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The Role of Phantasy in Relation to the Socially Innovative Potential of Filmic Experience

Abstract:

The aim of my essay is to distinguish the aspects of the filmic experience that are decisive in relation to the film's capability to sensitize the viewer to social issues in Williams's sociology of culture. In order to do that, I will take into consideration Williams's understanding of film as a particular medium that is connected with the general dramatic tradition and is able to realize a *total expression* of the *structure of feeling* rooted in every aspect of community life. On the basis of Williams's understanding of film, I will analyze the film's potential for social innovation from the standpoint of the viewing subject. In the later part of my essay, I will argue that the filmic experience's capability to promote phantasies is a decisive element in relation to the expressive power of the film. I will analyze the role of phantasy in relation to the socially innovative potential of film in the accounts of the filmic experience provided both by Williams and by other authors that follow in Williams's footstep by conceiving the filmic *flow* as a *gaze* located outside the viewer. Finally, I will draw my conclusions concerning the elements of the filmic experience that are decisive in relation to the film's potential for social innovation.

Keywords:

Raymond Williams, film, structure of feeling, total performance, flow, fourth look, phantasy

Introduction[1]

Williams attributes a socially innovative potential to film technology in "Cinema and Socialism."[2] According to Williams, "once constructive cutting and montage had become common techniques, this penetrative inter-action of reproduction could be seized on as a modernism, even a revolutionary modernism."[3] In the context of the socialist circles that Williams attended during his years as a student at the University of Cambridge in the 1930s,[4] "it was usual to say that montage and dialectic were closely related forms of the same revolutionary movement of thought" (CS, 113). In other words, "new concept…. could be formed by the planned interaction of images."[5] The power "to associate and combine different movements within an apparently single sequence" (CS, 112) by "cutting and editing film itself" (CS, 112) makes possible "many new kinds of synthesis" (CS, 112), and offered "quite new dimensions of represented action" (CS, 112). In light of this socially innovative potential attributed by Williams to film editing, my essay focuses on the viewer's watching experience. The aim of my essay is to distinguish the aspects of the filmic experience that are decisive in relation to the film's capability to sensitize the viewer to social issues. In other words, I will analyze the film's potential for social innovation from the standpoint of the viewing subject's psyche.

I will divide my essay into three sections. Since the film is conceived by Williams as a form of drama, I will account for the way in which Williams understands the evolution of the expressive conventions throughout the dramatic history in the first section of my essay. In the second, I will expose Williams's understanding of film. I will focus my exposition on Williams's account of the film's capability to express the *structure of feeling* that is rooted in every aspect of community life. In the third section, I will analyze the filmic experience from the viewer's point of view. In order to do that, I will make a comparison between Williams's understanding of film editing as a *flow* and Lacan's concept of *gaze* as an externally located look that "enables the subject to imagine its own unified identity."[6] Finally, I will emphasize some significant analogies between Williams's concept of *flow* and the analyses of filmic experience provided by Laura Mulvey and Lesley Stern.

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2)   With regard to the subject of the social impact of film, see Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" of 1935, Barjavel's *Cinéma total* of 1944, Edgar Morin's *The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man* of 1956, Gilles Deleuze's *Cinéma 1* of 1983, and Gilles Deleuze's *Cinéma 2* of 1985. For an account of cinema as a factor of mutation of daily life between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, see George Simmel's *The Metropolis and Mental Life* of 1903.

3)   Williams, "Cinema and Socialism," 113. Hereafter referred to in text as CS along with page number.

4)   The viewing of some classic silent films, such as Robert Weine's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* or Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, was a necessary prerequisite for admission to the socialist circles frequented by Williams in the 1930s (Raymond Williams, *Il Dottor Caligari a Cambridge*, 17. Hereafter referred as DCC followed by page number. This text includes the Italian edition of Raymond Williams, "Film and the Dramatic Tradition," originally in *Preface to Film*, 1–55).

5)   Williams's understanding of cutting and montage was influenced by his reading of the writings by Pudovkin, Eisenstein and some exponents of the German expressionist cinema (DCC, 16).

6)   Dix, *After Raymond Williams*, chap. 5. Kindle. Hereafter referred to as ARW followed by chapter number.

I. The Evolution of the Expressive Conventions throughout the Dramatic History

In his "Film and the Dramatic Tradition" Williams defines the film as a particular medium within the general drama tradition.[7] Being a recorded and definitive product, film allows for and offers different and entirely new conditions for performance (DCC, 17). Most film theorists and critics have overlooked this connection of the film with the general dramatic tradition and the literary tradition (DCC, 17). Most people, in fact, trace back their idea of the dramatic to the kind of play they are accustomed to (DCC, 18). However, the difference between a film and a play lies exclusively in methods (DCC, 18). The fact that the methods and the conventions of the film have a peculiarity of their own, in relation to other types of dramatic performances, does not prevent the full recognition of the position of this medium in the general dramatic tradition (DCC, 18).

Williams criticizes any use of names or definitions to express the drama's essence. Any definition of drama through a formula can consist of key words, or useful generalizations for a certain amount of works (DCC, 19). However, it is very dangerous to attribute to these formulas the capacity of expressing drama's essence (DCC, 19–20). By doing so, in fact, the meaning of absolute object is attributed to the term "drama": immutable and eternal (DCC, 20). According to Williams, when referring to the drama we are dealing with works, not with an essence (DCC, 20). Any analysis that aims to define the drama's essence through a name runs the risk of confusing that name with the action (DCC, 20). While the name can endure, the action can change (DCC, 20). Opting for the hypothesis that the drama's essence can be expressed through one name, there is a risk of wrongly attributing an immutable and absolute character to the action (DCC, 20). In this way, the possibility of discovering new and valuable forms of expression is precluded on merely formal grounds (DCC, 21–22).[8]

An artist that works on the creation of a drama should be able to employ the modality of word, singing, dance, or visual imagery depending on how much they consider it necessary according to the experience that they intend to realize (DCC, 22). Their choice concerning what dramatic conventions to apply should be based neither on the respect for some imagined law nor on practical or verbal conformism (DCC, 22). According to Williams, the only possible definition of drama lies in the works themselves, inasmuch as it is possible to provide a description of the types of actions that are called drama (DCC, 23). In this context, the element of the *performance* is one of the most important to achieve the kind of definition of drama which starts from the works themselves (DCC, 23). With the term "performance," Williams means: a) different ways of talking, acting and singing; b) different ways of movement, including the common movement, gestures of different levels of formalization, and dance; c) the modality of the visual representation concerning the performers' clothes, in

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7)   Raymond Williams is considered one of the founders of the cultural studies along with Richard Hoggart and Edward Thompson, and occupied the chair of Drama at the University of Cambridge from 1974 to 1983. Williams's theoretical work in literary studies was the instrument by which "his critical practice opened onto a much wider political world" (ARW, 5). To Williams, "critical cultural analysis of film" (ARW, 5) constituted "a natural extension of his interest in drama" (ARW, 5). Indeed, he was "interested in the relationship between technology and culture" (ARW, 5). On the other hand, film offered Williams "a new kind of drama in which to explore his interest in the relationship between culture and society" (ARW, 5). Film studies provided Williams "the chance to apply his theoretical insight in drama to a truly large – scale audience" (ARW, 5), and to the issue of "how national communities are constituted" (ARW, 5). "Film and the Dramatic Tradition" is the first part of *Preface to Film*, which was co-written by Williams and Orrom and was published in 1954. Other important Williams's works on drama are *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* of 1952 and *Drama in Performance* of 1954. The 1952 work was extended and republished with the title of *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* in 1964. Similarly, new chapters were included in a new version of *Drama in Performance* that was republished in 1968. Also other Williams's books include chapters dedicated to drama (for example, the third chapter of *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, and the sixth chapter of *The Sociology of Culture*).

8)   For example, if the drama is identified with a performance characterized by the word, the lyrical opera with a performance characterized by the singing, and the ballet with a performance characterized by the dance, the possibility to grasp the variety and flexibility of the Athenian drama's expression in the fifth century BC, when actors talked, sang and danced, is precluded (DCC, 21–22).

the scenography, in the use of the light and of the visual images; d) the modality of the sound, taking shape in the music or in any other modality that does not involve the human voice (DCC, 23).[9]

Williams attributes to the *performance* an element of *representation*, or *mime* – or *imitation* (*mimesis*) (DCC, 24).[10] Since the *imitation* takes very different forms depending on the dramatic work, neither this element of imitation nor the dramatic process should be understood starting from one of these particular forms (DCC, 24). According to Williams, *imitation* is vital (DCC, 24). It is possible to summarize Williams's notion of drama as a literary work that: a) is written in order to be performed according to the modalities of the *performance*, and b) includes this vital element of *imitation*. According to Williams, these elements of the performance and imitation are found in the film's artistic and creative forms (DCC, 28). As a consequence, in its main realizations, the film is a dramatic medium and it enables the creation of works of different genres such as tragedy, comedy, farce and any new category created as a variation within the dramatic history (DCC, 28).[11]

As part of Williams's concept of the film as a dramatic medium, the analysis of the nature of the dramatic conventions is a crucial step. Williams observes that in the English language the term *convention* stands for an assembly, a union, or a breakfast of representatives that want to reach a certain purpose (DCC, 33–34). Therefore, a convention can be understood both as something habitual and as an agreement that precedes the conclusion of a contract (DCC, 34). At the same time, *conventional* can designate both a tacit consent and a compliance with an accepted standard (DCC, 34). Starting from the verification of this semantic ambiguity, Williams moves on to analyze the way the expressive conventions arise and develop through various times in dramatic history.

Williams observes that a dramatic convention can be regarded as just a method designed to facilitate the performance (DCC, 38). On the other hand, these methods change in the history of drama and a certain expressive technique can be employed satisfactorily in a dramatic work only provided that the dramatist, the actors and the audience recognize and accept it (DCC, 38).[12] According to Williams, evaluating a certain convention is not based on abstracted advantages, but rather on what it is able to concretely achieve in the work of art (DCC, 38). If some works, by virtue of their power, had not been able to replace the previous conventions with new conventions, no change in itself would have occurred in the history of drama (DCC, 38).

Because of the convention's nature and of the dependence of any dramatic method upon this way of understanding, it is not possible, in any time, either to depart too far from the most current segment of the dramatic

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9) Williams observes how the verbal, physical, visual and auditory elements of the performance exist, even though in different modalities, in times of greater development of drama: the Ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the Elizabethan era, and the modern naturalism (DCC, 23).

10) Williams highlights the fact that these terms do not need to be linked to some particular convention. For example, the term *performance* should not be understood as a realistic representation of the action based on methods that are familiar to the naturalist theater (DCC, 24). To notice this independence from any convention, the Welsh author describes the *performance* as a *performance underway* (DCC, 24).

11) The filmic typologies that Williams leaves out from this identification with the drama are the recordings without any artistic purpose, such as the newsreel or the evidences of scientific experiments (DCC, 28). On the other hand, the Welsh author considers the documentary as an intermediate category (DCC, 28). In fact, some documentaries are creative works based on specific conventional elements, such as the employment of real places and events, of people instead of actors, and of subjects concerning social problems and processes. In these cases, the documentary shows elements of the performance and the imitation and, therefore, tends to blend into the drama (DCC, 28).

12) Williams takes as an example the naturalist convention that requires the actors to portray characters that behave in the same way both in front of an audience and in a private context (DCC, 35). The illusion that these characters are unaware of the presence of the audience, when they let themselves go to personal confessions or dangerous conspiracies, is the result of a formidable convention (DCC, 35). Outside the specific socio-historical context of the naturalist theater, in fact, similar monologues would be considered to be bizarre, artificial and even non-dramatic (DCC, 36).

tradition – or to start from any point that is not inside it or placed on its sides (DCC, 38–39). Nevertheless, according to Williams, the contemporary segment of dramatic history is not necessarily better than the previous segments just because it is more recent, and the history of art is not a constant evolution towards better and superior forms (DCC, 38). Therefore, if the dramatic convention is simply regarded as a technical means of the performance underway, it is not possible to find an absolute reason explaining why another convention cannot be employed and evaluated in turn on the basis of the dramatic results achieved (DCC, 39). According to Williams, the changes throughout the history of drama took place when there was already a latent will of accepting them by those social groups from whom the artist benefited (DCC, 39).

II. Film as a Total Expression of the Structure of Feeling that Is Rooted in Every Aspect of Community Life

Williams observes that all the products of a community in a certain time are essentially connected (DCC, 40). An important institution such as drama will draw from different aspects of the community, such as, for example, the conditions of the material life, the general social organization, and the dominant ideas (DCC, 40). Linking a work of art to the totality of these community's aspects can be very useful, according to Williams, but it is as usual to observe that they still remain elements without an external counterpart (DCC, 40).[13] According to Williams, this element of the artwork that cannot be reduced to any external aspect of material, social or ideological nature, corresponds to the *structure of feeling* of that community in that historical period (DCC, 40–41). Being deeply rooted in every aspect of the community life, this *structure of feeling* can be communicated and expressed as a total experience only through the artwork (DCC, 77).[14]

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13) Williams "is very careful to avoid articulations which suggest that change in cultural form necessarily *follows* the social, the technical, or the economic" (Beverly Best, "Raymond Williams and the Structure of Feeling of Reality TV," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*2, no. 7, 2012, 192, hereafter referred as RWS followed by page number). Indeed, such a kind of articulation "would solicit charges of a mechanical or orthodox materialism" (RWS, 192). In *Marxism and Literature*, "Williams explicitly retheorizes Marx's…. base-superstructure metaphor in a way that challenges accusations of a mechanical and unidirectional causal movement *from* base *to* superstructure" (RWS, 192). According to Williams, the "causal movement between the cultural and the social" (RWS, 192) is bidirectional. In *The Sociology of Culture*, the Welsh theorist of culture observes that it is often the case that the cultural innovation "is a true and integral element of the [social] changes themselves" (RWS, 192), that is, "an articulation, by technical discovery, of changes in consciousness which are themselves forms of consciousness of change" (RWS, 192). Therefore, cultural innovation is regarded by Williams as "the mediation of structure and agency, the mediation of acting with intent on the social world and the social world informs all intentions and practice" (RWS, 192). In Williams's sociology of culture, the way in which "the interrelation between a specific practice or cultural form and its historical conditions" (RWS, 193) takes place is analyzed in terms of *mediation*. The method of *mediation* is aimed to "avoid subsuming empirical particularities within the identity of their systematic interrelationship" (RWS, 193) for the purpose of "*identifying a system of difference*" (RWS, 193).

14) In the afterword to the Italian edition of "Film and the Dramatic Tradition," Fabrizio Denunzio points out that Lukács's *The Sociology of Modern Drama* is to be regarded as the term of comparison for "Film and the Dramatic Tradition" (DCC, 102). According to Tony Pinkney, Williams went through a *Lukácsian phase* that was characterized by an ambivalence toward Lukács's literary works (DCC, 101). For example, on the one hand, Williams defends classic realism in *The Long Revolution* and, on the other hand, states that the critique of modern avant-garde developed by Lukács in "Die Gegenwartsbedeutung des Kritischen Realismus" deserves attention (DCC, 101–102). In *The Sociology of Modern Drama*, Lukács attributes three fundamental features to modern drama: a) modern drama is bourgeois, as it is the first dramatic form to arise from an aware class struggle; b) modern drama is laical, as it is the first dramatic form to be emancipated from religion; c) modern drama is individualistic, since the individual is the basic social agent of the bourgeois (DCC, 103–104). As Denunzio remarks, Williams's approach to drama in "Film and the Dramatic Tradition" differs radically from Lukács's approach, inasmuch the Welsh theorist of culture criticizes any attempt to describe the drama through fixed formulas (DCC, 105–106). As it has been explained above, Williams thinks the drama in terms of *performance* rather than in terms of essence. Moreover, *The Sociology of Modern Drama* and "Film and the Dramatic Tradition" were written in two different historical periods. In the first decade of the twentieth century, theater is still regarded as the major instrument of elaboration of collective representations

As Beverly Best points out in the article "Raymond Williams and the Structure of Feeling of Reality TV," Williams's conceptualization of a *structure of feeling* "is an effort to capture the complex mediations between the particular and the general that animate any specific historical conjuncture" (RWS, 194). There is a "precarious balance between the forces of structure and agency, between the forces of the social process and the willing, intending, experiencing subject" (RWS, 194). The contradiction arising from the fact that "our personal, intimate, individual experience (feelings) are always, at the same time, informed by collective and historical prejudices, expectations, fears, desires, conventions, institutions, laws, and modalities of the social that transgress even the most extended view of the feeling subject" (RWS, 194) is expressed by the notion of *structure of feeling* in Williams's sociology of culture. Therefore, the "structure of feeling connotes the sense that the feelings that belong to us, that animate us as individuals, at the same time exceed us, extend far beyond the individual, diachronically and synchronically" (RWS, 194).

Williams observes the fact that the conventions, within the meaning of means of expression that find an implied consent in a certain era, are an essential part in the *structure of feeling* of this time (DCC, 41). When the *structure of feeling* changes, the previous expressive means appear empty and artificial, and new means are created and perceived (DCC, 41). All the transformations in the methods of the dramatic art are strictly related to the transformations of the *structure of feeling* rooted in the human being (DCC, 42). In order that an expressive technique can be something more than a device and become a convention, it must find its counterpart in the current *structure of feeling* (DCC, 43). Therefore, it is never a case that the artists choose their technical means from the huge variety of the historical memory (DCC, 42). One of the examples proposed by Williams concerning the change in the expressive conventions of drama is the contrast between a medieval performance of the *Cycle for the Miracles*, characterized by a mastered simplicity and a scarce emphasis on the individual character, and an Elizabethan tragedy in which the individual character can even be a primary source of tension (DCC, 41).

On the other hand, a specific change in the conventions by an artist is usually criticized in the name of the standards in use (DCC, 43). Williams also takes into consideration the second acceptation of the term *convention*, that is, *accepted standard*, for the purpose of explaining the process through which a new expressive form gradually gains consent until it reaches a movement (DCC, 43). The awareness of a certain change in the *structure of feeling* is initially a prerogative of very few minds (DCC, 43). Even among the artists, this *structure* could manifest itself as if it were something original and personal instead of an intellectual comprehension of a general transformation (DCC, 43). Over time, however, the works that foster a certain innovation in the expressive conventions will gradually be able to overcome the initial resistance (DCC, 43). According to Williams, the transformation of the *structure of feeling* is both clarified and influenced by such works (DCC, 43). In the end, this process will lead to the creation of new conventions that will be regarded as valid and prolific – becoming the new accepted standard (DCC, 43).

As a technical method, any artistic convention always needs a material counterpart that usually constitutes the standard accepted in the time in question: concerning drama, it deals with a certain kind of theater, a specific form of stage, or some special acting methods (DCC, 43). When a transformation in the *structure of feeling* occurs, however, what used to be a suitable method before can become an obstacle (DCC, 43). As much as new expressive methods can develop in a play, at the beginning it will be possible to perform such innovations only in a theater,

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(DCC, 108). Differently, in the 1950s, media arose as instruments of creation of social imagery and as spaces of configuration of social conflicts (DCC, 108–109). As a consequence, *The Sociology of Modern Drama* and "Film and the Dramatic Tradition" understand the social conflict in two different ways.

on stage, and through the acting conventions in use (DCC, 44).[15] Therefore, the establishment of new material equipment as counterpart of a new expressive convention always implies a phase of clash and bitterness (DCC, 44).

Around the end of the nineteenth century an important transformation in the *structure of feeling* occurred. There was a growing mistrust of the established moral values, with its simple labels of Vice and Virtue (DCC, 62). At the same time, a certain interest concerning the real and detailed stream of consciousness as a true metaphor of the experience was spreading (DCC, 63). In this climate, great importance was attached to the everyday feeling of ordinary people (DCC, 63). In fact, it was thought that the major human crises occurred in this kind of context rather than in great and dramatic events (DCC, 63). Besides, people were more and more aware that a great part of the human experience was essentially obscure (DCC, 63).[16] Therefore, the attention was focused on the soul's hidden drama that never achieves a comprehensible expression in life (DCC, 63).

The naturalist drama employed some new expressive conventions for the purpose of expressing this transformation of the *structure of feeling*. Many producers of naturalist dramas tried to stage this hidden psychological reality, drawing upon the method used in the novel, by commenting and analyzing the characters' inner state of mind (DCC, 65). Stanislavskij included extensive explanatory comments in the text of his works for the purpose of helping the actors to perform their characters' inner feelings (DCC, 65). However, according to Williams, what was lacking in the naturalist drama was a concept of writing in which the elements of the word, the movement, and of the staging were embedded as parts of a controlled and unitary dramatic form (DCC, 71).[17] In fact, instead of developing separately a probable conversation, a probable behavior, and a stage setting, the playwright should write for an acted speech, and consider the *mise-en-scene* as a *necessary* part of the entire dramatic concept (DCC, 71–72).

Williams highlights the fact that a dramatic work that is written starting from this idea of total expression involves, in its essential concept, all that should be communicated to the audience (DCC, 73). Unlike the theater, the cinematographic medium enables this total expression by virtue of its technical potential (DCC, 73–74). Therefore, Williams defines the film as a *total performance* (DCC, 73).[18] In this respect, the fact that the film is a finished, registered and definitive product is a crucial factor (DCC, 74).[19] On the other hand, every element of

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15) In this respect, Williams takes as an example the event of *The Seagull*, written by Čechov. In fact, this work was a fiasco when it was staged, in accordance with the conventional methods of that time, in the first production of Karpov at the Alexandrinsky theater in 1896. Only two years later, however, it achieved resounding success, when Stanislavskij's imaginative intuition enabled the introduction of new conventions in the production staged at the Moscow Art Theater in 1898 (DCC, 44).

16) One of the most important reasons of this growing awareness lied in the discovery of the unconscious in psychology (DCC, 54).

17) Williams's concept of drama as a controlled and unitary form alludes to an idea of corporeal totality as an organic unity of word, singing and dance (DCC, 110). In the work *Understanding Media: The extensions of Man*, McLuhan elaborates a general distinction between alphabetic writing and electric media, as to the different kinds of subjectivity they give rise to (DCC, 109). Alphabetic writing gives rise to a kind of subjectivity that is characterized by individualization and specialization of functions (DCC, 109). Differently, an increase of the involvement of corporeal dimension and of the communitarian dimension, that is, *tribalism*, distinguishes the subjectivity that emerges from the rise of electric media (DCC, 109). Denunzio proposes to rethink Williams's idea of dramatic unity in light of McLuhan's distinction between these two kinds of subjectivity (DCC, 110–111). Although *Television* blames McLuhan for proposing a determinist theory of media, Williams's idea of *performance* as an organic unity of word, singing and dance is aimed to overcome the specialization and individualization of the single acting elements (DCC, 110–111).

18) In the preface to the Italian edition of "Film and the Dramatic Tradition," Gino Frezza compares Williams's understanding of film with the concept of film that emerges from Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film* (DCC, 13). According to Frezza, one can find a clear difference between the two approaches. Far from conducting an ontological analysis of the film production, Williams is basically interested in the performative character of the filmic medium (DCC, 13). Differently, Kracauer regards the film as a medium that is able to realize a redemption from reality by virtue of its photographic nature (DCC, 13).

19) The subject of the reproducibility of the work of art is addressed by Walter Benjamin in the essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" of 1935 (DCC, 14).

the film production can be subject to the control of the original conception. The control on writing concerning the total conception of the film work can directly become the control on the camera (DCC, 74). Writing properly for the film means writing for the word, the movement, and the staging, as the parts are necessarily connected to a whole (DCC, 74).[20]

III. Phantasy as a Decisive Element in Relation to the Expressive Power of Film

Williams's concept of film as a total expression "emphasizes the integrated nature of filmic performance – combining acting, lighting, sound, dialogue and technical editing" (ARW, 5). The technical practice that "consists of editing sequences smoothly together into a melodic whole" (ARW, 5) is named "flow" by Williams. In the section of *Preface to Film* co-written by Williams and Orrom, "the smooth sequences produced by filmic flow" (ARW, 5) are compared to music. Just as "in a musical symphony one theme gives way to another during a smooth and gradual transition" (ARW, 5), so in a film "each scene, each section, must blend with those preceding and succeeding it, to create an integrated whole" (ARW, 5). The term "flow" occurs also in Williams's later works. In the 1968 study *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, Williams uses this term "to refer to a method of combining the different elements that make up dramatic form" (ARW, 5). In the work of 1974 *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, he describes flow as "the deliberate planned sequences" (ARW, 5) in which television programs are broadcast.

It is worth noting that a shift has occurred in Williams's understanding of the term "flow." Both in *Preface to Film* and *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, *flow* designates just "a technical method employed by the dramatist/ filmmaker" (ARW, 5). Differently, the term denotes "an *analytic* concept employed by the critic or analyst" (ARW, 5) in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. Williams has become, on the one hand, "less uncritically enthusiastic for the makers of film and television drama" (ARW, 5) and, on the other hand, "more aware of the need to adopt a stance of skepticism" (ARW, 5) toward these things. As a consequence, he begins to use *flow* "as a rather pejorative term," capable of directing attention toward "the more insidious effects of film and television" (ARW, 5) in the 1974 television study. Moreover, Williams has realized that television cannot be adequately understood through the analysis of individual programs in isolation, and begins to consider the programs and advertisements "alongside each other, as a continual sequence" (ARW, 5).

Such a connotation of the term "flow" as an analytic concept "can also, and perhaps more fundamentally, be related to the television experience" (ARW, 5) rather than to the film experience. *Flow*, redefined in this way, is basically "what looks *at* us" (ARW, 5) rather than "what we look at" (ARW, 5). *Flow* "has power over the viewer" (ARW, 5) as it is located outside him/her. The term "viewing" no longer refers to the act of watching television but it refers to "the act of being confronted by television flow" (ARW, 5). In other words, "the flow… reaches out to" (ARW, 5) the viewer, rather than the viewer to it.[21] According to Hywel Dix, Williams "can be

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20) To name a film product capable of conveying this idea of total expression almost completely, Williams takes as an example the German expressionism of the 1920s (DCC, 45). Even though the structure of feeling at the base of the expressionist drama of that time needed a specific audience's psychological state to be fully communicated, these works illustrated clearly the ideal of a drama conceived in its entirety (DCC, 45). On the other hand, Williams observes that the most successful expressionist films were nearly all silent films (DCC, 45). According to Williams, one of the reasons for this lies in the new conventions of the movement and of the staging introduced by the expressionist drama (DCC, 45). These conventions implied the marginalization of the word (DCC, 45). Since in a usual expressionist performance the words spoken are fragmentary, disjunct, and standardized, such use of the word could be carried out, without great loss, through the subtitles of a silent film (DCC, 45).

21) Even though this concept of flow "has a much more complex meaning" (ARW, chap. 5) than the one that occurs in *Preface to Film*, "it was in that work that Williams was beginning to develop the concept itself" (ARW, chap. 5).

presented as a complex film theorist in his own right" (ARW, 5). Indeed, the version of *flow* that emerges from *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* "has much in common with the Lacanian concept of the *gaze* that was by this stage beginning to be developed in film studies – particularly in the journal *Screen*" (ARW, 5).

Just as Williams distinguishes between *flow* and act of viewing in the 1974 study, so Lacan regards "the gaze as an analytic concept rather than any physically accessible piece of sensory equipment" (ARW, 5) in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. According to Lacan, "the world is all-seeing, but…. it does not provoke our gaze" (ARW, 5). The *gaze* "is located in the object beheld by the eye" (ARW, 5) rather than being commanded by the eye. This theoretical insight underlies Lacan's understanding of "the process of subjectivity formation" (ARW, 5) as "a united sense of self" (ARW, 5) that "has to be performed in order to exist" (ARW, 5). The *gaze* is "a way of imagining the self, looking at itself from a point outside it" (ARW, 5). By virtue of being located outside the self, the gaze "enables the subject to imagine its own unified identity" (ARW, 5). In film study, such a concept of "externally located gaze" (ARW, 5) is termed *fourth look*, as "it comes after the three cinematic looks of audience to screen; character to character; and actor to camera" (ARW, 5). The *fourth look* can be described as "the illusion of being caught in the act of looking at others looking at others looking at others" (ARW, chap. 5).

Lacan's concept of *gaze* was employed by the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, in order to denounce "the tendency in mainstream cinema to pose women as fetish objects" (ARW, 5). In the article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,"[22] Mulvey observes that women's role in films is "to provide a fantasy of wish fulfilment for the actively desiring male viewer" (ARW, 5). Indeed, the mystique of cinema serves to naturalize "the presented relationship between characters" (ARW, 5) by concealing the first cinematic look, that is, the look of a viewer to the screen, and the third one (that is, the actor's look to the camera). This can result either in a "form of sexual desire" (ARW, 5) or in the taking of "*desire* as a more generalized principle of subjectivity formation" (ARW, 5). The viewer's exhibitionism "is projected onto the performer" (ARW, 5) and, in so doing, "enables the individual viewer to imagine being looked at by others" (ARW, 5). This provides the viewer with both "a unified self-identity" (ARW, 5) and "a level of visual pleasure" (ARW, 5). Mulvey terms this pleasure *identification*.

Dix points out that both the term *phantasy* and the term *fantasy* are employed by Williams in "Film and the Dramatic Tradition." According to him, "such a distinction…. implies an important conceptual difference" (ARW, 5).[23] The term *phantasy* is used by Williams "to refer to the viewer's desire for unified self-identity" (ARW, 5) and to the film's tendency to "offer resolution to this desire" (ARW, 5). Accordingly, the film is described as "an immensely powerful medium" (ARW, 5) that, by virtue of its "very large, moving features, its very loud sound, its simultaneous appeal to eye and ear," (ARW, 5) is able to "exercise a kind of hypnotic effect which very readily promotes phantasy and easy emotional indulgence" (ARW, 5). Differently, the term *fantasy* is used by Williams "as an example of a more conscious generic mode, rather than the organization of unconscious desire" (ARW, 5). Examining the concept of naturalism in films, Williams states that such a concept is "applied indiscriminately, in new plays, to orthodox religious drama, to melodramas of an essentially nineteenth century type, to *fantasies*, and even… to farce" (ARW, 5).

Just as Williams distinguishes between *phantasy* and *fantasy*, so the need to differentiate between different kinds of phantasy emerges from Mulvey's analysis. According to Mulvey, when a woman "becomes active part of the narrative, rather than existing simply as an object" (ARW, 5) the viewer's "identification with the main male character" (ARW, 5) is suspended. The tendency of women to enter the filmic narrative "gives rise to a castration

22) This article, published in *Screen* in 1975, was "a landmark moment in the history of film studies" (ARW, 5).

23) This point "is only implicit in Williams" (ARW, 5), as the Welsh theorist of culture "does not clearly define what he means by the different terms *phantasy* and *fantasy*" (ARW, 5). Dix grounds his interpretation on the observation that "a writer so scrupulously careful in verbal precision" (ARW, 5) should have a conceptual reason to make such a distinction.

fantasy – a fear of womanly power" (ARW, 5). Usually, the filmic solution to this is either "punishment/containment of the woman" (ARW,5) or "transfer of anxiety to a fetish object so that the source of anxiety loses its threat" (ARW,5). Mulvey cites Stenberg's film *Morocco*[24] as an example of a film which is aimed to "contain the possibility of female power by restoring women to the status of objects," (ARW, 5) and another Stenberg's film, *Dishonored,*[25] as an instance of the strategy to transfer the anxiety to a fetish object. Therefore, a contradiction in the *fourth look* emerges both from Williams's notion of "flow" and from Mulvey's understanding of *gaze*.

Just as Williams and Mulvey, Lesley Stern distinguishes between the functioning of different kinds of phantasy. In Stern's article "The Body as Evidence,"[26] one can find a demarcation between "*fantasy* as conscious imaginings, daydreams, inventions, make-believe, reverie" (ARW, 5) and phantasy[27] as the "unconscious process of identity formation" (ARW, 5)[28]. Stern follows in Williams's footsteps by resisting "films that privilege realist narrative," (ARW, 5)[29] and its logical progress toward wish-fulfillment and closure. *Fantasy* as a conscious desire can be used to interrupt the organization of unconscious wish-fulfillment in order to adopt a viewing strategy that resists closure. This strategy "generates a degree of conscious agency for the viewing subject, who is thereby able to resist acquiescence in the imagined order of the filmic gaze" (ARW, 5).[30]

Stern advocates an exploration of the way in which "*disbelief* operates in film viewing" (ARW, 5). Realism and narrative are "privileged sites for the return of the repressed" (ARW, 5), and a break with them can be a way to overthrow "the false unity of the viewing subject" (ARW, 5), provoking "a more self-conscious and active subject" (ARW, 5). Stern observes that what is usually lacking is "a conceptualization of fiction" (ARW, 5). Indeed, "fiction is most often collapsed into narrative or seen as shaped by and subordinate to realism" (ARW, 5). Even when we are aware that we are watching something unreal, "we are structured into belief through the strategies of realism" (ARW, 5). Quite the opposite, "where the dramatic conventions are functioning successfully, the viewer is not asked to collude in an affirmation of some mystified sense of exterior reality" (ARW, 5).

Conclusion

According to Williams, filmic experience presents the viewer with a finished, definitive, and integrated performance. The filmic cutting and montage enables the creation of new concepts. Moreover, the darkness of the movie theater, the big figures on the screen, the high volume and the simultaneous involvement of sight and hearing are able to "exercise a kind of hypnotic effect" (ARW, 5) on the audience. What distinguishes the filmic

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24) Stenberg's *Morocco* was released in 1930.

25) Stenberg's *Dishonored* was released in 1931.

26) This article was published in *Screen* in 1982.

27) As Dix remarks, Freud influences Stern's understanding of the word *phantasy*. Freud uses the term phantasy in three ways: a) "to denote conscious imaginings or daydreams"; b) "to denote unconscious phantasies which have a similar structure to dreams in that their origin lies in repressed material"; c) "to denote primal phantasies, fundamental unconscious structures which transcend individual experience" (ARW, 5).

28) Stern's analysis is not aimed to make a strict demarcation between the conscious and the unconscious. This demarcation would not make sense, since, for example, daydreams "can tell us about unconscious and are indeed structured by psychic mechanism" (ARW, 5). Stern's goal is rather to distinguish the way in which different kinds of phantasies function.

29) Stern bears in mind Williams's critique of dramatic naturalism. Williams argues that "in simply recreating everyday life on stage or on camera, naturalism in effect ratified a static series of relations outside" (ARW, 5) the theater. According to Williams, "mainstream naturalist drama is deeply conservative, for it leaves no room for effective critique to social order" (ARW, 5).

30) Stern's notion of *fantasy* differs from Williams's notion of *phantasy* as it is conscious. On the other hand, Williams and Stern's analyses analogously acknowledge the relationship between realism and narrative and the film's logical progress toward wish-fulfillment and closure.

experience is the capability to promote a specific kind of phantasy in the viewer. As Dix points out, Williams understands such a kind of *phantasy* as a viewer's unconscious desire for unified self-identity, and terminologically distinguishes it from a conscious form of fantasy that can hardly be promoted by the film. Even though socially disengaged employments of the filmic expressive potential are contemplated by Williams, in "Cinema and Socialism" the Welsh theorist of culture describes cutting and montage as a revolutionary modernism, and attributes a potential for innovation to the film's capability "to connect or to collide otherwise separated actions," (CS, 113) and "to invest moments and fragments with the power of sustained integrated imagery" (CS, 113).

Laura Mulvey also attributes to the film the capability to promote phantasies in the viewer. Accordingly, she advocates the replacement of the male chauvinist phantasies that are usually promoted by mainstream film productions with gender neutral phantasies in order to overcome "the tendency in mainstream cinema to pose women as fetish objects" (ARW, 5). Additionally, her analysis of the filmic experience parallels Williams's one inasmuch both Mulvey and Williams understand the viewer's *phantasy* as theoretically related to a *fourth look* that is located outside the viewer and has power over him/her. Just as Williams defines the *flow* as "the deliberate planned sequences" (ARW, 5) in which television programs are broadcast in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, so Mulvey follows in Lacan's footsteps by regarding the *gaze* as "a way of imagining the self, looking at itself from a point outside it" (ARW, 5).

Since this *flow/gaze* has power over the viewer, Mulvey points out that two opposite kinds of *phantasies* are possible. *Phantasies* might sensitize the viewer toward a social issue or promote a socially committed worldview. For example, consider the gender-neutral phantasies that ought to replace the male chauvinist ones in the mainstream cinema. On the other hand, phantasies might strengthen the viewer's prejudices by enabling his/her *identification* with a character that symbolizes a reactionary or a socially disengaged worldview. For example, consider the viewer's identification with the main male character of mainstream film productions. Lesley Stern individuates a way to "resist acquiescence in the imagined order of the filmic gaze" (ARW, 5) in another kind of phantasy that she terms *fantasy*. Unlike Williams's notion of *phantasy*, Stern's notion of *fantasy* designates a conscious desire that promotes "a more self-conscious and active" (ARW, 5) subjectivity by interrupting the organization of unconscious wish-fulfillment.

In summary, five outcomes emerge from the present analysis of the socially innovative potential of the filmic experience: a) film is a dramatic medium that is able to realize a *total expression* of the *structure of feeling* rooted in every aspect of community life; b) the film is able to promote the viewer's unconscious desire for unified self-identity (that is, *phantasy*); c) the viewer's *phantasy* is theoretically related to a *flow/gaze* that has power over the viewer since it is located outside him/her; d) the viewer can be stimulated by the film's *flow* to both socially committed *phantasies* and reactionary or socially disengaged *phantasies*; e) the viewer can interrupt the organization of a reactionary or socially disengaged phantasy by virtue of a conscious desire for a more active subjectivity (that is, by virtue of *fantasy*). Therefore, the viewer's social awareness can be enabled by two different kinds of phantasies related to filmic experience: the unconscious desire for unified self-identity (*phantasy*), and the conscious desire for a more active subjectivity (*fantasy*).

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