Raymond Williams

**City and Country**

A significant link between Raymond Williams’ musings about country and city and The Lonely Londoners can be found in the introduction to Williams’ essay; where Williams lays out the multiple perceptions of the country and the city from people. The main difference, and in this, the link between the two, is perspective.

The country is described as being perceived as being both a place of “peace, innocence and simple virtues”, and of “backwardness, ignorance and limitation” by the more cynical. The city, on the other hand, is a place of “noise, worldliness and ambition”, “learning, communication and light”[[1]](#endnote-1). The Lonely Londoners, taking place from an alternative perspective of London, turns these perceptions on their head. Galahad, and presumably Moses, arrives from their country full of ambition and hope of work- over the course of the novel, Galahad’s optimism and ambition is worn down into this ‘backwardness, ignorance and limitation’ – the limitation being the most important part.

**Quotes to look at:**

* “Like one time when newspapers say that the Wes Indians think that the West Indian think that the streets of London paved with gold...” (page 2)
* “Why are so many Jamaicans immigrating to England?” “They can’t get work.” (page 8)
* “Is a kind of place where hate and disgust and avarice and malice and sympathy and sorrow and pity all mix up” (page 27). This view of the city contrasts Wordsworth’s idyllic view of London presented by Williams, that “Earth has not anything to show more fair” (pg 342) than the city of London wearing the “beauty of the morning”.

**A Problem of Perspective**

This section of Raymond William’s essay begins with the statement (from an unknown source) that “a way of life that has come down to us from the days of Virgil has suddenly ended” (pg. 344). This statement suggests an immediate end to the traditional rural lifestyle, but Williams highlights other texts that bemoan the death of the rural lifestyle – all from different periods of time. Williams describes this chain of nostalgia as an escalator, an interesting metaphor considering the authors’ fear of technology. Williams asks if the escalator is “anything more than a well known habit of using the past, the ‘good old days’, as a stick to beat the present?”(pg 347) This would suggest the escalator is heading down, society regressing with it due to people clinging on to nostalgia and old ideals – which could explain the mistrust of immigrants by the English in The Lonely Londoners, and in general. However, The Lonely Londoners has moments that show that sometimes, this mistrust is justified (e.g. Cap). Additionally, this nostalgia can be found in Moses, who longs for home, and a time when fewer immigrants were coming into London – when home may not necessarily be better.

1. All taken from page 339. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)