Issue XXII

Structures of Feeling

Edited by Dr Lars Cornelissen

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EDITORIAL

Dr. Lars Cornelissen

ISRF Academic Editor

I write the editorial to the present issue of the ISRF Bulletin with something of a heavy heart. The issue marks the end of Louise Braddock's tenure as the ISRF's Director of Research. Having handed over her directorial duties to Chris Newfield earlier this month, this will be the last Bulletin issue for which she was asked to pen the opening note.

Although it was never framed as such within the ISRF team, to my mind this issue stands as a memorial to Louise's intellectual legacy at the Foundation. The guiding theme of the issue is the concept of structures of feeling, coined and elaborated by the Welsh Marxist and cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1921–1988), which has become central to Louise's own research agenda over the past few years. Her own contribution to this issue, "The Unconscious is Structured like a Structure: The Role of Structure in the Social Transmission of Meaning," documents her reading of Williams and her attempt to address some of the limits of the theoretical framework he articulated.

The way the remainder of this issue came together stands as a testimony to Louise's unmatched ability to bring different scholars and indeed scholarly styles together. The three opening articles, by former ISRF Fellows Mike Makin-Waite, Julie Parsons, and Henrique Carvalho, came out of a research meeting Louise convened earlier this year, when the ISRF—much like everyone else—was experimenting with the possibilities opened up by the Zoomscape. Asked by Louise to make their own research projects speak to the concept of structures of feeling, Mike, Julie, and Henrique all found ways of weaving it into their respective thinking, resulting in the articles presented here.

The 'Curated Research Conversation' that follows Louise's own contribution to this Bulletin is likewise the result of a series of online research meetings, this time involving Louise's research network.

Structured around a discussion of Louise's piece on Williams, these meetings took up some of the questions she raises and—as any good research conversation tends to do—ended up generating even more questions. The conversation as it is included here is based on the transcript of one of those meetings, which was artfully edited by Niall Gildea. The resulting piece revives a classic ISRF Bulletin genre: the 'curated' conversation. When it is done well—as it is here—such a piece is capable of capturing both the breadth and depth of the research meetings on which it is based, which is undoubtedly why Louise has always been fond of it as a Bulletin genre.

The final article included in this Bulletin was written by Chris Newfield, the incoming Director of Research. It was prompted, as Chris explains at outset of the piece, by the very same research meetings that generated the curated conversation. Inspired by Louise's generative use of Williams's conceptual work, Chris wondered whether the analytics of structures of feelings might help one make sense of the ongoing hold on United States culture of white supremacy. Taking his readers through a step-by-step analysis, Chris argues that ultimately, the kind of anti-Black racism that is rampant in white U.S. culture draws much of its sustenance from a deeply rooted and psychologically embedded comfort with coercive, racially inflected hierarchies. This mode of 'submissive individualism' generates not only white supremacist but also anti-democratic sentiments, both of which must be understood if we are to understand the nation's current crises.

What Louise's departure will do to the structure of feeling within the ISRF team remains to be seen. In the meantime, my hope is that this issue of the Bulletin can bear witness, however modestly, to the legacy that she has left the Foundation. Not only does it reflect, in so many ways, Louise's capacity to stage research conversations; more fundamentally, and like so much that the ISRF has achieved since its humble beginnings, this issue would not even have existed if it weren't for Louise.

NOTE FROM THE OUTGOING DIRECTOR

Dr. Louise Braddock

ISRF Director of Research

Chris Newfield has now taken up in person his post as the ISRF's new Director. I am glad to welcome him at last and to hand over to him the future of the ISRF. In the short term he will take over managing the still uncertain situation of the Covid pandemic as it continues to engage the ISRF's adaptability in interesting ways. In the past months, since the March lockdown, we have been finding out what works best in the online medium. One successful development has been the format of online mini-workshops in which current and former Fellows have been able to present research and share responses with each other. We have found that with preparation beforehand, turn-taking in discussion, and good time-keeping by all, an 'ISRF Research Conversation' can be intercalated into the academic online working day and has been welcomed by participants. The articles in this Bulletin on 'Structures of Feeling' arise from this programme. The three contributing ISRF Fellows previously met virtually for a mini-workshop with presentations and discussion of three different pieces of social research where the concept could be said to be doing work. Brought into relation with the three types of case material—social-historical, legal-criminological, and personal-psychological—the idea of a structure of feeling is a way to capture for further analysis an underlying process of ongoing adjustment to changes in social and political conditions, at the levels of social and individual consciousness.

The question of the relation between these levels was then the subject of a larger research conversation. Reported in this Bulletin as a 'curated' conversation, in the tradition of earlier Bulletin Conversations, this is an edited version of the larger group video-discussion on Raymond Williams's concept and its application to different social sciences. The

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starting point was my research note, reproduced in a shortened form here, on the question of whether the concept is able to provide the social sciences with an access to psychoanalysis.

These and other ISRF 'Research Conversations' have been productive and enjoyable, and have succeeded in reproducing, in miniature, the excitement of interdisciplinary discovery that characterises the Annual Workshops. These, it is hoped, will resume in something like their usual form in 2021. As a programme in its own right, however, the 'ISRF Research Conversation' model has the added advantage that, being simple to set up, manage and record (on Zoom), an onward programme can easily be instigated; more easily than with the Annual Workshops themselves where the difficulty of maintaining momentum has long perplexed me.

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Memory, Deindustrialisation, and Right-Wing Populism in a Northern English Town

Mike Makin-Waite

ISRF Independent Scholar Fellow 2019–20.

The recent growth of far-right politics and nativist populism in England is often seen as a response to the ‘austerity’ policies which shaped the last decade. The Cameron-Clegg coalition introduced these to make use of opportunities generated by the 2008 banking crisis. UKIP’s rising influence over the next few years pushed Cameron into calling the Brexit referendum, and tempted some ‘mainstream’ politicians to adopt arguments and registers which had previously been restricted to the fringes.

There is, however, a problem with this simple explanation, and with the more general practice of emphasising the immediate precipitating factors behind political developments. Broader preconditions have always been put in place, and these are crucial in understanding ‘unexpected’ events.

The Eurosceptic views currently dominant in English politics (and thus in the decreasingly ‘United Kingdom’) have been building for over twenty years. UKIP had its first significant successes in 2004. Before this, anti-EU themes had been promoted by a minority of Conservatives, dismissed then as mavericks, or ‘bastards’.¹

Together with opposition to immigration, antipathy to the EU was also expressed in even ruder tones through the significant if geographically uneven support for the British National Party (which emerged from

1. Paul Routledge & Simon Hoggart, ‘Major hits out at Cabinet’, *The Guardian*, 25 July 1993.

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the 1970s National Front). The BNP showed that racist and xenophobic arguments, bluntly expressed, could lead to some electoral success. Their 'breaking the rules' helped lay the ground for Farage's later campaigning.

The BNP's profile rose at a time of overall economic growth, but most of its councillors were elected in former industrial towns in the north west, Yorkshire and the midlands—areas which were not 'turned around' by New Labour's policies. These short-lived but significant successes for an 'extremist' party with fascist roots were often put down to the deprivation and deindustrialisation which began under Thatcher.

The decline of manufacturing and 'traditional' industries may well have been an important backdrop to political developments in towns like Burnley, which suffered serious racialised rioting in 2001, and where the BNP won its first clutch of seats in 2002. But arguing that far-right successes were 'inevitable' in these circumstances is to accept as an explanation what has to be explained.

During my ISRF research project, I considered how the 'heritage of past cultural values', which 'leaves an enduring imprint', could combine with economic and social problems resulting from deindustrialisation to generate a degree of far-right support in the particular location of Burnley.² In thinking about this, Raymond Williams' concept of 'structures of feeling' proved suggestive of how certain outlooks had sedimented, combined and fermented over many decades.³

I noticed that certain perspectives which had developed amongst workers in the cotton industry still shaped the way people saw and argued over issues—even though it was often the *children* of former textile 'hands' who were now expressing these. 'Common sense' picked up in the long-closed mills had somehow been transmitted generationally: sectional and divisive attitudes, formed in the days

2. Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 42.

3. Williams developed the concept in a number of works, including *A Preface to Film* (1954), *The Long Revolution* (1961), and *Marxism and Literature* (1977).

when mill workers focussed on the minutiae of demarcation lines and small differentials in pay between them (these gave status to their particular—and gendered—roles); a passive-aggressive character to trade unions' reactive disputes with management, rather than any long-term strategic approach (there were exceptions to this pattern amongst skilled and assertive engineers); and a general culture of low ambition, expressed in 'jokes' and put-downs which people used to stop each other 'getting above themselves', combined with a disdain for formal education going back to when children getting 'on the job' experience under the looms was thought more useful than half-days learning by rote in the Victorian schoolroom.

The town's manufacturing workers had been justifiably proud of their role in producing tangible goods. Textiles positioned Burnley within a nationally understood division of labour, in which 'almost every town and city [was] identified with the making of some useful or necessary article of daily life, and places were synonymous with household artefacts: Sheffield meant cutlery and steel, Stoke-on-Trent teacups', and so on.⁴ After the Second World War, Burnley complemented its mill town identity with a new reputation for light engineering and manufacturing in aerospace and automotive supply-lines.

But, from the 1950s, the cotton industry's terminal decline was apparent. Trade unions joined industrialists in calling for government action to restrict other countries' exports to former British colonies. Protectionist Tory MPs ran a 'great textile campaign', aiming to block imports so that at least the home market could be retained (some east Lancashire Conservative Associations considered disaffiliating from the national party to set up a new right-wing party to push 'the cotton interest'). 'Buy British' was the rallying cry.

Though limited curbs on cotton imports were introduced (until superseded by rules consequential on Britain's membership of 'Europe') the 'great campaign' was unsuccessful. Redundancies and short-time working followed, and manufacturers moved some production overseas, where wages were even cheaper. At a time of full

4. Jeremy Seabrook, *The Song of the Shirt: The High Price of Cheap Garments, from Blackburn to Bangladesh* (London: Hurst and Company, 2015), 256.

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employment in Britain, younger workers quickly found new jobs—and were pleased to move into better-paid and more modern sectors. In the mills that remained, trade unions accepted a belated mechanisation drive, and the shift work pattern which employers introduced to quickly recoup their investment. For a moment, there were unwanted jobs (particularly on night shifts) within an industry which was beginning to disappear: this was the economic ‘pull factor’ which drew the pioneer immigrants from Pakistan to Burnley during the 1960s.

From the mid-1990s and into the early 2000s, ‘memories’ from the moments sketched above were recovered by right-wing independent councillors and then by the BNP, and rearticulated into racialised narratives about what had happened to Burnley: sectionalised jealousies over whether another poor person was getting more than you, or might want what you had; the sense that politicians ‘down London’ aren’t listening; nationalism as a way of making a claim to useful work; and the association of immigrants with industrial decline, the ‘newcomers’ resented for their positive economic contribution, whilst they themselves felt ‘wanted but not welcomed’.

Such themes could resonate with a significant minority of white voters because they felt familiar, as much a part of the town’s fabric as the empty mills in the area still called ‘the Weavers’ Triangle’. The issues sketched above suggest how modulations from deindustrialisation to right-wing politics are not automatic or inevitable, a reflex reaction, but involve the use of specific historical resources. These are selected and woven together by political actors who construct particular viewpoints, identities and projects. Once formed and incubated at the local level in towns like Burnley and Stoke-on-Trent, these were available to be taken up and promoted more generally, in somewhat more palatable forms, by better-resourced and more broadly-based forces—first Farage’s vehicles, and then the Conservatives’ pro-Brexit wing.

Is it possible to move beyond mere ‘suggestion’ to identify the specific processes by which particular ‘structures of feeling’ condensed so as to shape Burnley’s controversial politics in the early 2000s?

Scholars who have considered how collective values and understandings are communicated across the generations often



Warehouses at Weavers' Triangle, Burnley. Image by Dave Bevis (CC BY-SA 2.0).

highlight the role of vehicles for carrying social memory which have a continuous character. For Jan Assmann, 'cultural memory' involves the transmission of meanings which are attributed to disembodied and materialised symbolic forms that 'are stable and situation transcendent'.⁵ Assmann distinguishes this process from 'communicative memory', which happens through individuals sharing recollections with their contemporaries: amongst other things, such recollections form 'the object of oral history'.⁶

Paul Connerton's exploration of 'how societies remember' highlights the interplay between peoples' subjectivities and the materialised forms to which historical meanings and forms of identification attach, whether or not they were produced for this purpose (such as statues) or were built with simple functional intent (such as cotton mills and weavers' cottages). For Connerton, our 'images of social spaces' are important anchors for constructing meaning and identity. 'Because of their relative stability', these spaces 'give us the illusion of not changing and of rediscovering the past in the present. We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us'.⁷

5. Jan Assmann, 'Memory and Culture' in Dmitri Nikulin (ed.), *Memory: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 331.

6. *Ibid.*, 334.

7. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge

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Deindustrialisation disrupted Burnley's continuities. It broke the transitions that people had come to expect for themselves and their children during the long third quarter of the twentieth century: from school to work; from living with parents to setting up a new family home; from relative hardship to modest and honestly-earned comfort. This rupture did not happen all at once, in a single moment of shock. During deindustrialisation's long and toxic 'half-life', the memories generated by now-gone working lives get mutated and morphed.⁸ Stories of how the bosses tried to get one over on you cannot resource any solidarity or shared alertness between workers in the factory or the mine: you are not there. Instead, they confirm a lingering sense of betrayal, and sullen resentment of the authorities.

Though the 'material milieu' of old mills and Victorian terraced houses stayed in place, they shifted in terms of their meanings. The 1990s saw the narratives which they had helped constitute become unstable. Old mill buildings are no longer 'satanic' because of the hard work and long days they require of you. Their dereliction tells you that you are no longer needed.

The immigrants (or rather, now, their children and grandchildren, born in this town as much as you were), are somehow reminders of the empire that 'we' once had, and 'they' were somehow part of. In a political culture which has not yet begun to recognise and process how Britain's place in the world has changed, post-imperial melancholy blocks the chance to build good relations on the basis of open exploration of our diverse but linked 'memories'.⁹ Instead, racialised notions of difference offer the means to construct sectional political identities. Even if these *are* shaped by loss and disappointment, at least they give *something* to hold onto...

University Press, 1989), 37.

8. Sherry Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialisation: Working-class Writing about Deindustrialisation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

9. Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004).

FINISHING TIME, 'I-POEMS' & THE 'PAINS OF RELEASE' INTO THE COMMUNITY AFTER PUNISHMENT

Dr. Julie Parsons

ISRF Mid-Career Fellow 2016–17.

Criminalised individuals remain one of the most vilified, marginalised and excluded social groups.¹ This is particularly felt and enacted on release from prison, yet limited attention is paid to the lived experience of the 'pains of release' and to the narratives of former prisoners. 'Finishing Time' is a two-year project (2018-2020), funded by a discretionary grant from the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF), that aims to explore the lived experience of resettlement into the community after punishment. Overall, the research has become focused on how individual identities are formed through storytelling without assuming that identities are fixed or stable. It aims to explore how individuals develop narrative reinterpretations of the self in relation to criminalisation and/or multiple traumas through a form of collaborative connective labour,² which consists of the doing of timelines, contributing photographs and the reading of 'i-poems'. To date through a series of in-depth interviews, ten men have mapped their resettlement journeys using images and/or photographs and drawing timelines to help organise their memories and encourage a temporal sense of how their lives may have changed.

1. F. McNeill & B. Weaver (2010), *Changing lives? Desistance Research and Offender Management*, available at: <https://www.sccjr.ac.uk/publications/changing-lives-desistance-research-and-offender-management/>.

2. K. McLeod (2017), *Wellbeing Machine: How Health Emerges from the Assemblages of Everyday Life* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press).

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These interviews lasted from one to two hours and whilst no two timelines were the same, and the focus of the photographs varied widely, there were some pertinent themes, not least an overriding sense of isolation, particularly for those more recently released, who also documented feelings of fear and shame.

There has been considerable research on prisoners while they're in prison and the 'pains of imprisonment', since the publication of Sykes's influential work, *The Society of Captives* (1959).³ There is similarly intense interest in the 'pains of release' due to high rates of recidivism. However, post-release models in this context tend to focus on deficits, that is on 'offenders' lacking the abilities, capabilities, or resources to manage themselves, or desistance, which builds on human and social capital towards a 'good lives model' that incorporates redemption scripts and an internalisation of generativity (doing for others).⁴ However, as identified in the background to the PeN project, a previous ISRF-funded project (see www.penprojectlandworks.org), there is a relative neglect of prisoner/ex-offender narratives in the desistance literature⁵ and these narratives continue to be excluded from the co-production of knowledge on desistance work. 'Finishing Time' therefore aims to address this gap and give voice to criminalised individuals, whose stories are rarely seen or heard.

One of the methods used to give authenticity to the voices of the men participating in the research was the creation of 'i-poems' from the interview transcripts,⁶ which constitutes one element of the Voice Centred Relational Method (VCRM).⁷ Following this method, i-poems

3. G.M. Sykes (1959), *The Society of Captives: The Study of a Maximum Security Prison* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

4. D.F. Johns (2018), *Being and Becoming an Ex-Prisoner* (Abingdon: Routledge), 60.

5. A. Weaver & B. Weaver (2013), "Autobiography, Empirical Research and Critical Theory: A View From the Inside Out," *Probation Journal*, 60(3): 259–277, 260.

6. J.M. Parsons & C. Pettinger (2017), "'Liminal Identities' and Power Struggles: Reflections on the Regulation of Everyday Foodways at a Homeless Centre and the Use of Creative Participatory Research as a Tool of Empowerment and Resistance," in A. Bleakley, L. Lynch, & G. Whelan (eds.), *Risk and Regulation at the Interface of Medicine and the Arts* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 171–189.

7. M. Mauthner & A. Doucet (1998), "Reflections on a Voice-Centred

are created from the 'I', 'we' and 'you' statements as they appear in the transcripts and become powerful and personal statements of intent that prioritise the voice of the narrator.

It belongs to a social constructionist, epistemological position that recognises that human experience is bound up within larger relational dynamics. It centres on the 'voice' of the respondent and is associated with a 'feminist interpretative lens', one in which the 'self is viewed as having multiple selves or voices, in contrast and conflict with one another'.⁸

The power of the i-poem, as I have noted previously,⁹ is intensified when it is spoken/listened to, particularly if it is the voice of the original speaker. It is with this in mind that I gave the i-poems to some of the men, who then read them aloud whilst being audio recorded. These audio files have since been used alongside their timelines and photographs to produce short film clips. Indeed, in an attempt to give voice to one of the most vilified and marginalised social groups, the research has become a process of making and unmaking, organising and arranging a kind of temporal bricolage that reveals alternative rehabilitative conceptualisations of wellbeing and meaning beyond the notion of released subjects as risky and potentially transgressive. Instead, there is vulnerability and resilience.

To date there are three films ready to view, with others in production. The process of creating the films is a collaborative effort. Not only with those participating in the research itself, but others as well. Notably significant input from Rob Giles, a University of Plymouth IT specialist and videographer, who interpreted the i-poems in order to create 'Red Pen' and 'Dreaming of Fishing'.¹⁰ And Daniela Chivers, a stage

Relational Method," in J. Ribbens & R. Edwards (eds.), *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research* (London: Sage), 119–146.

8. J.M. Parsons (2017), "I Much Prefer to Feed Other People than to Feed Myself': The 'I-Poem' as a Tool for Highlighting Ambivalence and Dissonance within Auto/Biographical Accounts of Everyday Foodways," *The Journal of Psychosocial Studies* 10(2), available at: <http://www.psychosocial-studies-association.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Julie-Parsons-Commentary-I-do-remember-being-hungry-Ophelias-i-poem.pdf>.

9. Ibid.

10. For 'Red Pen', visit <https://youtu.be/ENLQbwgWfek>. For 'Dreaming of

2 sociology student on a volunteer placement at the resettlement scheme, who worked with Rob on 'Quentin's i-poem'.¹¹ They both engaged in work with the written and audio files of the i-poems, as well as the photographs contributed by the men (see <https://collaborations-in-research.org/> for more on this process). The films were sent to the men for them to comment on and for them to suggest changes. The films have since been shown to members of the resettlement team who worked with the men previously and at a number of conferences this year (2020).¹²

What is striking about the i-poem films is that the focus on the 'I', 'we' and 'you' statements distils the overall narratives from the men, with interviews lasting from one to two hours concentrated into four to seven minutes. These become powerful statements about the 'pains of release', notably in terms of the enduring impact of criminalisation on the sense of self. When listening to and watching the films, key themes emerge from each of the men. In Anton's story, he uses a 'red pen' to draw his timeline as it symbolises being naughty. He says:

*I would never turn my back on my old self
I also think about my old self every day.
I don't punish myself these days.
I have done in the past.
I've still got regrets,
I'm accepting it
I see someone
I don't say
I gravitate
I can't have them as friends
[...]*

In Bryan's interview, he sends me photographs of his new wife and the fish he has managed to catch night fishing. He says:

Fishing', visit <https://youtu.be/kdV5XZWIMjU>.

11. For 'Quentin's I-Poem', visit <https://youtu.be/WIKD8Bea2tw>.

12. 4th European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, 5th-7th February 2020, University of Malta. 7th International Conference of Autoethnography, 20th-21st July 2020 (online).

*I'm not in touch with my old friends
One of them,
I am
I realised
I haven't really got that much in common
I didn't want to be living like
I was before
I went in prison
One of them I still hang around with
I go fishing
I've got new friends
I sort of muscled in
I don't know whether it's just getting older
I just prefer to go off with Janine or just be on my own*

During Quentin's interview, he sends photographs and shows me the pottery he has been making in his garage at home. He says:

*you've been in there for two years and
you've lived your life a certain way,
you come home,
you've got all this freedom and
you don't go out the house.
I still don't.
I've not had one friend come to see me
I haven't got any friends,
I'm ok with that.
I got home,
I was sat on the front there,
you could see him talking
I was just looking at his mouth moving,
I had this little bubble in my head
"why are you talking to me?"*

For all of the men there are difficulties in forging new relationships, as well as re-establishing or maintaining old ones as a consequence of criminalisation. They all engage in various strategies, from spending time alone, to night fishing and spinning pots. However, their accounts are also powerful reminders that social reform is needed for

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criminalised individuals to be fully reintegrated into the community after punishment. As criminologist Fergus McNeill reminds us, the problem of desistance is social as well as individual; acceptance of a former prisoner is a community matter and not just a private business.¹³

Sometimes, though, as Quentin comments in response to seeing his film a few months after his interview:

Christ! I had to watch that twice! I stand by everything I said. I'm not quite as dark and depressing as I was but I'd say where I was then is 100% genuine. Some of the issues are still very real. I just don't speak it out loud anymore lol. Crikey I was a bit dour wasn't I? Perhaps I need to chill out a wee bit lol.

Thanks Julie, for everything you all do at the resettlement Scheme and for being interested in the other side, sometimes that's enough.

Quentin

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all of the men who spent time with me for this research, drawing their timelines and sending me their photographs, especially those who subsequently read their i-poems without much of a rehearsal. Thanks to IT specialist and videographer Rob Giles, Sociology student Daniela Chivers and of course the ISRF for enabling me to carry out this research—thank you all.

13. F. McNeill (2012), "Four Forms of 'Offender' Resettlement: Towards an Interdisciplinary Perspective," *Legal and Criminological Psychology* 17(1): 18–36.

TOWARDS A CULTURAL APPROACH TO DANGEROUSNESS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Dr. Henrique Carvalho

ISRF Early Career Fellow 2019–20.

Dangerousness pervades the idea of criminal justice. Our contemporary concern with the prevention of harm has given rise to an ever-increasing array of criminal laws and other preventive measures targeted at handling dangers—that is, unacceptable risks¹—posed by individuals. And while the wide scope of criminalisation covers a range of activities that may sometimes carry very low levels of harm or risk of violence—such as watching television without paying for a TV License—it is fair to say that criminal justice derives much of its justification and public support from the perceived need to police and punish those involved in serious and persistent criminal activity. The threat of dangerous offenders such as terrorists, rapists, murderers and gangsters has a strong grip on our social imagination, fuelling much of media discourse and public perceptions about crime, as well as feeding into the punitive populist type of politics that is prevalent in recent times.

It is undeniable that these kinds of criminal activity can lead to very serious, sometimes irremediable harm, and that it is therefore quite understandable that they attract a good deal of concern. These are issues that should not be left unaddressed. The main point I wish to raise in this short essay is that there is a big difference between

1. J. Floud (1982), "Dangerousness and Criminal Justice," *The British Journal of Criminology* 22(3): 213–228, 213.

saying that these issues must be addressed, and affirming that it is necessary (or even appropriate) do to so through institutionalised practices that have time and again proven to significantly contribute to the marginalisation and exclusion of already vulnerable and socio-economically deprived populations. If our focus was predominantly on the prevention of harm, there is a plethora of other measures that could (and arguably should) be taken which do not rely on the stigmatisation of those deemed responsible for such harm through penal measures grounded on the hostile attribution of blame, including (but not limited to) concrete efforts towards social reform. Instead, I aim to suggest that our preoccupation with dangerous criminals is more closely tied to our affective reliance on a specific notion of civil order than it is to a desire to prevent the harm related to serious crime.

The concept of dangerousness is usually deployed to refer to something assumed to be a quality of the object that it is trying to describe, be it a substance (such as explosives), an animal (a dangerous dog, for instance), or an activity (such as dangerous driving). Likewise, individuals who engage in specific crimes deemed serious or particularly violent, or who are repetitively involved in criminal activities, are identified and treated as dangerous criminals. This attribution of dangerousness suggests a persistent (if not permanent) disposition to cause harm, so that whatever (or whoever) is deemed dangerous is taken to require ostensive restraint and avoidance. This results in criminal laws that are specifically tailored to deal with this kind of threat, be it by means of lower standards of culpability or broad definitions of the conduct involved so as to allow for wider and swifter—more ‘effective’—criminalisation, and/or by allowing for extended police powers, longer and more stringent sentences or other forms of control.

There are at least two significant problems with regard to the ascription of dangerousness to individuals in criminal justice matters. First, identifying dangerousness is not an objective or clear endeavour; quite the contrary. Even those more technical and ‘objective’ assessments of dangerousness, such as those linked to sentencing and probation, are proven to be very bad predictors of future behaviour, and therefore deeply flawed in determining any concrete relation between ascriptions of dangerousness and any actual propensity to do harm.

Dangerousness assessments have much more to do with judgments regarding an amalgamation between the individual's past behaviour and personal and social characteristics, than it has to do with an actual expectation or risk of future harm.

This 'misidentification' is linked to a second paradox. While judgments and portrayals of dangerousness (in media and political discourse, for example) are often linked to 'eventful' instances of violent harmful behaviour—terrorist attacks, gruesome murder, serial rapists, etc.—they fuel a much wider framework of suspicion and repression. The dangerousness attributed to terrorists is associated with socio-cultural traits and patterns, which lead to a broad range of laws, powers and resources that are in turn used to over-police and criminalise already marginalised Muslim and immigrant populations. Similarly, the focus on 'gangs' as symbols of street violence linked to the problem of knife crime results in the overcriminalisation of racialised and socially deprived urban youth and neighbourhoods. Both of these issues reveal the criminalisation of dangerousness to be a blunt instrument posing as sharp-edged: it proclaims to be targeting specific individuals and groups in order to prevent serious harm, when it effectively casts a wide net that negatively affects a large and diffuse group of people, and it does so on the basis of a pre-judgement of the dangerousness of these individuals that seems largely independent of any practical outcome in terms of harm reduction.

It could be said that this rather violent aspect of the criminalisation of dangerousness is mainly a side-effect, a consequence of an overzealous attitude, which is itself justified by the seriousness of the danger involved in these activities—the cost of security, so to speak. However, in the remainder of this essay I want to briefly outline an alternative way of looking at these dynamics, which suggests that this 'side-effect' is in reality the main focus of what I call hostile criminalisation—that is, criminalisation that is geared at engendering hostility through the identification and targeting of dangerous others.²

2. H. Carvalho (2019), "Feeding the Prison Crisis Through Hostile Criminalisation: The Case of Joint Enterprise," *Prison Service Journal* 243: 41–47. H. Carvalho (2019), "Joint Enterprise, Hostility, and the Construction of Dangerous Belonging," in J. Anderson and J. Pratt (eds), *Criminal Justice, Risk and the Revolt against Uncertainty* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan): 115–137.

To explore this possibility, I propose that we should adopt a cultural perspective to understanding what grounds ideas—or, rather, *images*—of dangerousness in criminal justice.

My starting point for this analysis lies in how criminalisation and punishment perform a significant affective role in managing social insecurity and anxiety. This function is in many ways a direct consequence of the inherent ambivalence of advanced liberal societies, in the sense that their social imaginary is grounded on values and aspirations that are betrayed and negated by their own structural violence. Due to this ambivalence, individuals' sense of identity and belonging constantly feels precarious and vulnerable, something which is exacerbated in moments of crisis. Criminal justice then engenders a symbolic apparatus aimed at reinforcing the normative validity of civil order in these societies by channelling such insecurity and anxiety towards those identified as dangerous others, who are scapegoated as the main threat to this order and therefore made legitimate recipients of negative feelings and hostility.³

In other words, criminal justice helps to manage the ambivalence intrinsic to advanced liberal societies by 'purifying'⁴ their social imaginaries through symbolic processes that attribute disorder and violence to the actions and existence of dangerous criminals—and thus away from social structures and institutions. For this process of purification to work, these criminals must be estranged from these social imaginaries, so that the dangerousness that they embody is perceived and experienced by those who identify with the civil order as something coming from 'outside', something 'other'. The notion of 'danger' represents precisely this aspect of separation, marking the

3. For a detailed discussion of these dynamics in relation to criminal law and criminalisation, see H. Carvalho (2017), *The Preventive Turn in Criminal Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). For an analysis of the link between punishment, punitiveness and hostility, see H. Carvalho & A. Chamberlen (2018), "Why Punishment Pleases: Punitive Feelings in a World of Hostile Solidarity," *Punishment and Society* 20(2): 217–234; H. Carvalho, A. Chamberlen & R. Lewis (2020), 'Punitiveness Beyond Criminal Justice: Punishable and Punitive Subjects in an Era of Prevention, Anti-Migration and Austerity,' *British Journal of Criminology* 60(2): 265–284.

4. See M. Douglas (1966), *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge).

object of disorder as something (or someone) to be avoided, lest one runs the risk of being harmed, or tainted with its 'pollution'.⁵ The stigma of criminalisation is pivotal for this process of estrangement, since the notion of crime is intimately connected with images of unlawfulness, of violence and disrespect, that pit offenders against civilised society, thus imbuing hostile attitudes against them with an aura of legitimacy and justification.

Undoubtedly, the 'main stage' of this affective apparatus of hostility is the punishment of those serious offenders who come to embody the paradigmatic images of dangerousness that populate the social imagination. However, the (significant) symbolic effect of these events is grounded to a large extent on an illusion, which is meant to occlude the broad and diffuse work which criminal justice necessitates to perform its function. First, underneath the spectacle of punishment there lies a series of rituals of criminalisation⁶ which constantly produce and reinforce markers of dangerousness and criminality—where criminals act and live, how they behave, what they are usually after, what they might look like—which tell us what to look for and where to look for it, with regard to crime. These are fundamental to the cathartic effect that punishment is supposed to produce, related as it is to the reaffirmation of a normative idea of order that grounds our sense of social identity and belonging.

Second, and this is perhaps the main concluding point of this essay, these markers of dangerousness are intimately connected to issues of social fragmentation, deprivation and exclusion. On the one hand, the sense of estrangement related to crime relies heavily on broader notions of otherness in society, both reflecting and being reflected in populations that are seen to not fully fit in or belong to images of 'good citizenship'—the racialised, the marginalised, the foreign, the insane, etc. On the other hand, these structures of feeling that permeate otherness and social exclusion substantially benefit from and to a large extent also depend on the scapegoating provided by preventive and punitive logics which privilege criminal justice practices and 'solutions' in lieu of more concrete forms of social reform and critique.

5. See *ibid.*

6. See Carvalho & Chamberlen, "Why Punishment Pleases".

If this perspective is sound, then what appears to be an unfortunate side effect of our pursuit of security and justice is an essential part of the function that criminal justice performs in society. While awareness of this reality is not enough to challenge the social need for the sense of security and belonging that criminal justice provides—it is also part of the structures of feeling grounding the social imaginaries of advanced liberal societies—it can hopefully be a step towards questioning how we in such societies choose to address such need.

'THE UNCONSCIOUS IS STRUCTURED LIKE A STRUCTURE'

The Role of Structure in the Social Transmission of Meaning

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There is much interest for the social sciences in explaining how meaning and affect get transmitted within and between groups of individuals, both as a social phenomenon in its own right and as a generator of social disorder. In the intergenerational transmission of trauma the mechanisms and effects of process and the nature of content can be deeply inaccessible to individual and social consciousness. In such cases psychoanalytic explanation becomes relevant as potentially informative. In the transmission of trauma we are in the realm of unconscious meaning-transmission: the handing-on of an unrecognised template for something that cannot enter consciousness; whether an unthinkable affective experience or an affectively freighted representation of something experienced but not registered in thought at the time, as what Bollas has called the 'unthought known'.¹

Social transmission is more than communication between individuals. It may go down generations, or between groups that are far apart in time and place, and from institutions and social entities to individuals. Here transmission involves the conveying to, and reception by, the

1. Bollas's most succinct formulation is that 'It is a form of knowledge which has yet to be thought.' Christopher Bollas (2018 [1987]), *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (Abingdon: Routledge), 26.

individual subjective consciousness, of meaning collectively generated and held within the social structure. By meaning I include the broad semiotic notion of signification, but principally in what follows, the specifically representational, linguistically-articulable content of thought. Both consciously and unconsciously, knowledge and memory, fantasy and feeling can be transmitted between individuals and groups directly; in social behaviour, practice, and organisation; and through the cultural media of art and literature, drama or ritual.

This brings into view a conceptual problem about the nature of the relation between the states, moments and movements of a social consciousness and the evolving states of mind of the individual that make up a subjective consciousness. It is common to hear social scientists, as also psychoanalysts, speak of 'internalisation'; the individual's taking on by taking in of codes, roles, norms, 'order', of rules for action, etc. But internalisation is at best a metaphor for what yet needs clarifying: the dynamic interactions between the collective and the individual in which meaning is generated, transmitted and received. Moreover, in receiving meaning the individual can do so passively, 'partaking' in the collective, or can take it on as meaning she makes for herself.

In calling what is transmitted 'representational content' we are not committed to the idea that it passes more or less intact down some chain of transmission. Rather, the individual subject's reception of social memory, or social imagination must involve a process of construction which engages their representation-forming capacities. What psychoanalysis adds to this is that the construction may not be, and indeed may never be, a totally faithful re-construction, since the internal dynamics of the mind, aimed at the preservation of mental stability, will operate to re-fashion the representations produced into a form tractable to the ego's rational thinking processes. This founding psychoanalytic tenet guides the clinical work of tracing the unconscious determinants of conscious memories, recalled dreams, or behavioural enactments.

It is here that observations and theories in other disciplines and their characterisations of the transmission process can provide a range of comparisons against which to test the validity of psychoanalysis'

hypotheses about the processes of transmission. One way to organise these comparisons is by using Raymond Williams's 'structures of feeling' as an analytic concept for a 'methodological structuralism'—not as a theoretical commitment to structuralist explanation. Understood abstractly as a unit composed of inter-related elements, a structure is an entity that can be formally characterised in terms of objects and relations.² It can then be used to describe, in just these terms, how relations between individuals and down generations play out together in social transmission. We should then ask of Williams's 'structure of feeling' whether it is more than a merely suggestive model for a social process of unconscious meaning-making; whether, that is, it can provide an analytic concept of general application in social science for exploring the generation and transmission of affective social meaning.

What in Williams's conception of a structure fits it to convey meaning and produce affect? Structure in 'structure of feeling' is a sociological concept which defines individuals by their place within it but as it stands it does not readily carry over into the description, analysis or explanation of individual subjectivity. Nevertheless we can use the idea of structure to investigate what more might be needed for a socially-produced consciousness to go 'all the way down' to engage with an individual mind's activities across the broad range of cognition, imagination, memory, as well as the representation of affect (with the caveat that these are social and not solipsistic activities), without making the assumption that a subject's partaking in the form of social consciousness reflecting a structure of feeling is sufficient to install in her a like structure that will give authorship to her feelings.

I propose that in Williams's structure of feeling, the structure is composed of individuals in relations which are conceived as productive and semantic; thus it is a structure capable of producing meanings for those who inhabit or who 'internalise' it. I take this interpretation from the Marxian concept of structure which precisely specifies the 'economic structure of society' to be the 'totality' of the relations of production between men which their material powers make possible.³ Reading Williams accordingly, we could say that a structure

2. Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel (1993), *An Introduction to Logic*, Second Edition, ed. John Corcoran (Indianapolis: Hackett), 137–141.

3. 'In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite

of feeling is itself still at the level of relations of production at the base, but production relations that are not grounded in human beings' material powers merely, but in their semantic powers as language-users. By implicitly including semantic relations among the relations of production Williams effectively relocates the production of social consciousness from the superstructure to the base. Here, the abstract concept of structure readily adapts to provide Williams with an economy of consciousness that maintains individuals in relations of production through the exercise of their semantic powers. The structure holds individuals together in relations of meaning and communication within a shared social consciousness of forming, transforming, eliciting and communicating not only knowledge but feeling and experience. Hence, its semantic relations could be said also to provide an economy of affect through a social formation in which individuals are produced as social subjects with a con-forming affectivity. At this point in the exposition, the sociological-theoretical frame of Williams's Marxian thought does not accord more than a schematic place for the individual, who remains a feeling-undergoer.

So far then, a structure of feeling is one in which individuals are linked through—or placed in—semantic relations which produce feelings and so produce them as feeling subjects, individuals with affective experience; equivalently, so placed they are under-goers of experience which is felt as having meaning, and so is intelligible and able to enter thought. However, what is missing here is the feeling subject who is the possessor, and not just the under-goer of her feeling—the difference, as a semantic 'agent', between being a meaning-maker and not just a meaning-partaker within a social consciousness. Here we see

relations that are indispensable and independent of their will: these relations of production correspond to a definite state of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which legal and political superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production constitutes the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.' Karl Marx (1963 [1859]), 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. T. B. Bottomore, in T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (eds), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (London: Pelican), 67-68.

Williams, whether or not intentionally, intervening to alter the Marxian conception of structure by adapting it to accommodate the affective and experiential dimension of human life. When structures of feeling make themselves felt in individual experience as what Williams calls 'presence' we see a broader, affective and experience-near conception of nascent social consciousness, which stops just short of explicit subjectivity.

Within a structure of feeling, feelings are experienced by human beings in relations which produce them as social subjects; doctrinally, this is the production of a 'social consciousness'. But what is felt includes emotions, affects, and sensibilities, which may be intense and acute, and have motivational force as 'impulse' or 'restraint'; Williams writes of such feelings as 'specific qualitative changes' that are social 'changes of presence'.⁴ However, if 'presence' marks an immediate presentation of experience in individual consciousness, it is hard not to see an equivocation on Williams's part; blurring the difference between a socially shared or imposed experience, and one that is individually-lived cannot by itself move him on from a Marxian conception of the bourgeois individual.

To see how (or whether) a social consciousness arising within a structure of feeling produces not just a semantically equipped social agent who partakes of that consciousness, but a subject who thinks, feels, suffers, acts or struggles to act, both consciously and in ways that elude conscious apprehension, we will need to do more theoretical and empirical work. This is where the question about the usefulness of the idea of a structure of feeling comes together with the question of how to integrate psychoanalysis better into social science. However, rather than introduce psychoanalytic concepts into a psychosocial gap here, we should explore the idea of structure as a bridging concept. If different disciplines can use the idea of a structure of feeling, and if this can be extended to the individual-level activity of meaning-making, and if it can be shown in the different disciplines that what is transmitted is well described as such a structure, then an equivalence with phantasy, memory, imagining (and dreaming) can be posited. Williams writes that a structure of feeling emerges 'at the

4. Raymond Williams (1977), *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 131–132.

very edge of semantic availability' as an attempt to solve an impasse in collective affective thought; if successful it becomes a form of social consciousness.⁵ He shuns any reference to un-conscious thought as a place for such meaning-making, resorting instead to the metaphor of a precipitate coming out of solution. Separately from whether he in fact took any stand on the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious, certainly under discussion in Cambridge at the time, his reduction of the thinker to a product of structure removes individual thought as a starting point for understanding collective thought, whether conscious or unconscious.

Matt fytche notes that in much sociological theory the explanation of psychoanalytic theory and practice, and its theoretical concept of a dynamical imagination in particular, are incompatible with a sociological self-conception which has no role for the imagination beyond the merely cognitive.⁶ While not cognitivist, Williams's position is resolutely sociological and without the potential to accommodate the affectively valenced, intractably opaque, strategically coercive or rationally recalcitrant aspects of individual thinking with which psychoanalysis concerns itself. Nevertheless Williams does describe structures of feeling as dynamic and emergent, producing ongoing semantic change without full availability to consciousness. This encourages exploration of what a structure of feeling might offer, in a schematic way, as a place to articulate unconscious affects theoretically into the social world. However, considerable theoretical modification of Williams's Marxian structure-ism will be needed to open up a place for subjectivity and individual thought.

There are opportunities for this; Williams's structure of feeling is transitional, *en route* for an 'explicit' social formation or form of social consciousness, such as an ideology. In it the emerging semantic relations that link individuals are not yet explicitly understood by them. Williams comes close here to acknowledging unconscious thought; a structure of feeling has 'deep roots and origins' whence it articulates 'new semantic figures' in response to changes in society. It is social formation in *statu nascendi*, in which the affectivity of individuals

5. Ibid., 134.

6. Matt fytche, (2019), 'Real Fantasies: Reinserting the Imaginary in the Scene of Social Encounter', *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* 24: 394–412.

in a social class or group is elicited in response to their position and experience in the social structure.⁷ At times, too, the individual appears; in *Mary Barton*, Mrs Gaskell's 'sympathetic observation and [...] imaginative identification' enable her to write movingly of 'the sympathy and cooperative instinct which were already establishing a main working-class tradition'. But sympathy fails her when it comes to depicting a member of that class, 'an essentially good man driven to an appalling crime by loss, suffering and despair', as suffering an agony of conscience. Although this violence is against 'a man contemptuous of the sufferings of the poor', Williams sees Gaskell as constrained by a prevailing structure of feeling in which the necessitous poor are unconsciously feared as a threat to middle-class security, so that her ability to sustain a relation of sympathetic identification (itself) falls victim to the structure of feeling lying behind.⁸

In conclusion then, Williams's concept of a structure of feeling does provide a starting point from which to develop the idea of a structure of affective meaning-making at an individual level; one in which the affective relations individuals engage in as social subjects also engage their powers as individuals to think, deliberate, experience and act, as conscious reflective subjects and where room is left for the individual subject to make meaning for herself, unconsciously.

7. 'Early Victorian ideology, for example, specified the exposure caused by poverty or by debt or by illegitimacy as social failure or deviation; the contemporary structure of feeling, meanwhile, in the new semantic figures of Dickens, of Emily Bronte, and others, specified exposure and isolation as a general condition, and poverty, debt, or illegitimacy as its connecting instances.' Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 134.

8. Raymond Williams (1960), *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Anchor), 95.

STRUCTURES OF FEELING

A Curated Research Conversation

Edited by Dr. Niall Gildea

Question 1. Does 'structure of feeling' have application to psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic practice and theory?

Louise Gylter: I am interested in the transmission of trauma, and whether the structure of feeling might be too rigidly centred around meaningful transmission to capture what we might call the transmission of affective nonmeaning—those states that are inchoate, jumbled and muddled, that stir up anxiety and terror and paralysis in people. Do the social sciences have a language to describe that? How do we understand what gets transmitted in such cases? As psychoanalysts we can talk about emotions that get split off and projected and deposited elsewhere, but what is being transmitted is not affective meaning. I think it is something that is too confusing, doesn't carry any structure of meaning. How do we find a way of understanding those processes? It is partly a question of how to find ways of articulating and conceptualizing something about this transmission of something which is affective—which is basically unintelligible but yet has material impacts on individuals, societies and cultures. Attempts to find ways, to give expression to that, always seem to fall flat or have limits.

David Kaposi: I think the first question is 'What is psychoanalysis?' Psychoanalysis is concerned with truth and authenticity—but it is not philosophy. It is concerned with healing and alleviating suffering—but it is not medicine. I think psychoanalysis brings something radically novel inasmuch as it is emerging from a clinical encounter, and in that sense we might consider psychoanalysis itself as a structure of feeling—a liminal experience to do with process, to do with becoming, and to

do with the potential of stepping out of habitual patterns of behaviour. At the same time, though, psychoanalysis shows the limits of the structure of feeling as a concept, concerned as it is with phenomena such as affective nonmeaning, as Louise Gyler says, and even the destruction of meaning. The destruction of meaning is so prevalent in the clinical encounter, but so difficult to theorize outside it.

Steven Groarke: Can we talk about affective meaning or nonmeaning? I'm not sure. I would prefer to think of meaning which is either affect-laden or void of affect. Affect is always meaningless: it can get latched onto a meaning, it can find itself in a meaningful configuration, but affect is of a different order than meaning, it seems to me. Louise Gyler's point about the extrapolation of psychoanalysis to social reality is absolutely pertinent. I remain sceptical about that whole endeavour, even though it intrigues and fascinates me. I think that a lot rests on the idea of what we mean by enactment. Here we do need a theory of action and a theory of living in a Winnicottian sense: a theory of lived experience, so that life and action supplement the idea of the structure of feeling and of how the structures or forms in place have their impact and effects. Just how they're enacted or realized for the analyst is the question of how to do something with feeling in the countertransference. And the doing something with feeling is not the feeling; the doing something with the feeling may be a form, it may be a narrative, it may be some form of figuration, but it's not the feeling. One can do something with an affect, make it meaningful, or meaningless, but that's not the same thing as an affective meaning. I recall a patient who, typically, talked about her mother in such a way that she (the mother) came across as affectively dead. I missed any sense of the mother as a lively internal object in the patient's devitalised account. At one point, however, the patient came across a letter from her mother that she had completely 'forgotten' about; she had no memory of the contents of the letter, or of its existence. The sense of shock and bewilderment that she experienced in the session, having discovered the letter, provided something of the missing affect in the patient's typical way of speaking about her mother.

Jeffrey Murer: As a practice, psychoanalysis deals with that which is 'at the edge of semantic availability', and this becomes what you could call the passion for psychoanalysis: it gives us a way through thinking about

how to think about that of which we cannot speak. Although some philosophies may give a theoretical account of this, in psychoanalysis we have a very rich practice pertaining to engaging the preverbal, in Kleinian terms, or in our own psychoanalytic practice, engaging that which cannot be immediately articulated but which is profoundly felt.

Question II. Is a structure of feeling already social? Is there a place for the individual in a structure of feeling?

Matt ffytche: I am resistant to using this concept as a starting point for a dialogue with psychoanalysis, because it begins at a kind of double remove from psychology. Firstly, Williams's gateway to the presence of feeling is via literature and tradition—this is where he finds solidified traces of feeling. Secondly, he introduces 'structure of feeling' into a historical-materialist gap: he does not begin with feeling or experiential phenomena, but with a model of historical change, into which he insinuates the structure of feeling to account for the gap in which change emerges. That is, he begins with a very specific Marxian model of what goes on historically in transmission and how an existing epoch might transmit something new to an emergent one, and I find it difficult to get from there to the psychology of the individual.

Daria Martin: As an artist, I'm perhaps responding to the material in a more freely associative manner. I would begin with the question of whether the term 'structure' captures the fluidity of affect as it is outlined in the paper. Given that we're trying to step away slightly from Williams's relatively fixed Marxian ideas of base and superstructure, I wondered what kinds of metaphors we might use instead for the structure of the structure. The paper notes the exemplarity of certain authors for Williams's structure of feeling concept; and additionally we might wish to think about psychoanalysis's characteristic reliance on metaphors from dramatic structure (role playing, storylines, parts and so forth). I found this interesting, this shared falling back into narrative frameworks. Accordingly, I was searching for a metaphor for the structure of the structure, which perhaps takes affect more fully into account. I was wondering if we might come up with an image for this.

Sarath Jakka: One image you can take from mathematics is the fractal; can you have a fractal image of the social dimension of affect? There, you need to have the individual starting as the primary node of a network, but within the individual itself there are these transformations which are fractal-like. A related issue here is that of scale. I'm thinking for example of how in physics, atomic particles and Newton's theories seem tenable at one scale, but at another scale quantum mechanics seems more tenable. Analogously, we might think of a changing of shapes when considering a social formation at the different levels of the individual or the collective. Accordingly, the structure of feeling will look different at every scale.

David Russell: I think bringing up the idea of scale, as Jakka just has, is really important. What kinds of forms or responses are appropriate or fit with certain scales, and what kinds don't? I can think of the work of some anthropologists on that subject, in which there is a kind of imperialism of imposing the wrong scale at the wrong time on the wrong subject—which is very telling in itself.

Susanne Herrmann-Sinai: I read the paper as looking for a notion of structure whereby the role of the person or the subject embodying or enacting that structure is already part of understanding that structure, so that one cannot understand that structure if one is not enacting it. There is an analogy here with the role of the viewer of, say, a Caspar David Friedrich painting: you cannot read the structure of it without understanding your role as someone observing that painting.

Jeffrey Murer: In the clinical picture, I can think of instances where structural simplicity damagingly overwrites affective complexity. For example, in his paper, 'Confusion of the Tongues Between the Adults and the Child',¹ Ferenczi describes a kind of violence of subjectivity, whereby the traumatic experience of a child is actually denied by an abusive parent: the abusive parent says 'No, you're not experiencing trauma—what you're experiencing is love.' And yet clearly for Ferenczi, the child understands the disconnect, understands the anxiety of the traumatic experience of the sexual abuse inherent in this example. And there is a denial of the child's own subjectivity, in the sense that the

1. Sándor Ferenczi, 'Confusion of the Tongues Between the Adults and the Child', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30: 225–30.

parent is saying that the child is experiencing something that the child doesn't experience, imposing an intelligible structure which obscures the fuller affective picture. We might also think about Karl Figlio's work on absolute states of mind, where those who are suffering tremendous anxiety about their own identities are willing to forgo their own ego testing by the security of replacing that process of ego testing and reality testing with an already-structured ego ideal of the group, and are dependent upon the group's experience as a replacement for personal experience.

Steven Groarke: For Williams, the structure of feeling is a more fluid, emergent, open-ended formation or configuration than the idea of a social structure: we might think of it as *en route* to a social structure. But we might still question whether there's enough dynamism in the concept—whether it can get things moving in a manner that says something about emergence beyond familiar Marxian ideas of historical periodization and the development of ideologies, however much mileage these notions might still have. Nonetheless, Williams does raise in a way the question of the emergence of feeling or affect, and its status in terms of meaning or non-meaning.

Sarah Marks: As a historian of science, who looks at the sociology of scientific knowledge, I am very much aware of the limitations of a lot of sociological thinking. In Williams's case, there are things that he hints at, when discussing structures of feeling, which seem to be right on the edge of semantics, but he lacks a conceptual language which might take him further. However, for me that does not amount to a wholesale recommendation of psychoanalysis as a means of filling this gap: if, as Louise Braddock suggests in her work, we can learn a great deal about psychoanalysis by considering it in the context of Kant, Hegel, and German Romanticism, for example, then do we need psychoanalysis *per se*, or will its philosophical components suffice? On the other hand, I think that if we dwell a little more on psychoanalytic developments such as Wilfred Bion's object relations theory and Christopher Bollas's 'unthought known', we might find psychoanalysis's distinctive contributions to a discussion of structures of feeling.

Question III. How far do our disciplinary perspectives come together on 'structures of feeling' as a concept? Do we have a shared sense of how Williams's structures of feeling are 'structures'?

Susanne Herrmann-Sinai: One philosophical benefit of Williams's notion of structure is that it has two sides which are continuously in play. It is at once an object for analysis, and something which is actualized or enacted by individuals and groups. It seems that Williams wishes to emphasize the priority of this second facet, which explains its usefulness for the argument of the paper: this is a notion of structure, for which the enactment is crucial in order to understand it analytically. This seems to me something that I would like to explore further, as it points to a question of structure more general than Williams's delineation: this loaded notion of structure—as the name for something which human beings enact and then are able to reflect on to a degree—seems absolutely integral to the performances that are human interactions and even human lives. What I'm trying to understand is how such a notion of structure is crucial for the individual, whilst also carrying within it the loss or subsumption of the individual.

Jeffrey Murer: I agree with this, and also think something similar is still going on in Marxian thought, particularly the early Marx, for whom class is at once the analytic category and the lived experience of that category. It might be helpful to think of this as a kind of antecedent of the form which Williams's 'structure of feeling' takes.

Sarath Jakka: I'm reading Williams's structure of feeling almost as an oxymoron, implying a concept which is at once firm and definite—structure—but also delicate and less tangible – feeling. It recalls an Indian philosophical dyad, *Sthira* and *Sukha*: that which has permeability and that which has stability. Like a cell, it needs some stability (walls, for instance), but it also has to be able to be permeated by its environment to in some sense perpetuate itself. Looking at the concept this way perhaps helps us to get past Williams's ostensible Marxian neglect of the individual: in his essay 'Culture is Ordinary', he claims that 'the making of mind is, first, the slow learning of shapes, purposes, and meanings, so that work, observation and communication are possible. Then, second, but equal in importance, is the testing of these in experience, the making of new observations,

comparisons and meanings.² Williams suggests here that it is not a case of beginning with individual emotion, but that emotional valency is built into individuation itself, and that emotional valency creates the circumstances of individuation—an almost materialist account which can be mapped onto Williams’s understanding of class oppression.

Michael Uebel: Early in my career, reading Williams as a literary scholar, I found Terry Eagleton’s critique very persuasive. Eagleton argues—and this is similar in a way to what Sarath Jakka was suggesting—that there is an oxymoronic relation between ‘structure’ and ‘feeling’. Eagleton argues that this calculated tension between the terms is a mark of the limits of Williams’s thought when it comes to reaching beyond some notion of a feeling complex to some notion of a feeling *structure*: there isn’t a theoretical way that Williams can specify the precise articulations of that structure. So Eagleton concludes that structure in Williams ‘is, accordingly, reduced to the status of mere pattern.’³

David Russell: I was looking back to Williams’s very first mention of the structure of feeling, in *Preface to Film* (co-authored with Michael Orom), where he defines it as ‘deeply embedded in our lives; it cannot merely be extracted and summarized; it is perhaps only in art—and this is the importance of art—that it can be realized, and communicated, as a whole experience.’⁴ Williams suggests that there is something happening in the cultural realm that could not be expressed propositionally or in logical terms. I think there is an important intersection with psychoanalytic interests here, concerning what makes a communication be experienced as meaningful. Williams’s Leavisite connections between the quality of the literary and the quality of life—of what enlivens—recall Blackmur’s famous statement that poetry or the arts should ‘add to the stock of available reality.’⁵ Williams seems to be asking how this process might happen, which seems to

2. Raymond Williams, ‘Culture is Ordinary’, Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. Robin Gable (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 4.

3. Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 34.

4. Williams, ‘Film and the Dramatic Tradition’, Williams and Michael Orom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954), 54.

5. R. P. Blackmur, *Form and Value in Modern Poetry* (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1957), 337.

me to suggest an important shared interest between the history of literary criticism and the history of psychoanalysis.

Matt fytche: The 'structure of feeling' concept may be useful as a means of analysing the intellectual development of an institution such as psychoanalysis itself. For instance, might we consider the move away from the Freudian patriarchal assumptions early in the twentieth century to the reparative welfare model of British psychoanalysis after the Second World War as a shift in the structure of feeling within psychoanalysis? Similarly, does the re-centring of trauma in late 1980s and 1990s psychoanalytic theory constitute another such shift?

Michael Uebel: I really appreciate David Russell's turn to the literary as it informs Williams's project, and reading the paper I was sent back to Williams's book *The Long Revolution* (1961). What he says there about what a structure of feeling is⁶ really raises a larger concern for Louise Braddock's project: that the idea of the structure of feeling is one with which Williams was grappling for almost forty years, and it changes, develops and evolves in interesting ways. I think that has to be taken into account, and speaks to what the paper indicates when it states that 'considerable theoretical modification of Williams's Marxian structure-ism will be needed to open up a place for subjectivity and individual thought.' I agree with that, and would add that Williams himself is in the process always of modifying his own Marxian structure-ism.

Question IV. Is the 'structure of feeling' of interest for psychoanalytic understanding of intergenerational transmission and trauma?

David Kaposi: The paper dealt with a fundamental question to do

6. 'In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation. And it is in this respect that the arts of a period, taking these to include characteristic approaches and tones in argument, are of major importance. For here, if anywhere, this characteristic is likely to be expressed; often not consciously, but by the fact that here, in the only examples we have of recorded communication that outlives its bearers, the actual living sense, the deep community that makes the communication possible, is naturally drawn upon.' Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Pelican, 1965), 64-65.

with the structure of feeling concept: whether it allows us to think of individuals as meaning-makers and possessors of feelings, as opposed to simply partakers of meaning. The fundamental issue here is one of freedom. However, for three reasons I find myself more optimistic than the paper appears to be about whether the structure of feeling might help us to think about freedom. The first is that 'structure of feeling' is actually a misnomer, as it describes a process rather than a structure—a process of becoming, of something in the making, of novelty, which is important to Williams's phrase, 'at the edge of semantic availability'. The second is the insight that what is transmitted in structures of feeling is not a closed content, but what we might term affective meaning; again, I think that this involves an overall orientation, a way of becoming, or, again, a process of sorts—which opens things up toward active meaning-making, rather than a passive endurance of meaning transmission. The third is that an act of transmission involves an act of construction: affective meaning is not just imposed, but interacts with other sources of affective meaning. This interactivity makes the outcome uncertain, in a potentially productive manner. What these three points have in common is that they draw out the ways in which the 'in-between' of transmission itself is not just simply being passed over, but becomes an important site of production.

Michael Uebel: Part of the question here is: what is necessary for transmission? What do we need for the exchange of affect to work between two parties, whether it be an individual and a social body, or two individuals? One answer might be that there has to be some level of unconscious agreement. To Sarah Marks's question 'Why psychoanalysis?' I might therefore respond, 'Why Williams?' It seemed self-evident to me that psychoanalysis would be important here, because of this question of unconscious agreement, and what psychoanalysis shows us about the outcomes of such agreements being broken. Williams, on the other hand, does not really seem to reckon with the unconscious: for example, he commends Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* for its flexibility and suitability for a consideration of practical consciousness, but criticizes Bourdieu's suggestion that it operates unconsciously.

Daria Martin: I can give a personal case study here from my recent film-making, which has to do with transmission and trauma, but also

this relationship between meaning-making and meaning-partaking. I recently made a film which reconstructed my grandmother's dreams in her childhood home in Brno, which she had fled as a teenager in 1938, just prior to the Nazi invasion. She and her Jewish family left initially for England, and eventually for California, where I was born. My grandmother left behind a dream diary archive of twenty thousand pages; a few years ago I selected from this diary five dreams about her childhood home, to which she never physically returned after this traumatic rupture of having to depart in those circumstances, but to which she returned repeatedly in dreams. I restaged these dreams in her childhood home, attempting to reinvest them with both meaning and feeling. While I was doing this I was thinking about transgenerational trauma transmission and Vamik Volkan's idea of deposited images, in which the parent draws from a reserve of conscious and unconscious images, depositing these into the unconscious of the child. I related to this because I felt that I had received images from my grandmother, so that when I was reading her diaries I was consciously seeking out dreams which resonated with me, which spoke to what you might describe as a structure or image inside myself.

Jeffrey Murer: As a kind of social consciousness, the structure of feeling can be used in pursuit of an elaborated thinking of the other. We often think of the self and the other, but what happens when we add to that dynamic the group self in which both self and other play some part, so that we might think of the self, the group self, and then the other? This might help with the process, outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, of stepping out of habitual ways of thinking, of articulating desire, and even of feeling? This last—the idea of habitual ways of feeling—are those social processes which tell us the meaning of our feelings, irrespective of how we are feeling them, like the abusive parent in Ferenczi's 'Confusion of Tongues'.

Daria Martin: What's interesting about the process as a case study is that it begins with an enormous collective event—the Holocaust—moves through the individual psyche of my grandmother and her diaries, comes through to myself as deposited images and through readings of the diaries, and finally emerges back into the public via utterly different kinds of collective event, including exhibitions and

the collaborative process of film-making itself. Following what Louise Gyler said, I am also thinking about what the process is by which what is inchoate is transmitted transgenerationally. But, furthermore, what is the process by which one then may transmit *that* again onward, potentially re-traumatizing the next generation and passing down more undigested chaos and dissociation? Or how might someone—as I have tried to do with this film—find the form and meaning for this inchoate material, and transmit it in this way?

EMERGENT AND RESIDUAL ELEMENTS IN U.S. WHITE SUPREMACY

Professor Christopher Newfield

ISRF Director of Research

My first approach to this topic was an analysis of the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020.¹ Police killings of civilians, above all of Black Americans, are a despicable, familiar feature of U.S. history. Yet rather than generating disgusted resignation, Floyd's killing produced the most extensive mass demonstrations in the history of the United States.² The demonstrations—uprisings is a better word—were driven by a complex of feelings that varyingly mixed rage, disgust, disbelief, solidarity, hope, criticality, and a determination to make fundamental change. Some commentators on Raymond Williams' term *structure of feeling* have noted that the word *structure* doesn't capture the fluidity of affective mixtures. But it does get at the systemic nature and constitutive power of affects of the kinds mobilized in 2020's Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

This second essay was also inspired by reading materials and attending a meeting of a research group convened by Louise Braddock. The work of Braddock and her colleagues encouraged me to press further on the question, does Williams' term reveal hidden or surprising aspects of this racial history and mass outrage? I think so. I'll use it to address two burning issues with BLM and other social movements. First, what is new or emergent in a sudden mobilization that looks ahead, and what is a minor shift in the dominant? Second, what prevents the emergent from displacing the dominant formation to which it claims to be an alternative?

1. See Christopher Newfield, "How Do We Stop Calling the Police?", at <https://www.isrf.org/2020/08/03/how-do-we-stop-calling-the-police/>.

2. See www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/06/06/floyd-protests-are-broadest-us-history-are-spreading-white-small-town-america/.

In the U.S., racial equality has been a “new” state concept in partial and contested emergence for at least a hundred and fifty years. Much of the 2020 movement’s anger was provoked by the failure of the country to accept as dominant the norms of racial equity that were formally enacted in constitutional changes in the 1860s, and to relegate them to the always-about-to-emerge. I take Williams’ claim to be that these three qualities—*residual*, *dominant*, and *emergent*—can only be told one from the other by analyzing structures of feeling, not through analysis of discursive content or social structures as such. Distinguishing them is an essential step toward understanding the emergence of new social experience, and also its failure to emerge out of some non-social condition, sometimes for centuries.

1

Structure of feeling is a provisional synthesis of other major terms explored by the ten chapters of Part II of Williams’ *Marxism and Literature* (1977), entitled “Cultural Theory.” Among the claims most relevant to us, Williams prefers *hegemony* to *ideology* as a model for socio-cultural processes (Chapter 6), defines formations as “conscious movements and tendencies” that go well beyond the formalizations of institutions (Chapter 7), and distinguishes the emergent element from the dominant and the residual (Chapter 8). In all cases, Williams denies that we can grant the ontological or causal priority of economic and social forces over culture and psychology. He regards economics and culture anti-dualistically, rejecting the view of culture as the superstructure to the economy’s base. He sees these realms as constituting each other and continuously interacting. He also insists that “unresolved conflicts” typify all formations: hegemony, defined as one group’s effective control over others, operates with and through these internal conflicts. “The true condition of hegemony is effective self-identification with the hegemonic forms”—an identification that crosses over conflicts, because there is never an absence of internal contestation and diverging views.³

With these three terms, *dominant*, *residual*, and *emergent*, Williams tries to stay close to their ordinary senses. *Residual* elements come

3. Raymond Williams (1977), *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 118.

from a culture's past but unlike *archaic* forms they are still "active in the cultural process."⁴ *Dominant* means what you'd expect—the accepted mainstream, or widely assumed conventional wisdom that you may or may not like, but which you and most people agree defines cultural reality.

Emergent also has a familiar meaning: "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship" as they constantly arise.⁵ But Williams insists that this is much trickier than at first appears. In practice it is hard to distinguish the truly "emergent" from "some new phase of the dominant culture" through which it will carry on more or less as it has. How do we know whether the emerging element is "alternative or oppositional to the dominant elements", rather than an extension of the dominant?⁶

Williams accepts the longstanding Marxian strategy of tracing truly emergent cultural elements to a new class—with major qualifications that upend the use of economic class as a base. The BLM movement offers a good illustration of the limits of that strategy as Williams identifies them. Emerging elements are mixed with dominant and residual elements, mingle economic, racial, gender, and other identities, are developed unevenly and incompletely, and are themselves always in the process of (re)forming the new class itself. This was true even in the paradigmatic case of the emerging capitalist working class of the early 19th century, and it certainly applies to the complex Black Lives Matter movement.

BLM was developed in 2013 by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi—and then a host of others—in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a private citizen who shot Black teenager Trayvon Martin while he was returning home from a shop. BLM has been pointedly intersectional⁷ in its anti-racism, and also social-democratic. After the killing of Floyd, the BLM framework helped put debates about systemic racism back on the editorial pages of daily newspapers, for it treated ongoing police killings of Black people as symptoms

4. Ibid., 122.

5. Ibid., 123.

6. Ibid., 124.

7. See <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>.

of an entrenched social system. It helped direct outrage at policing as an institution, at the poverty of the public services that police budgets help to starve, at the state-sanctioned subordination of Black Americans in U.S. history, at structural underinvestment in Black (and Latinx) neighborhoods, at entrenched disparities in housing, schools, transportation, and health care, and racial capitalism as such, including its structural inequalities of wealth and income. In short, BLM is a complex mixture of people, goals, and analyses of root causes that links race, class, and gender analyses among many others in a way that Williams would have considered typical of a cultural formation.

With this in mind, one could then attempt a comprehensive descriptive sociology of BLM culture. This kind of work has real value. But it doesn't generally capture Williams' core interest in the lived experience of a structure that expresses itself both as culture in the sense of poetry, music, oratory, etc. and culture as multiple and contested narratives of lived experience.

The BLM movement was surrounded by such narratives, and I'll simplify them into three.

(1) The United States is the great success story among world nations, both the mightiest and the most righteous. Exemplifying the Christian, free-enterprise, and republican values of the West, it has always cleansed itself of systemic evil. Its righteousness expresses itself in family life, churches, business, and law and order in the public realm. It has overcome the racism of a bygone era through color-blind legal and social policy. Racial discrimination is now a rare aberration that is best handled by ignoring race. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others are regrettable, but reflect mistakes on the part of individual police officers. The claim that American policing is systemically abusive, racist, and murderous is false. Worse than that, it reflects a leftist assault on the mainstream values that made the country great and are making it great again. Black Lives Matter is a Trojan horse for welfarism and socialism and other trends that seek to tear down what normal citizens, like successful, affluent white suburbanites, have earned through their own hard work and family values. The best response to the BLM so-called movement is "all lives matter," coupled with vigilant discrediting of radical left slandering of America, coupled

with more rather than less policing of the streets.

(2) The United States is the great success story among world nations, but like all great things it has major flaws. Its history of pluralism, good government, strong business, and republican values has been plagued by racism in many forms. It has overcome racism in the past—abolishing slavery and controlling incursions into Native territory, then ending legal segregation with the sweeping civil rights legislation of the 1960s. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others are not only regrettable, but reflect racial bias in policing—and in other domains such as housing, education, and health care. The police must be structurally and not just cosmetically reformed. They should not be defunded, but their conduct should be reformed in keeping with the best of dominant American values. Some share of police budgets may be transferred to after-school programs, expanded school funding, mental and other forms of health care, and job training, as long as it does not undermine policing functions.

(3) The United States' belief in its own greatness has blinded it to its inherent flaws. Its wealth and power flow directly from and are dependent on racism, which constitutes and shapes every major national practice. Its early economic development flowed in large part from two sources: expropriation of Native lands on a continental scale, and slave labor. When chattel slavery was outlawed, westward expropriation continued for many decades, and the ideology of white supremacy legitimized hyper-exploitative labor regimes such as sharecropping and prison labor. Black and Native subjection was enforced with forms of domestic terrorism, particularly lynching, and by legalized racial segregation. American capitalism was always and everywhere racial capitalism, and this continues to be the case. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others are not only regrettable, but reflect the roots of US policing in slave patrols and other forms of state violence against people of color, which in turn enable an extremely unequal and racialized accumulation of wealth. The best response to BLM is to de-fund the police, converting all of its police funding to a spectrum of social services that include completely demilitarized community protectors. The desirable outcome of the BLM movement is something like a Third Reconstruction, a fundamental transformation of U.S. society that achieves full racial

equality and justice.

With these three narratives in mind, how can we answer the questions I posed at the start: how do movements make the emergent stick, and displace the dominant and residual narratives?

It's tempting to start by aligning the narratives with the Right, Center and Left on the political spectrum. Certainly Donald Trump espoused the first, and his opponent in the 2020 election, Joe Biden, espoused the second. BLM is a coalition of the third and second narratives, with the movement's "Narrative 2" members returning to non-activist electoral politics as the summer progressed. Trump sought to frame the protests as Antifa besieging the innocent suburbs; the mainstream generally rejected this as a residue of 1950s or 1960s white right-wing thought, even though espoused by a sitting president. In his turn, Biden affirmed his centrist legitimacy by saying he would never defund the police. The Left, on its side, has inspired a renaissance of social research on the collaboration of the sponsors of the first two narratives, the anti-civil rights Right and the liberal center, in restricting reform in policing, housing, and education and maintaining racial inequality throughout the 20th century and beyond. We might then be inclined to answer our questions by saying the Right is the past, the center is the stagnant and unsatisfactory present and the Left is the herald of things to come. So the Left narrative, as the emergent, must build a political force strong enough to overcome the other two.

2

But this is how Williams' cultural theory does *not* work. Cultural and political change emerge from lived experiences—inward and individual, but still social. Political narratives like those above falsify these. They create an artificial internal consistency. They ignore the fact that all narratives mingle residual, dominant, and emergent elements: they are never just one or another. Above all, such narratives ignore the fact that change is tied specifically to "the experiences to which the fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize".⁸

8. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 130.

To put it another way, emergent elements are always tied to the *pre-emergent*. This is a difficult term—associated with art and imagination—that Williams summarizes as the ending to Chapter 8:

What matters, finally, in understanding emergent culture, as distinct from both the dominant and the residual, is that it is never only a matter of immediate practice; indeed it depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of form. Again and again what we have to observe is in effect a *pre-emergence*, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named. It is to understand more closely this condition of pre-emergence as well as the more evident forms of the emergent, the residual, and the dominant, that we need to explore the concept of structures of feeling.⁹

Emergent elements cannot be understood apart from pre-emergent elements, which appear as intimations, pressures, impressions, intuitions, sentiments, attachments, or feelings. They are not embodied in coherent language. In the structure of feeling chapter to which this passage leads, Williams insists that the pre-emergent / emergent is “not silence; not the absence, the unconscious, which bourgeois culture has mythicized. It is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange.”¹⁰ In another metaphor, Williams later says that *structures of feeling* refers to “social experiences in solution,” where they are not quite stated, acknowledged, or seen. He contrasts this with concepts that are knowable and expressible because they are already “precipitated” into public discourse as sets of attitudes or values or as political narratives.¹¹ Terms invoked by other authors in this Bulletin refer to something like these experiences in solution—“affective non meaning,” and the “unthought known.”

People experience structures of feeling as social rather than personal experiences in two senses that Williams identifies: they “exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action” without

9. Ibid., 126–127.

10. Ibid., 131.

11. Ibid., 133–134.

yet being defined; and they are “changes of presence.”¹² The latter is a difficult term that here I’ll simplify as referring to an active experience that undergoes some kind of qualitative shift, a shift that can be felt but not necessarily described or explained even as it seems tied to collective life.

Political theory often alludes to collective mental states that seem good candidates for structures of feeling. White supremacy is an important example. Economically and regionally disparate white voters would seem to come together around the sense that Donald Trump would restore a status that Democratic governments had been giving away to racial minorities; the public feeling would be to see the (racial) “Other as he who essentially steals my own enjoyment.”¹³ They would vote for Trump because he would recover their enjoyment (affluence, automatic preeminence) from Black and brown people.

But again, this is not what Williams means by structures of feeling. Resentful white entitlement is not emergent in the strict sense that emergent elements are always tied to inchoate pre-emergent experiences that cannot be named.

It’s important to see at this point that residual and dominant formations *also* have emergent elements. These are sources of vitality and affective power. Trump was an opportunity for a formation that felt itself relegated to residual status to reaffirm itself as dominant again by accessing feelings that felt emergent, unchained, released from bondage to orthodoxy. This feeling—the minority other has stolen my birthright—then supports a coalitional white supremacism that includes overt racists as well as whites who formally oppose discrimination but take their economic superiority and social insularity as natural and good.

At this second stage in our argument, we seem on the verge of answering the questions with which we began. What is new or emergent in a sudden mobilization, as opposed to residual or to a minor shift in the dominant? For the political Right, it was their affective

12. Ibid., 132.

13. Cited in Slavoj Žižek (1990), “Eastern Europe’s Republics of Gilead,” *New Left Review* 1(183), 54.

response to Black people now in charge (Obama), which meant Black people took things away from whites while attacking America (BLM). What prevents the (Left) emergent from displacing the dominant formation to which it claims to be an alternative? It is the emergent element within the residual culture of Trump's base as it strives for dominance. It generates an affective power that keeps the base in a state of permanent mobilization on the political Right.

3

But once again, we've made a mistake in our cultural analysis. Not in the answer to the second question—I do think residual and dominant formations can (re)mobilize themselves by tapping into structures of feeling they define as emergent. But as to the first question, when I invoke white racial resentment toward economically and politically weaker Black Americans, I'm invoking a conscious, powerful "precipitated," belief system that is not emergent. A properly emergent element, to repeat the stricture, is tied to a pre-emergent element that is neither fully articulable nor avowable. Thus we can't *equate* the right-wing emergent element with a manifest authoritarian racism.

I'll go back to the George Floyd killing to try to identify an important pre-emergent element. The visual record of his death at the hands of the police consists of cell phone and small shop security footage.¹⁴ The episode began with Floyd and a friend making a purchase in a Cup Foods convenience store in Minneapolis, allegedly using a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. At 7:55 pm, three young Cup Foods employees approach a small SUV parked at the curb. One of the three talks to the driver. He is a man wearing a white shirt and black shorts and is identified as the store owner's nephew. George Floyd is not doing a runner: his car stays parked at the curb. At 8:01, apparently before the conversation is over, the city's 911 emergency call system records a complaint of bill forgery coming from the Cup Foods shop.¹⁵ It's the call that sets Floyd's murder in motion, which this first conversation had not.

14. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/05/30/video-timeline-george-floyd-death/?arc404=true>.

15. See <https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2020/05/28/george-floyd-store-owner-staff-call-police-ctn-sot-vpx.cnn>.

Two police cruisers arrive, one at 8:08, with the rookie cops, and the second, at 8:17, with the veteran officers Derek Chauvin and his partner, Tou Thao, both with documented histories of violence. By 8:25, multiple bystanders are confronting the officers with Floyd's condition: "No, look at him, bro. He's not responsive right now, bro," one young man says to the officers at least twice.

At 8:27, the Cup Foods nephew suddenly reappears in the frame. Another onlooker tells him to get back in the store, and the nephew replies, "I'm here to help you all out." The onlooker replies, "you don't need to help me out, bro. I know your parents. I know everybody that owns that store. You don't need to help me the fuck out, bro." The nephew then makes a rush toward Floyd, but is shoved hard backwards, twice, by Officer Thao. The nephew gives up and drifts to the rear of the crowd. Three minutes later, Floyd is in the ambulance, where medics try in vain to revive him.

A key issue appears in the hostility of the onlooker toward the Cup Foods nephew: calling the police over a bad twenty was an unforgivable stupidity. The staff knew they were calling the police on two Black male customers. They must have known something about police treatment of the Black community in the area. (As one example, they could hardly have missed the killing of Philandro Castile in 2016 during a traffic stop in a nearby suburb, which had achieved international infamy.) The Cup Foods staff didn't think about Floyd as a (racialized) peer, as one of them. They didn't think about him democratically.

By *democratic* I don't refer to procedures of electoral representation but to changing affects of egalitarian interaction across conflict. The democratic affect might have expressed itself as an articulated sense that "We can work something out with these guys on our own." Since Floyd was parked at the curb and in no hurry to leave, they could have started by finding out if he even knew the bill was counterfeit: the first victim of forgery might have been Floyd himself. They could have negotiated a later payment, or taken his license plate, found out where he lived and sent him a letter asking him to pay up. They could have asked him for a real twenty if he came in again or if they saw him on the street. Most obviously, they could have just let it go.

As I read it from a distance, the choice to call the police reflected two elements, one both residual and dominant and the other closer to what Williams means by emergent, which can be unveiled through the study of its structure of feeling. The residual-dominant element is an anti-Black racism that normalized calling the police on a customer who was still in the process of discussing the incident with Cup Foods staff. Then, attending to structures of feeling allows us to find a recessive, pre-emergent element, one appearing though not explicitly stated in the phrase, "you don't need to help me out, bro." The onlooker has identified (in negating) the Cup Foods' anti-democratic element, that people cannot work out differences on their own, especially across the charged social line of race. This structure allowed Cup Foods employees to feel that the conflict entitled, even required, them to call the police.

Simplistically defined, a democratic structure of feeling means a not very articulable sense of the ongoing possibility of successful engagement with divergent others by treating them as equals. It assumes conflict among the parties. It doesn't make race consciousness or racial anxiety or contempt or mistrust go away. It works through and with these to make unnecessary routing of one's relationships through a superior authority when those relationships become conflictual.

Whatever people say about the official U.S. democratic creed, the country has a scarcity of democratic intuition. The Cup Foods response is an example of a lengthy U.S. history of using interpersonal coercion to resolve everyday conflicts as well as define the borders of the nation and the nature of its economy. The historian Khalil Muhammad again had to explain that in the aftermath of slavery, "all expressions of black freedom, political rights, economic rights, and social rights [became] subject to criminal sanction."¹⁶ In such a society, normal social relations involve the majority treating other residents as objects of subjugation and control. This poses enormous problems for the functioning of public institutions. The historian Elizabeth Hilton again chronicled the decline of 1960s and 1970s community programs as their ethics of "maximum feasible participation," sustained in the immediate aftermath

16. See <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/6/21280643/police-brutality-violence-protests-racism-khalil-muhammad>.

of protests, was soon replaced with top-down bureaucracies.¹⁷ The U.S. is full of brilliant organizers and tireless, effective activist groups: current demands for police abolition flow largely from the work, to stick with Minneapolis, of local Black Lives Matter chapters, Reclaim the Block, MPD150,¹⁸ and Black Visions Collective, among others. But like anyone else, activists can replace dysfunctional top-down systems only if they can maintain the group-psychological preconditions of non-coercive responses to social needs. Transformed social policy requires that democratic intuitions about private and public life be a presence on the ground. When democratic intuitions are absent, communities cannot sustain sanctuary spaces and other forms of non-state settlement that distribute needed resources.¹⁹

My claim here is that the emergent element that animates residual-dominant anti-Black racism is an unspeakable comfort in (white) U.S. culture with coercive and hierarchical everyday relations—a preference for them as the lesser of two evils when compared to face-to-face democracy.

4

I'll conclude by making one more connection between this emergent element—a hostility to democratic everyday life—and a pre-emergent element. Emergent does not mean new: as I noted before, experiences or ideals can remain in a state of varying emergence for centuries. "Pre-emergent" in Williams doesn't mean "even newer than the emergent." I will invoke a structure that was established in 19th century (white, middle) class feeling in the U.S. It is likely to come into play when this middle-class status feels threatened, as has been increasingly the case for several decades.

Years ago, when I started doctoral study, one of my main questions was whether U.S. culture was as readily authoritarian as it was democratic. It seemed to be, and I wanted to understand why. Why hadn't the U.S.

17. See <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/opinion/george-floyd-protests-1960s.html>.

18. <https://www.mpd150.com/report/overview/>.

19. See also <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2020/06/minneapolis-sheraton-george-floyd-protests/>.

been able to abolish slavery without a Civil War? Why did post-Civil War naturalizations of racial inequality spread so easily for another hundred years, throughout the North as well as the South? Why does de facto segregation still structure U.S. society?

My initial answer arose from reading of one of the U.S.'s most canonical authors, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in which I linked him to the racial and the economic thinking of his time.²⁰ Williams treats literature as a site in which emergent elements are particularly likely to be in play, and I brought that assumption to my reading of Emerson's literary essays. I was drawn to him initially because he was preoccupied with something like my issue—the political-psychological-theological problem of submission to authority in what was supposed to be a democracy. But I became convinced that the standard reading of him as democratic individualist only scratched the surface of his writing.

Though self-reliance was a continuous theme, I came to believe that he tied individuality to the absence of democracy rather than its presence. I argued that for his people—these being the educated, liberal Christian, white middle-classes—he developed a compound psychology that I called “submissive individualism.” Self-reliance was the envelope, but the contents consisted of a deference to authority whenever that presented itself as both higher and natural. Long story short, Emerson elaborated and sanctified a submissive individualism that encouraged the white middle-classes to compete with other individuals while simultaneously submitting themselves to established rules. In the midst of all this competing and deferring, there was no collective agency, or what could be called democratic psychology. This enabled both a corporate economy and permanent racial hierarchy.

I see submissive individualism as the pre / re-emergent element in the efforts of right-wing whites to restore the residual white-dominant order. It heads off the apparent danger of multi-racial democracy and Black equality while allowing all sorts of self-assertive parading around.

We often tie white racism to aggressive individualism, picturing scenes like the men toting assault rifles in military formation inside

20. See Christopher Newfield (1996), *The Emerson Effect: Individualism and Submission in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

the Michigan state capitol.²¹ This is actually an example of submissive individualism. The belief behind those guns is that a strongman president had authorized their revolt against public health rules. In standing against the female governor and health professionals, they were submitting to and getting sanctioned by the president's higher authority.

Similarly, the loyalty of evangelical Christian leaders to the plainly impious Trump lies in large part in their shared norms of submission to fatherly leaders. Trump believes that authoritarian responses to social challenges is the great American tradition, typified by his call on governors to "dominate the streets,"²² or by his ally Senator Tom Cotton's demand that Trump send the U.S. Army to the cities in an "overwhelming show of force."²³ These calls are animated by a pre-emergent element, a desire to submit to full and certain authority.

The George Floyd protests reflected a popular belief that U.S. society and politics must change at the root. The provisioning of protection, housing, health, transportation, water, power, broadband, food, and education would then be reconstructed together. Many citizens of other countries seem to feel similarly, particularly about the need to make social standing equal across racial lines. But these feelings are repeatedly repressed, in both the political and the psychological senses.

Over the long haul that the U.S. and other societies now face, social reconstructions will succeed only if the majority culture undoes a paired practice and feeling—undoes the practice of systemic racial inequality, and also the anti-democratic feeling that public life requires submission to authority. Williams' concept of the structure of feeling helps us focus on the future benefits of making both elements explicit.

21. See for example <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/30/michigan-protests-coronavirus-lockdown-armed-capitol>.

22. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-minneapolis-police-protests-trump/trump-suggests-governors-call-in-national-guard-to-dominate-the-streets-idUSKBN23C258>.

23. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/opinion/tom-cotton-protests-military.html>.

This issue features:

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Sarath Jakka

David Kaposi

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