

Chapter 3

Raymond Williams

Raymond Williams was a highly influential Marxist critic of the twentieth century Britain. Born in the working class on the borders of Wales in 1921, he remained all his life deeply committed to his proletarian roots. He became an academic after serving in the Second World War, and his academic career at Cambridge and Oxford was highly distinguished. His work is central to the formation of the emerging field of cultural studies in both England and the United States. Cultural materialism promotes a socialist vision for Britain using the tools of literary and cultural criticism. Cultural studies, a wider application, uses the theories and methods of literary criticism to probe the depths of culture both through literary study and through the study of other “texts” of society. Through this criticism the ethos of cultural studies aspires to be both independent and representative: in its opposition to the social mainstream it is critical, but in speaking for that mainstream it is cultural. Williams’s influence is wide. His wide-ranging influence results partly from his interest in rekindling critical attention to ties between literature and its historical and social contexts.

Between 1965 and 1985 there was a major transformation of the English intellectual Left: R.H. Tawney and Archbishop Temple were forgotten, C.A.R. Crossland and Roy Jenkins were edged aside, and a new body of sages delivered a more uncompromising and more revolutionary message in their place. Of these new sages, Raymond Williams, Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson were the

most important. All three were “tenured radicals”, and all three used academic subjects as instruments of persuasion - literature in Williams’s case, history in the other two cases- and all three had a stimulating effect on the English student revolutionaries of the late 1960’s and their successors, who came to maturity without the restraint and respectability that the English student revolutionaries of the 1930’s had acquired through participation in the just and unavoidable war against fascism.

This chapter attempts to look at the following: Williams’s early affiliations to New Criticism, his sociological theories and criticism, his cultural theory and criticism, his conception of tragedy, his contemporary Marxian aesthetics and his critique of Modernism.

The nineteen thirties witnessed a significant change in British literary scene. It was the re-entry of the Marxist discourse into the British literary criticism. British Marxist discourse had been almost barren since William Morris (1834-96). Though Morris is considered to be the pioneer in British Marxian aesthetics, he was actually not a literary critic. Besides being a novelist and painter, Morris was a socialist who took recourse to Marxism and criticised industrial capitalism. Therefore the re-entry of Marxist discourse in the form of literary criticism in the writings of Christopher Caudwell and Ralph Fox can be regarded as the real beginning of British Marxist literary criticism.

Raymond Williams appeared on the British critical scene in the early nineteen fifties, the period of transition from New Criticism to the moralistic criticism spearheaded by F.R. Leavis. New Criticism and the Leavisian movement

had equal influence on the early writings of Williams. Terry Eagleton comments on the British critical context when Williams started writing:

When Raymond Williams came to write in the early 1950s, the ethos of thirties criticism, compounded as it was of vulgar Marxism, bourgeois empiricism and Romantic idealism, could yield him almost nothing... Marxism had, inevitably, influenced Williams: indeed Marxism and Seruting supplied between them the formative influence on his early development.(CI- 21)

Williams is drawn to sociologically oriented theory and criticism only when he comes to write Culture and Society (1958) which came out after Reading and Criticism (1954). It is only in Culture and Society that he addresses Marxist problematics. The above-said other works not only lack Marxist orientation, but they show an affinity to New Criticism and emulate several Leavisite tendencies. Reading and Criticism, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot and *Drama in Performance* are as formalistic as some of the classic texts in New Criticism. They share with I.A. Richard's Practical Criticism and William Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity an attentiveness to works of literature as something to be read closely and intensively. But Williams does not contribute to the development of an aesthetic theory that encourages evaluative preferences, for example, witty and ironic poetry. The received criticism of Williams has paid little attention to the theoretical orientation in his early works.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Williams began to articulate many of his main concerns. But his books at first seemed to fit in with those of contemporary literary critics, take this, for example: “Criticism is concerned with evaluation, with comparison, and with standards”. (RC 3) It seems today a fundamentalist statement; it comes from Williams’s first published book, Reading and Criticism (1950). Much of it would now be dismissed as ‘Leavisite’. In fact Reading and Criticism remains a useful book for students and teachers in any sector. It is a helpful corrective to the insensitivity to certain aspects of language that aggressive or euphoric theoretical and political readings can induce and sanction. But though Williams himself found practical criticism “incredibly exciting” (PL 66) he does not himself reveal anywhere, as the most exciting or subtle of practical critics. His advocacy of practical criticism is, however, qualified in one crucial respect: it stresses that a judgement on an extract from a novel is a judgement on that particular extract, not a judgement on the whole novel, or the oeuvre, from which the extract is taken, Even so, it is the critic’s task to perceive the “‘fundamental patterns’ of a writer’s work and then to find”adequate passages which convey this pattern at a length susceptible to demonstrated analysis” (RC 74). the perception of “ ‘fundamental patterns’ is a process of participating in discovering, exploring, shared, communicable meanings. But if a society is divided, agreement on the nature or very existence of fundamental patterns may well break down. Indeed, Leavisism, Structuralism and Marxism, among others, might all be seen as attempts, in the absence of more general social agreements, to construct and enforce perceptions of ‘fundamental patterns’ in life and literature.

According to Williams, drama is also a social activity- potential perhaps, the most social of all literary modes indeed one which can actively subvert narrow literary concepts . But Williams's next book represses this subversiveness. Born out of personal and political stress, Williams wrote it in 1948-49. Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (1952) is a careful, pedestrian work. Williams cannot or does not choose to convey a sense of enthusiasm for, the plays which he approved. Reading and Criticism and Drama from Ibsen to Eliot offer considerable analogies between New Criticism and Williams's early critical position. Drama from Ibsen to Eliot aims to apply practical criticism to drama. It seeks to reaffirm what Yeats called 'the ancient sovereignty of words in drama', and mounts a sustained attack on dramatic naturalism which is felt to limit the dramatist and threaten the achievement of dramatic totality. Williams strongly stresses a distinction between 'drama' and 'theatre', and he is reluctant to allow any freedom to 'theatre', to the actors, the director, the stage designer. According to him, there is little sense of the drama as a collaborative effort between author, actors, director, stage designer and others.

We can see and share Williams's objection to the kind of interpretative vulgarity that foregrounds acting, direction, 'stars', design, at the expense of language and of dramatic structure. Given the political context of the time, and Williams's constant concern with communication, we might wonder whether his insistence on authorial control isn't a partly magical attempt to preserve a possible mode of definite communication in a world in which communication seems to him, for the most part, blocked, impaired, deformed. At the age of

sixteen, he had written and produced two plays in Pandy village hall: he recalls that “everybody came”(PL 30).

The book Drama from Ibsen to Eliot puts forward a peculiarly new conception of drama. Williams says, for instance: “The substance of a play-the total organization of words, and those visual elements which the author prescribes - either conveys the experience he wishes to communicate, or it does not” (DIB 99). This is a dogmatic statement which assumes a clear -cut distinction between effective and failed communication.

In 1954, Williams, with Michael Orrem, published Preface to Films (1954). This took up a concern he had developed before going to war, when he had watched the large range of films shown at the Cambridge University Socialist Club; Orrem organized their show. Williams has recalled that these films “were particularly important” (PL 39). The book was indeed a preface to Williams’s own film making projects. It was also a contribution to the then embryo discipline of film studies, and more generally of cultural studies. It is further notable in retrospect as the first place in which Williams used the term which was to become so important in his later work, “structure of feeling”.

While we may, in the study of a past period, separate out particular aspects of life (for example, the material life, the social organisation, most of the dominant ideas), and treat them as if they were self-contained, it is obvious that this is only how they may be studied, not how they were experienced. We examine each element as a precipitate, but

in the living experience of the time every element was insoluble, an inseparable part of a complex whole. And it seems to be true, from the nature of art, that it is from such a totality that the artist draws; it is in art, primarily, that the effect of the totality, the dominant structure of feeling, is expressed and embodied. To relate a work of art to any part of that observed totality may in varying degrees, be useful; but it is a common experience, in analysis, to realize that when one has measured the work against the separable parts, there yet remains some element for which there is no external counterpart. This element is the structure of feeling of a period, and it is only realizable through experience of the work of art itself, as a whole. (PF 21-2)

Art here then becomes, in Perry Anderson's phrase, the 'home of the totality' - and the influence of Leavisian literary criticism, along with anthropology, is evident in Williams's approach.

The stress on 'structure of feeling' is the most significant innovation in Williams's next book, Drama in Performance (1954). According to Williams, "the purpose of a play should be communication, through story, characters, of the structure of feeling which the dramatist first imagines and creates." (DP 116)

Drama in Performance mounts an enquiry into "the relation between dramatic text and a dramatic performance" (DP 10). Its case studies are the performances, in the conditions of their times, of five very different plays, from

Greek tragedy, through English medieval drama and Shakespeare, to Chekhov. Williams advocates 'dramatic criticism', a combination of 'literary' and 'theatrical' criticism that considers "play and performance, literary text and theatrical representation" (DP 12) as a unity. And in judging text and performance in this book, Williams strongly stresses unity and intergration, which he feels the text should achieve before any performance. Drama in Performance might be seen as, in part, a corrective to the emphasis on the text in Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, and indeed Williams affirms: 'A normal interest in drama ought always to include an interest, and a delight, both in dramatic literature and in dramatic performance' (BP 107) . But it is doubtful how far Williams obeys his own normative injunction. As in Drama from Ibsen to Eliot his pedestrian approach does not lay stress on delight, and he continues to assert the primacy of the text: ideally, the text should wholly control the performance, and performance is in no way necessary to the text: prior to any performance, the text is already complete. In the earlier book, the communication model of drama made the play, in a sense, redundant since we already had access to the experience of which it was the dramatic realization; in this book, performance is redundant, an agreeable but inessential supplement.

Drama from Ibsen to Eliot ends with high praise for Murder in the Cathedral(1935) and qualified endorsement of T.S. Eliot's dramatic project. Drama in Performance labels that project as a failure. Williams gives a very interesting account of this failure in terms of a widening gap, within Eliot's plays, between a diminishing attempt at formal rhythm and a growing concession to

naturalism. This symptomatology relates to Williams's general claim that "the only way to create a total dramatic rhythm is to allow the speech to be shaped by the essential structure of feeling" (DP 117-18). His analysis of Eliot is logically suggestive, and his overall remarks on rhythm have much potential. But his basic assumptions of a simple communication model, of the primacy of the text and the essential redundancy of performance, of the importance of unity and integration seem, like some of his allied assumptions about the realist novel, theoretically dubious and, in practice, too exclusive.

While Williams now sees verse drama as blocked, at least temporarily, he still rejects naturalism, and also repudiates expressionism because of its perceived linguistic poverty. But he retains faith in the possibility of a new, unified drama which will unite text and performance, voice, body and instruments, 'in a moving form, and so... embody the deepest and farthest reaches of human feeling'(DP 123). And indeed, Williams did try to do so, but only three have been published: Koba, which had not been produced, formed part of the original edition of Modern Tragedy (1966), and two TV plays, A Letter from the Country (1966) and Public Inquiry (1967) were, respectively, produced on BBC I and BBC 2.

The received criticism of Williams has paid little attention to the theoretical orientation in his early works. Williams says in Reading and Criticism that he has "never consciously or formally belonged to any school of criticism"(RC IX. ix). The fact is that his own statement makes his theoretical position problematic. In spite of this avowal, Reading and Criticism, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, and Drama in Performance offer considerable analogies between

New Criticism and Williams's early critical position. Though he objects to associating him with any school of criticism in his *Reading and Criticism*, he paradoxically acknowledges his debt to the works of T.S.Eliot, I.A. Richards, William Empson and F.R.Leavis. In *Reading and Criticism* it is argued that a significant reference to literary value cannot be external. Similarly, a work of art cannot be good if by literary standards it is bad. Literary values and literary standards are literature itself. Williams observes that neither the seriousness of the subject nor the greatness of the message a work of art conveys will make it great if its "texture" is "inferior by literary standards" (RC 63).

Williams has considerable regard for the individual competence of the writer. This is a major New Critical conviction. In his comparative study of Joyce and Meredith in *Reading and Criticism*, Williams finds the style of Joyce superior and commends "the modelling and modulation of words by Joyce". *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, though primarily devoted to the working out of a dramatic theory alongside *Modern Tragedy*, lacks the socio-political dimensions of his later works.

Reading and Criticism and *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* do not form an integral part of the cultural investigation he undertakes in his later works. In *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* a number of plays by significant dramatists from Ibsen to Eliot are closely examined in terms of plot, characterization, symbolism, language, relation between theme and form, etc,.. with an intensity often shown by New Critics and rarely seen in the later works of Williams. Williams makes it clear that any drama must be judged in the context of its own convention. The

autoletic status of the text upheld by the New Critics is endorsed in the observation that “...each play’s action stands in its own right”(DIB 221). His observation that Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral has completeness which springs from the complete matching of material and form. stands in proof of this theory. His lengthy analysis of the plot, detailed discussion of the interrelationship among characters, preoccupation with form employed by different dramatists, etc.... put into practice his theory that “each plays’s action stands in its own right”. Williams’s discussion of the use of symbols in Ibsen is intensely intrinsic, what attracts him is the sequence of dramatic imagery embedded in the language and character of Ibsen’s plays. The significance of the Wild Duck, as expressed by Williams in The Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, is its use of symbolism.

Williams’s judgement of the Riders to the Sea provides a very good instance for the influence of New Critics on him. He is of the strong opinion that the sea is the only character in the play. He sees the characters in Riders to the Sea as simple victims. According to Williams, the sea is man against the elements, but man only in the simple exercise of his routine existence. The tragedy is natural, in the most common sense of the term; it is, further, simply an issue of observation and record (DIE 178).

There is no exploration into the tragedy and there is no challenge posed to the idea of tragedy here, as Williams does in his later work Modern Tragedy. The early Williams holds the view that an approach to judgement is likely to be fruitful only when it involves actual first-hand responses to particular arrangement of words, and attempts to define these responses. Like many of the

renowned writings in New Criticism, Williams's early writings kept out of discussion the historical, sociological or psychological content of the work of art criticised. Moreover, the method Williams employed in his early period was the New Critical method of close analysis or practical criticism championed by I.A. Richards. It is a fact that both New Criticism and F.R. Leavis had equal influence on Williams's early writings.

Both Leavis and Williams covered a wide range of subjects in their writings. Sociology, culture, education and literary criticism were the common ground for them. While literary and critical theory and semantics were the areas in which Williams expended too much of critical energy, they did not attract Leavis's attention. Williams like Leavis adopted practical criticism as a method and upheld the independence of the text. In the matter of the critical objective, he breaks company with New Critics and becomes a fellow traveller of Leavis. Williams's sociological and cultural orientation, which later proliferates into various Marxist positions, is in embryonic stage even in his early critique. Most of the themes discussed by Williams are those already dealt with by Eliot and Leavis. As with Eliot and Leavis culture had been one of the central preoccupations with Williams. Patric Parrinder in this context says: "Like Leavis, his role has been that of a cultural missionary whose books offer both a record of his intellectual development and the cumulative outline of a course of studies". (Parrinder 73)

It is to be noted that there are certain essential differences between Leavis and Williams in their approach to culture. Williams strongly condemns the

cultural pessimism in Eliot and Leavis. Also, there is a basic difference between Leavis and Williams in their attitude to working class. In his early period what brings Williams close to Leavis is the emphasis on the organic relation between literature and society.

Criticism, according to Williams, is a social activity. In this connection he says:

It begins in the individual response and judgement, needing the question of feeling, flexibility, and good faith which D.H. Lawrence has described. But its standards of value, if it is to acquire meaning, must be ultimately matters of agreement between many people: values which are instinct in the culture of a society.(RC 29)

In his early period of literary criticism, Williams is more or less moralistic in the tradition of Leavis. It is a generally held view that morality is the pivot around which Leavis's criticism of novel hinges. His criticism of the novel is based on the assumption that the novel is a moral fable. His idea of the "great tradition" in English novel is built on the moralistic foundation. What he explores in a novel is its moral dimension and he affirms that a great novelist's central preoccupation is with moral questions about life. Williams's evaluation of The Heart of Darkness (1902) in Reading and Criticism is carried out along the Leavisite line. After analysing the novel in terms of plot, characters, symbol and narrative techniques, Williams finally judges it from a moralistic angle. In the course of his discussion of The Heart of Darkness Williams also establishes the

bond between great art and the moral. Williams concludes his evaluation of The Heart of Darkness in Reading and Criticism as follows:

Kurtz's essential moral failure, the lie at his heart, is not defined as the study of a personality. The intention of The Heart of Darkness is moral, in the sense that all great art preceeds from a moral centre". (RC 85)

In his later period, Williams's criticism becomes heavily theoretical indicating the shift to Post structuralism. It began in the antitheoretical, liberal-humanist tradition. In his later works Williams draws sustenance not only from Marxism, but also from various theories belonging to diverse philosophical tradition. In The Long Revolution (1961) Williams's criticism rises to the levels of theorization and conceptualization. The long shadow of practical criticism of the time of Culture and Society completely disappears by the time of The Long Revolution. In Problems in Materialism and Culture (1980) Williams emphasizes the need for sociology of literature which is different from both the Secrutiny position and Marxism. Here, Williams draws our attention to the limits of practical criticism:

Practical criticism is vulnerable at several points: in its hardening into an apparently objective method which is based, even defiantly, on subjective principles; in its isolation of texts from contexts: in its contemplative aspects, which have often made it hostile to new literary work. (PMC 17-18)

Williams expresses his disapproval of the critical method which isolates the text from the socio-cultural context in Writing in Society (1983) also. What is central to Williams's criticism is that, beginning with The Long Revolution, which marks a shift in the criticism of Williams, it took different theoretical positions. Though there was the stress on the organic relation between literature and society in Reading and Criticism and Culture and Society, it forms into a theory only in The Long Revolution. Williams is mainly concerned with developing a theory of sociology of literature in the second phase of his literary career.

In Williams's theory and criticism of the second phase, a theoretical orientation towards a general sociology of literature initiated by Hippolyte Taine, but keeping a distance from orthodox Marxism, is easily discernible. Nineteenth century French Philosopher and critic Hippolyte Taine (1828-93) is generally regarded as the founder of the sociology of literature. He was the first to study systematically the relation between literature and society. According to Taine, only the really great artist is capable of fully expressing his time, and by representing the social environment of a whole nation and a whole age, a writer rallies round him the sympathies of an entire age and an entire nation. For him art is the collective expression of society with great literature embodying the spirit of the age. Taine believed in the complete deterministic explanation of literature while he dismissed the materialistic and positive tendencies.

Raymond Williams's best-known and most influential book came out in 1958. Culture and Society (1958) moves away from specifically literary concerns

to consider the notion of culture that developed in England from the time of the Industrial Revolution. Williams suggests that the notion of culture emerges in response to the social changes that come with industrialization. As the nineteenth century goes on, it comes into conflict with the idea of democracy, which is seen as a threat to culture. It also gets more and more isolated and specialized, and confined to the keeping of a smaller and smaller, and sometimes partly ideal or imaginary minority from Coleridge's clerisy, through Arnold's remnant, to Leavis's educated public in the twentieth century. At certain times, especially towards the end of the 19th century, it tends to become restricted to a rarefied aesthetic sphere.

Culture and Society maintains a balanced, judicious tone, epitomized in this statement: "We project our old images into the future . (CS 322) We do this as conservatives, trying to prolong old forms; we do this as socialists, trying to prescribe the new man". But the attainment and implied endorsement of balance and fairness should not disguise the fact that Williams writes from a specific position-or, perhaps more precisely, strives to establish a position. He is, however, scrupulously fair to the conservative and reactionary thinkers he discusses - Burke, Carlyle, Coleridge, T.S. Eliot. This is particularly due to a desire to argue through the differences carefully - "I too wrote my essay on Carlyle as fascist when I was an undergraduate"(PL 105-6). It is due also to a wish to retain from the work of these thinkers what is valuable, even especially from a radical perspective. The chapter on Eliot, for example, begins "We can say of Eliot what Mill said of Coleridge, that an 'enlightened Radical or Liberal ' ought to rejoice

over such a Conservative”(CS 224). In particular, Williams commends Eliot’s stress on culture as ‘a whole way of life’.

Culture and Society offers penetrating analyses of modes of exile and rejection - especially in its accounts of Orwell and Lawrence, and of what Williams calls ‘the paradox of the exile.... of a significant number of men who, deprived of a settled way of living, of a faith, or having rejected these which were inherited, find virtue in a kind of improvised living, and in an assertion of independence’(CS 279). This is both a solitary and a negative way of living, and mode of relationship, within society,

In the conclusion to Culture and Society, Williams partly emerges from his mask to explore some of his own positions - a courageous and difficult move. He rejects the notion of ‘masses’ contending that the term is never seen to apply to oneself or those one knows: “There are infact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses” (CS 289) . But, as Terry Eagleton suggests in Criticism and Ideology (1976), this could also be said of classes and that would create difficulties for a radical political project. And the general question of the modes of collective identification and action remains. But Williams attacks the idea of ‘the masses’ and the related notion of ‘mass communication’ because he sees these as ‘the real danger to democracy, not the existence of effective and powerful means of multiple transmission’ (CS 293)- the medium of not the message. Such ‘mass’ ideas are complicit with a ‘dominative attitude to communications’; as Williams rightly observes, “almost every kind of leader seems to be genuinely afraid of trusting the processes of majority discussion and decision. (CS

303)Williams's assumption is, presumably, that a sufficiently open and informed process of majority discussion and decision would produce the most desirable result; but the problem would be of assessing what constituted a sufficiently open and informed process. It might tend to be assessed in a circular way- by the effectiveness with which it produced the results desired by particular parties.

Williams then moves on to propose the idea of 'equality of being' the acknowledgement of an 'essential quality' of human beings which does not deny difference or variation - and to argue the necessity, for survival, of a 'common culture'. (CS 304) He questions the idea of service and the belief that those in the upper echelons of society have a duty to serve the 'lower' - and he challenges the limitations of the sense of duty. He distinguishes between working - class and bourgeois attitude in terms of alternative notions of social relationship - one communal, one individualist.

The key notion of 'equality of being' seems to derive from Williams's discussion of Lawrence earlier in the book, when he quotes, with approval Lawrence's affirmation in the essay "Democracy" that 'no man shall try to determine the being of any other man, or of any other woman' . Williams contends: "We must ask, and require the answer, of anyone with a social philosophy, whether this principle is accepted or denied. Some of the most generous social movements have come to fail, because, at heart, they have denied this".(CS 208)

Williams's attempt to identify an 'essential' working class idea is particularly problematic. In his account earlier in Culture and Society he had

argued that “the worst harm done by the stock notion’ of class, a notion receiving constant assent from the material structure of society, was that it offered category feelings about human behaviour based on a massing and simplifying of actual individuals, as an easy substitute for the difficulties of personal and immediate judgement”(CS 126). Let us compare this statement from the conclusion of Culture and society: “ The great majority of English working people want only the middle-class material standard and for the rest want to go on being themselves”(CS 311). For ‘great majority’, substitute ‘mass’: for here we have, surely, “a massing and simplifying of actual individuals” that substitutes, easily and comfortingly, ‘for the difficulties of personal and immediate judgement’. It is Williams as Arnold inverted: he is simply turning upside down the crude notion he purports to attack - that most working - class people are desperately anxious to become middle-class. He goes further:

When we speak, for instance, of a working-class idea, we do not mean that all working-class people possess it, or even approve of it. We mean rather, that this is the essential idea embodied in the organizations and institutions which that class creates: the working-class movement as a tendency rather than all working-class people as individuals.(CS 313)

Here, actual individuals are displaced: we have an ‘essential idea’ embodied in organizations and institutions created by a class, but floating free of the individuals who compose that class. This kind of abstraction - a massing and simplifying of actual individuals’ - leads towards a socialist idealism. Williams

says that the “notion of the ladder” - of ‘individual upward mobility ‘ has produced a real conflict of values within the working-class itself(CS 318). We should observe here that though Williams rejected the image of ‘the ladder’, he did not reject upward mobility in his own life, even if he sought to combine this with a continued commitment to his class or origin and to its presumed collective idea. This is not to simply sneer at the socialist who succeeds in terms of bourgeois society. It is, rather, to begin to ask why the image of the ladder, or more precisely, the idea of individual upward mobility is attractive. The answers, especially from a working-class viewpoint, may seem obvious: more personal freedom, more satisfying work, more social status, more material benefits: but this is exactly the problem. While upward mobility remains attractive in these ways, even if its reality is available only to a few working-class escapes, the appeal of socialism is likely to be limited. And the upward mobile socialist of working-class origin who accepts that mobility, in a personal and material way, but who continues to endorse the collective idea is inevitably caught in a contradiction. It is not merely, as Williams suggests, a matter of rejecting a metaphor - this, after all, is easy for someone who has climbed the ladder. It is matter of understanding and imagining how socialism might offer an attractive and feasible alternative: and that leads to the areas where psychology, sociology, politics and economics interact.

Upward mobility and the divisions it feeds on and nourishes are key themes of Williams’s first novel Border Country (1960). It came out in 1960, a year in which Williams himself climbed further up the ladder, moving from East

Sussex to Oxford to become Resident Tutor for the Extra-Mural Delegacy. Williams himself believed Border Country had in its particular and quite different way, an essential relevance to Culture and Society and The Long Revolution - and, we could add, to the rest of his work.

Discussion of Williams's theory of sociology of literature could reveal his affinities with the theories of Plekhanov, Leo Lowenthal, Luckacs, Goldmann and Adorno. The theories of these writers with Marxist stress of different degrees, can be traced to the general sociological theory of Taine. It can be said that these writers enriched and developed the relation between sociology and literature introduced by Taine. It is worthwhile to see Williams's theories of art formulated from a general sociological angle, along with two parameters: how Williams theorizes on the sociology of literature and how he applies sociology to literature. Williams asks questions about the relation of literature to society and attempts are made to describe and define the influence of literature on society and to prescribe and judge the position of literature and society. This general sociological orientation in Williams should not be confused with a more distinct Marxist dialectics developed by Williams in the later stage of his critical career. It is a fact that his engagement with Marxist problematics begins early in Culture and Society. But this forms part of his attempt at tradition-building, a tradition different from the English school approach derived from Matthew Arnold and championed by F.R. Leavis, a tradition also different from orthodox Marxism.

While examining Williams's sociological writings one should bear in mind what Wellek and Warren observe in their Theory of Literature. Wellek and

Warren in their Theory of Literature observe that the enquiries into the sociology of the writer and the profession and institution of literature, the whole question of the economic basis of literary production, the social status of the writer and his social ideology also form part of the sociology of literature. The works of German sociologist Karl Mannheim and French sociologist Robert Escarpit show a shift of emphasis from the social context of writing to the social situation of the writer and institutions. Williams has devoted considerable attention to all these issues emphasized by Wellek and Warren., Karl Mannheim and Escarpit. The second half of The Long Revolution is a thorough survey of issues like growth of the reading publics, growth of the popular press, growth of standard English and the social history of writers. Culture and Society is primarily an analysis of social ideas of some of the leading English men of letters in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In Towards 2000 (1983), Williams considers the effects and implications of recent changes and probable new developments in social order, in cultural technologies and institutions and in war and peace-keeping. The book covers such wider topics as capitalist production, industrial economic system, bourgeois democratic representative practices and British Labour Party.

Towards 2000 includes, as a substantial section, most of the chapter of The Long Revolution called 'Britain in the 1960's' : an attempt, at the start of the decade, to analyse contemporary Britain and suggest dangers and opportunities for the future. Williams claims that he reprints this, not primarily to check its

‘predictions’ but to exemplify the problems and possibilities, in terms of ‘form’ as well as ‘content’, of analysing the present in a forward-looking context.

Williams then moves on to the 1980s. He criticizes the ideas of a ‘post-industrial’ or ‘deindustrialized’ society, pointing out that even manufacturing decline will not do away with the structures and processes of industrial capitalism. He challenges the idealization of ‘parliamentary democracy’ and proposes a more direct, participatory kind of democracy. He attacks the unholy alliance “of technological determinism with cultural pessimism” (T 2000 . 129) and outlines some positive prospects for technologies and cultural forms. And he questions the assumption especially in the ‘labour movement’, of an unproblematic link between class and political affiliation.

Compared with The Long Revolution and with much of Williams’s previous work, the later part of Towards 2000 makes a crucial break by extending the analysis on to a global scale. Williams seeks to dismantle the still dominant idea of ‘the nation’, but also recognizes its force and rejects a facile internationalism. Instead, he recommends a cultural struggle for actual social identities combined with ‘the political definition of effective self-governing societies’(T 2000.193). He also tries to attack the nations of ‘East-West’ and ‘North-South’ as inadequate ways to conceptualize the world, and argues for a redefined concept of ‘multilateral disarmament’-

Much of his analysis is impressive, within the perspectives and values that it assumes. The criticisms of parliamentary democracy are impressive. There are feasible and inspiring proposals for deploying new technology in democratic

decision-making, in cultural production, in information, in work and in education. The analysis of the image and realities of 'development' is complex and telling. The difficulties of 'unilateralism' receive sensitive and intelligent clarification. But it is the assumed perspectives and values which are the problems which need to be argued for.

Williams seems to think that 'capitalism' is the source of all our discontents. It is as if he has to affirm his Marxist credentials. He goes so far as to claim, for example: "It is, in the modern epoch, capitalism which has disrupted and overridden natural communities and imposed artificial orders"(T 2000.184). Despite his careful clarifications of problems, his specific proposals in regard, for instance, to technology, his suggestive intimations, and his frequent exhortations to detailed enquiry and discussion, Williams remains vague about the kind of socialism he wants and how to achieve it. The adjective 'new' is much used: 'new kinds of communal, co-operative and collective institutions', 'a new kind of social movement', 'a new definition of the general interest' 'new political forms'; 'new and radically alternative kinds of relationship'; 'new kinds of monetary institutions'; 'new orientation of livelihood'(T 2000. 123, 174, 199, 217, 256, 258, 266) . Towards 2000 is partly, of course, a call to common enquiry, to collaborative effort, to participation in defining those new forms. The very principles of Williams's project mean it cannot be a one-man job. Towards 2000 projects wholeness to another time and place, leaping over current and transitional difficulties.

In regard to the arts, Towards 2000 develops the reactionary fulminations against 'anti-art'. In Modern Tragedy, Williams denounces postmodernism, and what he sees as a particular but dominant assimilation of modernism. This may seem tangential to his main political and social concerns, but finally curves back to meet them. He argues that innovative modernist forms "destabilized the fixed forms of an earlier period of bourgeois society, but... were then in their turn stabilized as the most reductive versions of human existence in the whole of human history"(T 2000 . 267).

Wilbur Scott in Five Approaches of Literary Criticism (1962) remarks that sociological criticism starts with a conviction that art's relation to society is vitally important, and that the investigation of the relationship may organize and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art. Sociological criticism upholds the view that art is not created in a vacuum and that "it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community of which he is an important, articulate, part"(seott 123) . Williams's literary theory and criticism take their existence primarily from this general conviction that art is not created in vacuum. Although Williams shares with Taine his basic conviction, there are subtle differences between the theories of Williams and those of Taine. Williams is influenced by other intellectual strains in formulating his theories. He takes an unequivocal position on the question of the relation between literature and society. He prefers "literature in society" to the usual formulation of "literature and society". He observes that "literature and society" presupposes the existence of society as a formal whole before the literature exists. It also

presupposes that society is something which is essentially complete before its literature comes to be written . Williams says: “The society cannot be said to exist until the literature, like all other activities which are part of what we understand by society, has been written”(CAES 25). Society is not an activity fixed beyond writers but their activity is an activity within it. He elaborates that the society is not complex, not fully and immediately present, until the literature has been written, and that this literature, in prose as often as in any other form, can come through to stand as if on its own, with an intrinsic and permanent importance, so that we can see the rest of our living.(CAES 25)

Williams is critical of both the English school of criticism and orthodox Marxist position on the question of the relation between literature and society. English school criticism, in relating literature to what is called its “background”, presupposes the existence of society before its literature comes to be written. Williams argues that in orthodox Marxism, the features of a given society are described, its particular social relations, its class character and so on determined, and then the literature which was written during that period is related to these. He dismisses this orthodox Marxist position as the making of literature is part of the social process itself.

Williams’s theory and practice of sociological criticism is closer to the theories of the twentieth-century critic Leo Lowenthal than to those of Taine. Williams shares with Taine only the epistemological importance of the sociology of literature. Lowenthal, who has made remarkable contribution to the sociology of literature, observes that the task of the sociologist of literature “is to relate the

experience of the writer's imaginary characters and situations to the historical climate from which they derive. He has to transform the private equations of themes and stylistic means into social equation". (Lowenthal 10) Williams transforms the private world of the novelists from Dickens to Lawrence to specific social meaning. But he does not stop with the mere discovery of the analogy between the world of literature and the real society. His objective is to find out the nature of the values -"structure of feeling" - embedded in particular literary works. Williams shares with Lowenthal the view that the social meanings of the inner life of characters are related to problems of social change. Like Lowenthal, Williams values literature as it provides human response to social forces. Lowenthal conceives a theoretical approach to literature and interprets literary works historically and sociologically, avoiding the pitfalls of either a descriptive positivism or metaphysical speculation. He says that a genuine, explanatory history of literature must proceed on materialistic principles. It must investigate economic structures as they present themselves in literature as well as the impact which the materialistically interpreted work of art has in the economically determined society. Williams's revaluation of the English novelists from Dickens to Lawrence has such a historical, sociological and materialistic basis.

Williams's rereading of the plays in Modern Tragedy (1966) is an attempt to overcome the 'pitfalls' caused by 'metaphysical speculation'. He formulates a theory of tragedy on the historical, sociological and materialistic foundation. Modern Tragedy begins with an attack upon the attempts to separate literary and everyday uses of the word "tragedy". Williams refuses to accept the conventional

argument that a mining disaster, a burned-out family, however painful, are not tragic. Tragedy is part of the common texture of life of human societies; it is not a metaphysical occurrence. Therefore, Williams says that tragedy can be historically surmounted by the action of man struggling to transform intolerable conditions.

Williams opposes the methodological weakness in Marxism, its rigidity, abstractness and static character. He points out that Marxism becomes reductive in its mechanical application of the formula of base and superstructure. Williams's concept of social totality implies the relation between elements in a whole way of life. His strong belief in a theory of totality finds its first expression in Culture and Society. In the theories Lukacs and Goldmann, Williams perceives real advances from the rigid Marxist formula. He explains that the idea of totality is a precise weapon against capitalism. Williams defines his concept of totality in relation to Goldmann's concept of structure. Goldmann's concept of structure and his distinctions of kinds of consciousness are important for Williams. To Williams, structure is a term and method of consciousness. He explains the relation between literature and sociology in terms of totality and structure. The relation between literature and sociology is not a relation between various individual works and various empirical facts. The real relation is within a totality of consciousness: a relation that is assumed and then revealed rather than apprehended and then expounded. Thus, Williams's 'structure of feeling' and Goldmann's 'transindividual structure' converge to the same point.

By the time of writing Problems in Materialism and Culture (1980) Williams realizes that he was working in the tradition of Lukacs and Goldmann in

The Long Revolution. Williams accepts Goldmann's rejection of sociology of literature which is concerned with the relatively apparent relations between ordinary literature and actual consciousness. According to Goldmann's genetic structuralism the real sociology of literature should go beyond the level of content. Following Goldmann's genetic structuralism, Williams advances a new sociology of literature, therefore, is not mainly concerned with peripheral relations like correspondences of content and background and overt social relations between writers and readers. Williams says:

We should study, in the greatest literature, the organizing categories, the essential structures, which give such works their unity, their specific aesthetic character, their strictly literary quality; and which at the same time reveal to us the maximum possible consciousness of the social group - in real terms, the social class - which finally created them, in and through their individual authors. In the specific literary phenomenon, the constituting elements of real social life and beliefs are simultaneously actualized and differently experienced.(PMC 24)

Williams's concept of totality and Roland Barthe's concept of structural sociology are structurally similar. Williams analyses literature at the level of structural sociology. In Culture and Society he analyses the critique of industrialism and its attendant political economy by writers of the conservative and radical sides of the political spectrum. Here, Williams emphasises the idea of

art as a superior reality which offered an immediate basis for an important criticism of industrialism. This emphasis on art as a superior reality places Williams in the tradition of sociological criticism started by Taine and developed by Goldmann, Lukacs and Adorno. Williams like Adorno recognizes works of art as after images or replicas of empirical life and accept art as an autonomous entity and social fact.

Williams's first major attempt towards the formulation of a theory of art is seen in The Long Revolution. He develops his theory through a historical examination of the ideas of art from classical thought to those of the post-structuralist theories. It is identified that the idea of art as imitation gets transformed into "art as Creation" during Renaissance. Williams's objection to theories of art as creation and imitation is that both the traditions define art as a divine reality beyond man's reach. Williams argues that modern literary theories, that is theories in the romantic and realist tradition, also derive from classical theories as they are built on the subject-object, man-world or art-reality duality. Therefore Williams is not satisfied with the theory that art is reflection of reality or organization of reality, though there is a denial of supernatural reality in them. Though the theories of Freud and Jung contributed to a new definition of art, they also repeated the claim that there is a reality beyond man's reach. Williams equates the superior divine power in Classical and Renaissance theories with the "unconscious" in Freud and Jung and therefore does not accept the theories of art based on the new science of Freud and Jung. Jung's development of Freud's psychological theory too does not adequately explain the idea of "creative",

according to Williams. What Williams aims at is giving the artistic creation a material basis retaining its superior reality. This superior reality is different from the divine reality or supernatural reality beyond ordinary man's reach.

In Williams's theory of art society plays an important role. It is through art that the society finds its fullest expression. The artist is not the lonely explorer, but the voice of his community. Williams upholds the view that arts are certain intense forms of general communication. Art cannot exist unless a working communication can be reached, and this communication is an activity in which both artist and spectator participate. A human experience is actively offered and actively received when art communicates. According to Williams there can be no art below this activity threshold. He rejects any artistic theory that excludes communication. Communication implies not only transmission but reception and response. Williams lays emphasis on communications and the relation between art and society. In his insistence on these Williams echoes Plekhanov.

Like Plekhanov, Williams considers art, like any other social phenomena, from the standpoint of the materialist conception of history. He shares with Plekhanov the conviction that the development of thought and knowledge is the ultimate cause of the historical movement of mankind. The distinction of art from ordinary living and the dismissal of art as unpractical or secondary are common errors, according to Williams. The individual creative expression is part of the general process. Williams illustrates the interaction between art and society in the following way. Values of art works cannot be adequately studied without reference to the particular society within which they are expressed. It is wrong to

suppose that the social explanation is determining or that the values and works are mere by-products. Art reflects its society and created elements which the society, as such, is not able to realize through new perceptions and responses. We find in art evidence of the deadlocks and unresolved problems of the society. This kind of explanation of the relation between art and society has a bearing on the theories of Lukacs and Adorno . Adorno suggests that art loses its foundation when it gains complete freedom from external purposes. Therefore art has to be defined by its relation to society. But it is both an autonomous entity and a social fact.

Williams's aesthetic theory emphasizes the organic relation between art and society. It is derived from his theories of the relation between individual and society. Therefore his ideas about the place of the individual in society would throw more light on his aesthetic theory. Freud's theory separating the individual from society is rejected by Williams. But he accepts Eric Fromm's mediating concept. "the social character", with which Fromm applies psychoanalysis to explain sociology. In The Long Revolution Williams quotes Fromm to substantiate the view that in the medieval period the individual was defined in relation to the group he belonged to. Quoting Eric Fromm, Williams argues that in the medieval period a person was identical with his role in society. For instance, an individual was identified as a peasant, an artisan, a knight, etc... Fromm does not advocate the application of psychoanalysis where economic, technical, or political facts provide the real and sufficient explanation of social questions. Williams's recommendation of psychology as the mediating element between society and literature can be considered an elaboration of Plekhanov's insistence

on the place of psychology in the study of literature. Psychology as the mediating process is yet another common theoretical point shared by Williams and Lowenthal. Lowenthal says that psychology must be considered as one of the principal mediating processes in the field of literary studies.

Williams's sociological literary criticism finds its direct expression in The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence. The English novel from Dickens to Lawrence is here examined from a sociological angle. Williams constantly highlights the limitations of conventional criticism which ignores the sociological and historical dimensions of a work of art. The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence unravels the history and culture that went into the making of English novels from Dickens to Lawrence. The changes in the English novels from Dickens to Lawrence are delineated mainly through the discussion of Dickens, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Hardy, Conrad, Joyce and Lawrence.

According to Williams, the novels of the eighteen forties do not reflect the respective society but they try to define it and in their attempt at defining the society they also participate in the common social process. Historical and social changes altered not only outward forms but also inward feelings, experience and self- definition which lie deep in the novels of this period. Williams recognizes Dickens as the novelist of genius in the critical eighteen forties which witnessed the remaking of the novel in the eighteen forties. Dickens incorporates into his novels a history and culture that had been excluded by his predecessors. Williams makes a vehement attack on the conventional criticism which undervalued the socio-cultural importance of Dickens. He opposes the existing standards of

criticism which worked against Dickens and excluded him from the 'great tradition'. He finds value in Dickens as he offered "the finished articles: the social and psychological products"(TENDL 11). According to Williams, the originality of Dickens lies in his ability to dramatize social institutions and consequences which are not accessible to ordinary physical observation. Dickens presents those institutions and consequences as if they were persons or natural phenomena. Individual moral questions get transformed into social questions in Dickens's novels and Williams observes this as the essential pattern of all Dickens's works. Dickens's novels are basically his social criticism.

The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence came out in 1972. Based on a Cambridge lecture course, it combines informality with close insistence of argument. Williams proposes that the central concern of the English novel in this period is "the exploration of community: the substance and meaning of community"(TENDL 34) at a time when that substance and meaning is more uncertain than ever before. This exploration is one of form and language, not only of content. With The Great Tradition(1948) implicitly in his view Williams seeks to reinstate Dickens and Hardy in the lineage of the English novel, and to reopen what he sees, rightly, as a crucial debate, focused by the Wells / James dispute, in the development of fiction. He defends James's novels against Wells's unjust attacks, and correctly stresses their strong consciousness of money power and property, but he also argues that the general issues of the dispute are not as easily settled in James's favour as much twentieth century criticism has assumed. The

split between the 'personal-psychological and the social -sociological' novel is still at the heart of our creative concerns.

Williams questions conventional criticism which finds continuity from George Eliot to Henry James. He pleads for a more central tradition from George Eliot to Hardy and then to Lawrence. Williams emphasizes the need to examine Wuthering Heights from a sociological perspective and condemns conventional literary criticism in which the social experience in the novel undergoes reduction. He is of the opinion that the experience in Wuthering Heights is quite central to its time. In the case of Hardy, Williams challenges the common tendency to reduce Hardy's fiction to the impact of urban alien on the timeless pattern of English rural life. Williams believes that the more common pattern "is the relation between the changing nature of country living, determined as much by its own pressures as by pressures from 'outside', and one or more characters who have become in some degree separated from it yet to remain by some tie of family inescapably involved"(TENDL 34), Williams recognizes Hardy as a major novelist.

Williams places Hardy, George Eliot and Lawrence in a cultural tradition which is central to English life. What is important in them is that they keep as the basis of their fiction an ordinary world. The power of the ordinary world is so strong in Hardy that Williams recognizes his fiction as 'major fiction'. Similarly Williams argues that the central crisis in Conrad is very human and social. The symbolic and metaphysical dimension in Conrad over-emphasized by conventional criticism, is only secondary. The social and historical meaning of

Conrad's fiction is neglected by conventional literary criticism. Williams identifies the substantial reality, the living variety in the observations of Bloom in Ulysses. One of the most striking observations Williams makes is that there is the presence of an ordinary language in Ulysses. The significance of Lawrence is that his problems were central to a main current of growth in the society.

The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence represents a particular stage in the evolution of Williams as a critic. This state can be rightly called the Pre-Marxian state in the critical career of Williams. Distancing himself from Scrutiny and Marxism, Williams takes an almost intermediary position at this stage. The English Novel is an attempt at deconstructing "the great tradition" of English novel set by F.R. Leavis. One of the striking differences between Leavis and Williams is that Williams includes Dickens in the map of his major fiction, whereas Dickens has no place in "the great tradition" of Leavis. Another significant inclusion of Williams is Hardy. From George Eliot, Leavis suddenly passes to Henry James while Williams completely excludes Henry James. Terry Eagleton highlights the influence of Leavis on Williams even in the pre-Marxian phase of his critical career in which he attempts a break with the Scrutiny position. In this context Eagleton comments on The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence:

It is a powerful plea for the English tradition not, to be sure, Leavis's tradition, exactly, for suppressed links are inserted (Hardy), lines of continuity consequently redrawn and the political assumptions forcefully at odds with Leavisian

ideology. But for all that the book is rewriting of the great tradition from an alternative stand point rather than a total displacement of that critical terrain.(CI 36)

Though Eagleton interprets Williams's work on the English novel as an implicit retort to Leavis's The Great Tradition, he does not consider Williams's attempt as a total displacement of Leavis's great tradition.

Now let us examine Williams's theory of tragedy. It is based on the dualism of individual and society. He rejects the traditional classification of tragedy into personal and social. According to Williams, tragedy is not the conflict between an individual and the forces that destroy him. Williams develops a theory of tragedy from the historical, sociological and materialistic sources. Modern Tragedy is a rejoinder to George Steiner's The Death of Tragedy. The book is an especially interesting, wide-ranging discussion, which combines careful argument with some loosening of academic constraint. Williams tells us, at the outset of Modern Tragedy, that the book is written from the intersection, in a specific life, of the 'many roads' by which we come to tragedy - as 'an immediate experience, a body of literature, a conflict of theory, an academic problem'(MT 13). He challenges the distinction between academic and popular uses of the term;

The events which are not seen as tragic are deep in the pattern of our own culture: war, famine, work, traffic, politics. To see no ethical content or human agency in such events, or to say that we cannot connect them with general meanings, and especially with permanent and universal

meanings, is to admit a strange and particular bankruptcy,
which no rhetoric of tragedy can finally hide. (MT 49)

The challenge to the distinction between 'tragedy' in its popular sense and permanent and universal meanings combines with an attack on the 'universalist character of most tragic theory', and, especially, the assumption of a permanent, universal human nature. To reject that assumption necessarily transforms the problem: "Tragedy is then not a single and permanent kind of fact, but a series of experiences and conventions and institutions... the varieties of tragic experience are to be interpreted by reference to the changing conventions and institutions.

The assault on universalist notions has now become a critical commonplace - though that does not, in itself, invalidate it. But there is contradiction between Williams's attack on such assumptions and his implication that the experiences popularly called 'tragic' are indeed such. He seems to shift between a rejection of universalism and a desire to endow experiences excluded from some academic definitions of tragedy with universal or at least general significance. His definition of tragedy is very broad: "All that is common, in the work we call tragedies, is the dramatization of a particular and grievous disorder and its resolution" (MT 53) . But this could surely also apply to many works usually called 'comedies' or 'romances'. On one level, Williams's assimilation of revolution to tragedy, especially in the twentieth century, is understandable, it also seems like a dubious distancing and aestheticizing of human suffering even allowing for Williams's promise that we should identify revolution, not solely

with violence or a sudden capture of power, but with “the changes in the form, activity of a society, in its deepest structure of relationships and feeling”.(MT 76)

Williams wants to broaden the definition of tragedy, but also to wrest it away from assumptions of the impossibility of change, the ineradicability of evil, the inevitability of suffering. He seeks to analyse “the structure of tragedy in our own culture”(MT 62) and to question the “complacencies of our fashionable despair and the grossness of our defensive cynicism” (MT 202). He challenges the apotheosis of death as an absolute in a world without God or immortality:

The life-death contradiction is limited, in fact, to the kind of individual consciousness especially characteristic of bourgeois philosophy. ‘I exist - I shall die’ seems absolute, within this experience, but Camus sometimes recognized, at the limits of his strength that ‘we exist’ is a permanent alternative proposition, and if this is so, then ‘we exist’ - we shall not die’ is in fact a resolution, and one which many men have in practice attained (MT 188).

But these propositions are not, as Williams implies, mutually exclusive. The dialectic of death is precisely the tension between ‘I exist - I shall die’ / ‘we exist - we shall not die’: precisely the contradiction between the fact that while this individual existence will be cancelled, other existences will, presumably, persist. Williams moves close to a form of bad faith here, to an attempt to assimilate the ‘I’ into the ‘we’, to forget death as a personal reality in an abstraction that only gains its significance from the fact that death is a personal

reality. Others go on despite Williams's death, and this death, like any death, gives meaning to that persistence: but the persistence does not dissolve the death. Williams has gone from others and others have gone from him, irretrievably; and however much we reiterate 'we shall not die', that individual loss is irreducible.

This focuses a general problem in Williams's work. The rejection of a facile despair is commendable. It is implied that all 'personal' problems, fears, worries, etc., are ultimately social and political - Williams's aversion to what he calls, in a gross misrepresentation, Freud's 'inhuman assumptions' (MT 107) is significant here and can be eliminated or at least radically ameliorated by social and political change. This suggests a regressive element in Williams; his nostalgia for community, his desire to create a future community using all the resources of the self, the isolated awareness: to dissolve into the collective: we shall not die. And this relates to his uneasy aesthetization of revolution: for 'we shall not die' can serve to diminish the significance of individual death in the revolutionary process. True Williams does not formally endorse this:

The tragic action, in the deepest sense, is not the confirmation of disorder, but its experience, its comprehension and its resolution. In our own time, this action is general, and its common name is revolution. We have to see the evil and suffering, in the actual disorder that makes revolution necessary, and in the disordered struggle against the disorder. We have to recognize this suffering in a close and immediate experience, and not cover it with

names. But we follow the whole action: not only the crisis,
but the energy released by it, the spirit learned in it.(MT 83)

One important aspect of Modern Tragedy is that it shows Williams's desire for community. Williams shows a decided aversion to Lawrence for not portraying Birkin as a family man, a husband and father. Despite his attack on 'universalist' assumptions, he seems, in this argument, to assume that the family has a basic continuity that persists through social and political change. In fact, Williams thoroughly supports an institution that came under radical assault in the sixties: the bourgeois nuclear family. The idealistic and metaphysical foundations of the idea of modern tragedy developed from Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are proved irrelevant in Modern Tragedy. Williams stresses the need for historical and sociological orientation. He observes:

To examine the tragic tradition, that is to say, is not necessarily to expound a single body of work and thinking, to trace variations within an assumed totality. It is to look, critically and historically, at works and ideas which have certain evident links, and which are associated in our minds by a single and powerful word. It is, above all, to see these works and ideas in their immediate contexts, as well as in their historical continuity, and to examine their place and function in relation to other works and ideas, and to the variety of actual experience. (MT 16)

Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy, rooted in the 'crime of existence' and to which historical and ethical considerations are irrelevant, is replaced here by a concept of tragedy in which the action of tragedy and the action of history have been consciously connected. One of the glaring limitations of the existing traditions of tragedy, according to Williams, is that they all kept silent over the fact that tragedy arises from man's struggle against other men and not against inanimate things nor against mere institutions and social forms. To put it in other words, Williams relates the theory of tragedy to revolution.

Williams criticises the contemporary ideology of tragedy for being metaphysical and ahistorical. He argues that the major playwrights of the twentieth century are incapable of moving beyond the contemporary ideology of tragedy. The common practice of reducing Ibsen as the social critic, the romantic or the existentialist is wrong. "The liberal tragedy" with which Ibsen and Miller are associated does not receive the recognitions of Williams as it presents false relationships, false society and false condition of man. In 'liberal tragedy' the individual fights for his own life and the individual's struggle is seen as both necessary and tragic. Strindberg, O'Neill and Tennessee Williams presented a kind of tragedy "which ends with man bare and unaccommodated, exposed to the storm he has himself raised"(MT 106). Of course, Williams recognizes the creative genius of these writers. Williams's attack is on the practice of criticism which reduces their works to what is called "private tragedy" in which the whole attention is directed towards the family, and the disintegration of the family is seen as a tragic theme. What Williams inquires into in the plays of Eliot,

Pasternak, Chekov, Pirandello, Ionesco, Beckett, Brecht, Sartre and Camus, is the 'Structure of feeling' they embody. He sees how the works of these writers are structurally related in the total system of the society through the consciousness of the writers. The 'structure of feeling' Williams follows in these writers is not the result of a simple and direct determination if it is the writer's consciousness merging out of the complex network of inter-relationships. The structure of feeling expressed by the major twentieth century playwrights is the experience of hostility, guilt, illusion and meaninglessness. These are not metaphysical facts but lived experiences, in the words of Williams. The hostile or neutral society that appears in modern playwrights represents the twentieth century "structure of feeling". This structure of feeling is the real lived experience of a people who cease to understand their own fellowmen as well as their relationship with society.

The nineteenth century realist tradition, according to Williams, reacted against the condition of society. But the individual in the twentieth century literature reacts not against the condition of society, but against society as such. Williams is of the opinion that the twentieth century concept of anti-art and anti-hero are necessitated by the new structure of feeling. Rejecting the contemporary theory of tragedy on the basis of the structure of feeling identified above, Williams comes to the conclusion that Eliot and Pasternak end in sacrifice and resignation, while Chekov, Pirandello, Ionesco and Beckett end in "tragic deadlock and stalemate". Sartre and Camus remain locked in "tragic despair" and they present isolated, ineffectual gestures of revolt. Of the major twentieth century

dramatists, only Brecht receives the full recognition of Williams. Williams observes:

Tragedy in some of its older senses is certainly rejected. There is nothing ennobling about this kind of failure in *Mother Courage*. It is a matter of human choice, and the choice is not once for all, it is a matter of continuing history. The major achievement of Brecht's mature work is this recovery of history as a dimension of tragedy (MT 202).

Williams is a theoretician of realism. By realism Williams does not mean "stocktaking descriptions of shops or back-parlours or station waiting room" (TLR 279). Realism, according to Williams, is not an identifiable object. It is a way of describing certain methods and attitudes, and the descriptions naturally vary in the ordinary exchange and developments of experience. Williams is of the opinion that the ordinary criterion of realism is still applicable to a majority of modern novels, as elements of ordinary experience are evident in modern novels. What is important in the realist tradition is the balance involved in creating and judging the quality of a whole way of life in terms of qualities of persons. Neither the individual nor the society is given priority in the realist tradition. The essence of realism, according to Williams, lies in maintaining the balance in creating and judging the quality of a whole way of life.

Williams employs the general sociological approach in his works like The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence and Writing in Society. He examines the relation between literature and society, reader and writer and the

social origin of writers in Writing in Society. He clearly follows the changes in the form of drama and substantiated that the changes in form are directly related to changes in society. Placing *Hippolytus* of Euripides and *Phedre* of Racine against their respective societies, Williams demonstrates the influence of the social order on the dramatic form of Hippolytus and Phedre. Studying the function of dialogue and monologue in relation to the plays of Shakespeare, Williams draws our attention to the social relation that determines the form of communication among characters, The effect of changing social pattern on the form of drama receives William's attention in The Long Revolution also.

Coming back to Williams's observations on realism, we can see that Williams finds an extreme reaction to realism in the novels of Virginia Woolf. The Waves represents a damaging imbalance. Williams views it as the object - realist and subject-impressionist polarization that has taken place in the history of the modern novel. But the division of the realist novel into the separate traditions of 'Social novel' and 'Personal novel' is the more essential polarization that has occurred since nineteen hundred. In the social novel there may be accurate observation and description of the general life. Williams describes it as aggregation in the social novel. Instead of this aggregation what is found in the personal novel is the accurate observation and description of persons. Thus, the personal novel offers units. But, Williams contends that life is neither aggregation nor unit, but a whole indivisible process and therefore both personal novel and social novel lack a dimension. Williams highlights the need for a new realism. A changing world makes necessary a changed reality. Reality has to be established

continually. The establishment of a new reality is not the result of individual effort, but a common effort. According to Williams, art is one of the highest forms of the process of establishing reality.

The first major emergence of the Lukacsian problematic in Williams's work is the chapter on 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel' in The Long Revolution, a book which is written to dismiss Expressionism, for the first time. As modernism changes under the pressure of post-war capitalism so it splits the working class in its wake: "an internal division in the working class was occurring, separating the politically and industrially active sectors of it from the rest of the class" (PL 286) . If this split sounds uncannily like the fissure that is presumed to have afflicted the realist novel, it is no accident that one of Williams's earliest attempts to evoke it, in an account of that structure of feeling in contemporary working-class consciousness, should have come in part three of The Long Revolution, which immediately follows the analysis of 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel: 'The realist totality becomes the secret utopian home of a comprehensive proletarian activism which no longer exists as such. From now on, certainly, the rhetoric of realist revival becomes a substantial component of Williams's work and gives the Lukacs-minded comparativists the evidence they need to press home their case. The New Left Review interviewers point out that there is a recurrent tendency in Williams's discussions of realism to slip from a mature Lukacsian definition of the term - the successful integration of individual and society, to an earlier version of it - an individual grindingly encountering society as an objective outer limit to the attainment of personal desire. They

alertly pinpoint one such moment of slippage, when ‘you seem to be using a new definition of realism now’ (PL 222). This new definition, derived from Lukacs’s Theory of the Novel, was dismissed by him in later comments on the book as being, precisely, Expressionistic.

Tony Pinkney in his essay ‘Raymond Williams and the Two Faces of Modernism’ points out the limit to Williams’s commitment to realism. The modernism which ‘splits’ the proletariat is in some sense its own product, since it had formerly split apart realism in its turn. In Politics and Letters, Williams throws out, as a somewhat casual hypothesis, the suggestion that ‘the arrival of an articulate, newly organized and modern working class presented qualitatively new problems to the kind of integrated and extended social vision which had been the major achievement of the bourgeois realists’(PL 262). But clearly some deep intuitive sense of this casual observation has funded his literary oeuvre throughout. No socialist could, on this showing, be a realist novelist in any straightforward sense, and certainly Williams’s comments on this issue in Politics and Letters are ambivalent, at times evasive. And his novelistic practice too, enacting in this the realist paradigm of Theory of the Novel, forces us up against the objective limits set by the form itself on the ‘desire’ of the individual socialist writer. In Border Country, the formal structure of the novel is exactly congruent with the structure of the political defeat at the book’s heart - to the point where one is inclined to posit causal relations between them. Most writers on Border Country have registered the extraordinary metaphorical austerity of the book’s prose, far removed from Williams’s undergraduate enthusiasm for Joyce in

particular and modernism at large. At its best, the style recreates the experience and rhythm of work in the community itself, dogged, sparing, tight-lipped and dry-eyed, a tenacious effort to win a small margin of freedom from an often difficult Nature. A notable example is offered by the pages recording and enacting Matthew Price's insight that 'this was not anybody's Valley to make into a landscape. Work had changed and was still changing it' -pages which tackle and defeat a long Romantic tradition of aestheticizing the rural environment. Yet this same purged style ultimately, in its systematic exclusions, entails other and less desirable commitments: close to the community in one sense, it marginalizes or even abolishes it in another. In Politics and Letters Williams reports his desire to avoid "the Welsh style that had got established in England", with its extreme verbal exuberance, free-associationism and metaphorical virtuosity" (PL 279). But to do so was to enact the founding gesture of the realist novel itself, which first moves into the local community, since it is there that it will effect its social-democratic extension of 'sympathy', but steps radically out of it, in its construction of the universal, disinterested, linguistically transparent Reason of its own narrative level.

Williams's critical career has been a cultural investigation of great intensity. Alan O'Connor introduces Williams as one of the important writers and thinkers about culture. J.C. Ward considers him the most eminent humanist writer on the concept of culture that contemporary British society has produced. Patrick Parrinder views Williams as a pioneer of cultural and media studies. These commentators prove beyond doubt the pre-eminence of Williams in the field of

cultural materialism. In The Cultural Critics Lesley Johnson examines Williams's cultural critique in relation to Arnold and Leavis. Tony Dunn in his article "The Evaluation of Cultural Studies" discovers Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy and Williams's Culture and Society as the first attempts which undertook the study of culture in the proper direction. Until Williams and Hoggart entered the field, cultural criticism was confined to literature or history, and culture was identified with religion or accomplishment. It was used as a metaphysical idea to confront social disintegration. Williams and Hoggart try to break away from the existing tradition of cultural studies in certain general trends.

Williams tries to formulate his theory of culture through a deconstruction and reconstruction of the Arnoldian tradition of culture. In the nineteenth century, the most forceful expression of the notion of culture was given by Arnold. He employed 'culture' as the central category in his commentaries on society and interpretation of literature. Arnold's concept of culture insists on a commitment to a set of values. To Arnold, culture is an internal condition as it believes in perfection and as it is the study and pursuit of perfection. Arnold says that the idea of perfection as an 'inward' condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilization. Arnold elaborates that culture.

is a study of perfection, and of harmonious perfection, general perfection, and perfection which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances (CA 48).

According to Arnold, culture works against machinery, looks beyond it and hates hatred. Arnold takes recourse to culture as a category to analyse social problems. To him, material wealth is not an index of national greatness. He questions the common tendency to equate greatness of England with rich material resources. F.R. Leavis employed the same concept of culture as advanced by Arnold. Like Arnold, Leavis took culture to the heart of his social analysis. The influence of the classical ideal of Renaissance humanism is evident in Leavis as in Arnold. Leavis emulated the Arnoldian concept of culture as perfection and stressed that men of culture are better and nobler individuals.

Williams is critical of the English School tradition. He uses its critique of society as a spring-board to evolve his own idea of culture. The first phase of William's cultural theory is the partial rejection and acceptance of the Arnoldian tradition. This theoretical position is similar to his critical policy of distancing himself from the English School tradition and Marxism. Diagnosing the drawbacks in the tradition of culture set by Arnold, Eliot and Leavis, Williams attempts to correct them using some of the Marxist categories of culture without completely embracing Marxism. Lesley Johnson aptly remarks:

Williams was deeply influenced by Leavis; but he was able to break with that literary tradition while continuing to draw strength from its critique of society and its social vision. It provided him with intellectual roots, but he rejected its hierarchical conception of society. At the same time, Williams did not confront the ideological preconceptions of

this tradition, so that he was often caught within its problematic (TCC 152).

Williams agrees with Leavis that society is worth its existence only if it has something more than its own immediate and contemporary experience. But he has disagreement with Leavis on that ‘something’ which is definitely beyond the immediate and contemporary experience. In the English School tradition this ‘something’ represents a minority culture which Williams rejects. He is equally critical of the Marxism of the nineteen thirties which subordinates this something to economic considerations. Instead of minority culture Williams pleads for a “common culture” in which there will be common educational provision”, “equity in material distribution” and a “community of experience” all based on “full democratic process”.

In formulating his theory of culture Williams directly addresses Leavis rather than Arnold. Two important concepts in Leavis’s critique are “the loss of the organic community” and “minority culture” Leavis repeatedly expresses his lament for an organic community lost in the advent of the modern industrial society. However, Arnold, Leavis and Eliot are important writers for Williams as they are explicit about culture and they use it for the establishment of values. What is of interest to Williams in Eliot is his argument that culture is a whole way of life. Eliot’s notion of culture rules out the idea of an individual search for culture as a social goal, as in Bloomsbury faction and the “minority culture” of Leavis. The following definition of culture by Eliot prefigures Williams’s notion of culture:

We only mean that the culture of the individual cannot be isolated from that of the group, and that the culture of the group cannot be abstracted from that of the whole society: and that of our notion of 'perfection' must take all three senses of 'culture' into account at once (Eliot 24).

It is necessary for us to understand that Williams's theory of culture evolved through four of his major texts. These are Culture and Society, The Long Revolution, Marxism and Literature and Culture. There are other texts also which bear testimony to his cultural investigation. In The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, Williams unravels the history and culture that went into the making of English novels from Dickens to Lawrence. Culture and Society, The Long Revolution and Marxism and Literature represent three different stages in the evolution of Williams's cultural theory. Williams's inquiry into a theory of culture begins in Culture and Society which is regarded as a seminal and formative text in the field of cultural studies.

Williams begins his cultural investigation in Culture and Society. on the basis of the concept of culture advanced by leading English men of letters in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Culture and Society explores the idea of culture in relation to writers like Edmund Burke, William Cobbett, Robert Southey, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Carlyle, Dickens, Disraeli, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, A.W. Pugin, William Morris, W.H. Tawney, T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis and George Orwell. The list of writers shows that Williams is interested in "cultures" rather than "culture". In order to develop a

theory of a shared and collaborative culture he found it necessary to draw on ideas from the conservative and radical sides of the political spectrum.

The primary aim of The Long Revolution is to develop and apply concepts and approaches for the analysis of culture. The 'theory of culture' is defined as 'the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life'; the analysis of culture is 'the attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships'(TLR 630). Williams's totalizing approach - the attempt to see a whole structure and whole process - is an important shift in cultural analysis away from a focus on isolated disciplines. Culture and Society delineated the development, in the late nineteenth century, of an approach that used the quality of art as the index of the quality of a civilization. The totalizing tendency of The Long Revolution is a definite break from that approach.

As a heuristic device to investigate organizations of life, Williams develops the concept of 'structure of feeling'. He elaborates his theory of culture in relation to his concept of 'Structure of feeling'. In one sense, the 'structure of feeling' is the culture of a period. It is not learned in any formal way, but each new generation creates it - using, in part, elements from the past - as it shapes its response to the unique world it inherits. A 'structure of feeling' corresponds, in some ways, to the dominant 'Social character' - Erich Fromm's term, which Williams uses to denote "a valued system, of behaviour and attitudes"(TLR 63), but more important, it expresses the interaction between the dominant 'social character,' alternative 'social characters', and lived, experiential reality. In all

actual communities, it is a very deep and wide possession, since communication depends on it: but it is not uniform throughout a society, and is primarily evident in the dominant productive group. At this level, however, it is different from any distinguishable social character, as it has to cope, not only with the public ideals, but also with their experiences.

The fusion of 'structure' and 'feeling' epitomizes Williams's approach in all his work - a search for system combined with the desire to knowledge 'the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity'. - We may ask with 'structure of feeling', as with the 'wholeness' of 'a whole way of life', what constitutes it as a structure - why 'structure; rather than, say, a field of attitudes and emotions? How far is 'structure' more than a metaphor for 'firmness' and interconnectedness' - the metaphor the later twentieth century prefers to that of organic unity? The temporal dimensions of the concept are also a problem. 'Structure of Feeling' has synchronic implications, but Williams's stress, throughout his work, is diachronic, concerned with history, change. But how do 'structures of feeling' change, and in what sense, when they change, do they remain structures,? The Long Revolution seems to suggest that they change with "the new generation.... feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling"(TLR 65) But if a structure of feeling changes with each new generation, the difficulties remain of delimiting a 'generation' and of accounting for the possible persistence and co-existence of 'structure of feeling' across and within 'generations'. In his later,

work, Williams tries to define the concept more closely, but it remains a shifting signifier.

In recent years, the notion of 'structure' has been much used to challenge the idea of the free, autonomous individual: structures make men, not vice versa. Williams stresses in The Long Revolution, however, the role of human agency, indeed human creativity, in shaping 'structures of feeling' - and the 'creativity' is not confined to the artist, who partakes, rather, of a general human process of creativity and communication. Up to a point, Williams also commends the existentialist stress on authenticity, much in vogue in the nineteen-fifties. But he seeks to situate and complicate the notion of the lone 'outsider': an especially interesting analysis redefines what might be seen as a range of social types' - subject, servant, member, rebel, exile vagrant - as modes of relationships within a society. This analysis forms part of a wider challenge to the abstract notion of the 'individual', particularly as counterposed with a no less abstract notion of 'society'. But he does not dissolve the 'individual', affirming "It is right to recognize that we became individuals in terms of a social process, but still individuals are unique, through a particular heredity expressed in a particular history" (TLR 117). He counsels a balanced approach to the issue: "the experience we have now to interpret includes both the gains of individualism and its limits"(TLR 113). The individual society, or, in more recent parlance, subject/structure dichotomy is re-understood dialectically:

To begin with individuals have varying innate potentialities,
and thus receive social influence in varying ways. Further,

even if there is a common social character' or culture pattern each individual's social history, his actual network of relationships, is in fact unique. These are the basic individualizing factors, but again, as the unique potentialities and the unique history interact the very fact of the growth of self consciousness produces a distinct organization, capable both of self scrutiny and self direction. This autonomous self grows within a social process which radically influences it, but the degree of gained autonomy makes possible the observed next stage, in which the individual can help to change or modify the social process that has influenced and is influencing him (TLR 100-1).

Williams also proposes a kind of ontology, based partly on biology partly on sociology, to ground his political perspective: "If man is essentially a learning, creating and communicating being, the only social organization adequate to his nature is a participating democracy in which all of us, as unique individuals, learn communicate and control" (TLR 118).

In recent literary and cultural theory there has been a strong drive, well fuelled by post-structuralism to deny any but a mystifying role to concepts of the individual. This is especially strange when it is fused with a fervent urge for political liberation, since it is difficult to see who or what is to be liberated, or to how or what the prospect of liberation is likely to appeal. Williams's approach in The Long Revolution is more complex: it seeks not to deny individuals nor to

negate the uniqueness of each , but to understand the processes and practices by which ‘individuation’ - much more than merely an Althusserian interpellation into imaginary subject positions - takes place. And William does not aim, here, only to interpret the world, but to change it; to contribute to the creation or articulation, of a new structure of feeling.

Williams’s approach to cultural analysis in The Long Revolution combines the best aspects of structural, historical, and humanist awareness. It stresses complexity and difficulty, and stays alert to the dangers of reductionism and over-simplification, but it does not use these to evade attempts at analysis. But its analysis tries to avoid isolating categories like structure, feeling, individual, society, consumer, market. It strives to totalize but not to deny specificity or division. Williams engages in a characteristic effort to expand narrow partial ways of thinking and feeling, to make synchronic and diachronic connections, to press on and through where fatigue and prejudice would stop; he tries never passively to accept but always actively to comprehend.

Williams’s notion of culture implies a cultural pattern emerging out of different cultures. Interpreting from the angle of ‘structure of feeling’, the culture of a period is the structurally organized complex of different relationships. By culture Williams envisages the process of finding the essential relation, the true interaction between patterns learned and created in the mind and patterns communicated and made active in relationships, conventions and institutions. The result of this process also forms part of the culture. The process of understanding the relationship between the human feeling expressed in a work of art and the

society thus becomes a cultural investigation. But it is important that the definition of culture, according to Williams, is not complete without reference to industry and institutions which are as strong and valuable an expression of direct human feeling as the major art and thought. Williams's unique position as a cultural critic is that, while rejecting the Arnoldian tradition of cultural analysis, he does not accept the base-superstructure formula used by traditional Marxists. The intermediary position between English School criticism and Marxism taken by Williams in literary criticism remains unchanged in the formulation of his cultural theory.

Williams dissociates himself from a kind of Marxism characterised by an extreme form of reductionism. Williams shifts the emphasis from a view of "determined culture" to a view of culture as a practice which relates interactively with economic and political processes, shaping and conditioning these as well as being shaped and conditioned by them. Thus there is an emphasis on the autonomy of culture in Williams's theory. The plea for cultural autonomy effects a theoretical link between Williams and Lukacs and Goldmann. In Culture and Society and The Long Revolution Williams keeps a considerable distance from Marxism. His later works like Marxism and Literature (1977) heavily draw on Marxism. This can be called a period of transition. In this regard Lesley Johnson observes:

By the late 1960 s he was addressing himself more and more to the development of a Marxist Cultural theory. He shifted his attention from questions of cultural change to issues such

as those concerned with the relationship between base and superstructure (TCC 165).

But even after the acceptance of Marxist categories for analysis of culture, Williams argued for a cultural theory which takes all cultural production as its appropriate material.

Williams defines his latest theoretical position as cultural materialism which, he states, is developed out of the necessity to revise Marxist cultural theory. He makes it clear that this is the theoretical position he held in Marxism and Literature. He adds that this is:

a theory of culture as a (social and material) productive process and of specific practices, of 'arts' as social uses of material means of production (from language as material 'practical consciousness' to the specific technologies of writing and forms of writing, through to mechanical and electronic communications systems) (PMC 243)

The article "Distance" in What I Came to Say (1989) appears to be an application of the theory of "cultural materialism". "Distance" is a thought-provoking essay which criticises the British television and democracy. It was written during the Falkland War. In this essay Williams draws our attention to the "culture of alienation, within which men and women are reduced to models, figures, and the quick cry in the throat"(WICS 43). He welcomes the collapse of the old authority of writing, which had occasioned distress to many and argues for high literacy

which shows us the remarkable historical diversity of modes of address and composition.

Literature, according to Williams, is a shaping of the world, a transformative process by which the author acts upon the world. From the angle of cultural materialism, literature becomes a means of production, a social activity whose status cannot be accounted for by the concept of ideological superstructure. Each author operates within a network of pre-existing social relation consisting of literary conventions, literary traditions and language itself. Thus Williams tries to demystify literature. Similarly, Williams refutes the Chomskian and Saussurian views of language. Language is an active process of shared system of signs or symbols . But he criticises orthodox Marxism which reduces language and literature to superstructural by-product of collective labour,

Williams tries to define the nature and scope of a new sociology of culture in Culture (1981). Culture represents the continuation of a theory he began in the Culture and Society (1958). The new sociology of culture Williams advances here rests on the foundation of cultural materialism. Williams's "cultural materialism" implies the convergence of idealist culture and materialist culture. The three aspects of cultural sociology that are to be emphasized, according to Williams, are the social condition of art, the social material in art works and social relation in them That is, a sociology of culture must concern itself with the institutions and formations of cultural production with specific artistic forms. It is not enough to explain the relation between culture and society in universal and general terms. The sociology of culture Williams pleads for is historical sociology.

Williams is of the opinion that revolutionary change will be accomplished by the spontaneous intensification of cultural exchange, the deepening of free communication and the liberation of creative expression. According to Williams, a genuine cultural theory offers to supersede or suppress theories of particular arts while it offers to replace or enclose general sociological theories. This view of cultural theory corresponds to Williams's concept of culture as a totality. Williams clarifies that a proper cultural theory does not belong to an intermediate area between arts and society. A true theory of culture should challenge such separations. Williams also makes it clear that a true cultural theory cannot exempt itself from the most rigorous examination of its own social and historical situations and formations.

Different leftist critics have put forward their arguments for and against Williams's culturalism. On the contrary, the final stage, culturalism, is by and large welcomed by the left circles. Based on Williams's theoretical position in works such as Culture and Society and The Long Revolution, critics like Terry Eagleton are provoked by Williams's rejection of the "base-superstructure" formula in Marxist cultural theories. Williams always opposed the rigidity of the formula which laid emphasis on a determining economic base. In Williams's culturalism, we cannot find the concept of purely class-directed cultures. May be, this is another reason for protest from orthodox Marxist critics.

Terry Eagleton acknowledges Williams's "Cultural materialism". He appreciates Williams's attempt at transforming cultural studies from the relative crudity in which he found them. He points out Williams's belief in the centrality

of “meanings and values” as the plus point of his cultural criticism. Critics like Anthony Barnett justify Williams’s early theory.

Williams attempts to establish a common culture and a whole way of life. So he accepts the views that contribute to common culture, found in the writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth century writers. That is why Arnold, Eliot, Leavis, A.W.Pugin, W.H. Mallock and Allick West are accepted in Culture and Society. Williams’s latest theory of cultural materialism signifying his move away from received Marxist cultural theory, marks the convergence of Leavisite and Marxist elements. The major influences on Williams’s cultural theory are Antonio Gramsci, Lukacs and Goldmann. He shows structural identities with these writers. He has expressed his indebtedness to Lukacs and Goldmann. He shows structural identities with these writers. He has expressed his indebtedness to Lukacs and Goldmann in forming his cultural theory. The theories of Adorno and Benjamin have their impact on Williams’s cultural critique.

Commentators on Williams agree on the influence of Marxism on Williams’s writings. In his Criticism and Ideology, Terry Eagleton observes that the history of Marxist criticism that does not pay adequate attention to Williams’s theories will be seriously crippled. In The Cultural Critics, Lesley Johnson stresses the necessity to look at Williams’s writings in the context of the central Marxist debate in England. In his work Raymond Williams, J.P.Ward identifies a final group of Williams’s works which embody the sustained engagement with cultural Marxism. Anthony Barnett also brings to notice the dominance of

Williams in the twentieth century British Marxian aesthetics. On his leanings towards Marxism in the final stage of his critical career, Williams himself says:

The situation is now very different, Marxism, in many fields and perhaps especially in cultural theory, has experienced at once a significant revival and a related openness and flexibility of theoretical development My first contacts with Marxist literary argument occurred when I came to Cambridge to read English in 1939: not in the Faculty but in widespread student discussion. I was already relatively familiar with Marxist, or at least socialist and communist, political and economic analysis and argument(ML 1).

Williams develops his own Marxian cultural theory through reexaminations, revaluations and redefinitions of classical Marxism. The repeated attempts at revaluations and redefinitions make his attitude to Marxism complex and sometimes ambiguous. Williams's final theoretical position is "Cultural materialism". It emerges out of an epistemological break in his work. His heavy stress on Marxism forms the essential thrust of his final theory. He says: "Marxist literary theory seems to me in practice to depend. It is not only an analysis of elements of a body of thinking; it explores significant variations and at particular points, introduces concepts of my own..It is a position which can be briefly described as cultural materialism..."(ML 5).

This part of the third chapter attempts to examine the following things: Williams's attitude to Marxism, his application of Marxism to literary works, his

redefinition of Marxist categories and his position among British Marxist critics and also major European critics.

Common to all Marxist literary theories is the intransigent emphasis on the relation between literature and reality. Marxist literary theories are strongly critical of the practice of isolating literary from history and society. They do not accept literature as a product of writer's mental process. Art is a social product for the Marxist critics. Examined against these general principles, Williams's theories have definite orientation towards Marxism.

Marxist literary theories can be broadly classified into two: those which base themselves unconditionally on the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin uncritically and accept the role of the communist party and those who take recourse to the writings of Marx and Engels but often revising and redefining their pronouncements without any commitment to the party. The former is referred to as "orthodox Marxism" and the latter as neo-Marxism by non-Marxists. The neo-Marxists refer to orthodox Marxism as vulgar Marxism. The essential difference between Vulgar Marxism and neo-Marxists is that the former upheld that there is straightforward deterministic relation between economic base and ideological superstructure. They saw literary text as being determined by the economic base and ideological superstructure. They saw literary text as being determined by the economic base. While the orthodox Marxists use Marxism as a dogma, the neo-Marxists subject it to reexamination and redefine it. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Lucien Goldman and Frederic Jameson are neo-Marxists in this sense. The theories of Raymond Williams share common characteristics with neo-Marxist

literary theory of the nineteen thirties held that literature must be examined in relation to social and historical reality as interpreted by Marx.

British Marxian critics of the nineteen thirties used Marxist doctrines of other disciplines, especially economics, to interpret literature. The central Marxist concept that economic base of a society determines its superstructure - ideology, religion and literature- was uncritically employed by critics of the 1930's to interpret literature. Christopher Caudwell, Alick West and Arnold Kettle dominated the British Marxist literary critical scene of the nineteen thirties. Williams does not share with Caudwell, his immediate predecessor, any theoretical continuity. Caudwell's criticism characterized by utilitarianism and idealism represented a self -contradictory theoretical position. The dialectical relation between art and society did not receive his attention. Williams expresses his dissatisfaction with the English Marxism of the nineteen thirties in Politics and Letters:

People often ask me why I didn't carry on from the Marxist arguments of the thirties. The reason is that I felt they had led men into an impasse. I had become convinced that their answers did not meet the questions, and that I had got to be prepared to meet the professional objections (52).

Caudwell's interpretation of literature was reductive and mechanistic. His Illusion and Reality exemplifies the crudities of Marxist criticism prevalent in the nineteen-thirties. In this work he adopts the orthodox Marxist view in discussing the growth and development of English poetry. According to Caudwell, the

Elizabethan age is the period of primitive accumulation, a necessary stage, before the realization of capitalism. In England, during this stage, the bourgeoisie was preparing the ground for capitalism by seizure of church lands and treasure which resulted in the closing of monasteries and extinction of feudal lords. In the period of primitive accumulation, conditions for the growth of bourgeois class are created lawlessly. To establish his freedom every bourgeois tries to discard any sort of restriction around him. This was the spirit of the Elizabethan age and Caudwell observes that this gets reflected in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faust*. The following illustration from Illusion and Reality exemplifies Caudwell's attempt at establishing correspondence between the society at the stage of transition from feudalism to capitalism and its literature:

Intemperate will, 'bloody, bold, resolute, without norm or measure, is the spirit of this era of primitive accumulation. The absolute individual will overriding all other wills is therefore the principle of life for the Elizabethan age. Marlowe's *Faust* and *Tamburlaine* express his principle in its naivest form (IR 69).

This is an example of the mechanical way of connecting literature with the social structure.

Caudwell traces the course of development of English poetry. In this connection, he says that the poems of Blake, Byron, Keats, Wordsworth and Shelley express the ideological revolution of the bourgeois at the next stage, the Industrial Revolution in the development of capitalism. The landed aristocracy

and the demands it made for its growth was confronted by the industrial capital and its demands, 'The landed aristocracy, the former bourgeois distinguished from the industrial bourgeois opposed the free expansion of industrial bourgeois The former regarded the latter as their oppressors and they claimed to safeguard the interests of common people while they spoke against the industrial bourgeois. Caudwell finds parallels between the revolt of the landed aristocracy and the romantic revolt against existing system. Though Shelley also represents bourgeois remantic revolt, Caudwell finds a genuine dynamic force in him. He says that Shelley in his pleadings for the bourgeois pleads also for the whole of suffering humanity. He sees in Wordsworth a poet who enjoys a comfortable income and lives on the products of industrialism while he yearns for Nature unspoilt by industrialism. Therefore, Caudwell comes to the conclusion that Wordsworth's Nature poetry is artificial.

It is to be noted that Williams does not imbibe anything from his immediate predecessor, Caudwell. He, as Eagleton says, develops his theory by passing what went before him. Caudwell's "illusion and reality" theory is rejected by Williams as it emerges from Caudwell's misinterpretation of Marxism and its wrong way of application to literature. Williams begins his Marxist discourse in "Marxism and Culture" an important chapter in Culture and Society. It is mainly an attack on the rigid deterministic and mechanistic tendencies in orthodox Marxism. Williams illustrates with examples how Alick West and Caudwell misread Marx's original views and theorized on the relation between art and reality. According to Williams, Caudwell's description of modern poetry as

“capitalist poetry” is the result of the wrong methodology of applying Marxist formula to literature. Williams rejects such descriptions of literature. This does not mean that Williams is a supporter of capitalism and supporter of democracy and socialism. In The Long Revolution Williams denounces the capitalist system for its inequalities and evils, and calls for a democratic socialist system to take its place. He exposes the dangers involved in capitalism and makes clear the reason for capitalism to be ended.

Williams’s rejection of the present system of “mass communication” in which there is only transmission but no real reception and response and his proposition of true theory of communication in terms of a theory of community show his disposition towards socialism, sympathy with working class and antipathy towards capitalism. Williams’s critique of Romanticism exhibits a true Marxist orientation. He connects Romanticism with Industrial Revolution along the Marxist line and rejects the idealistic and individualistic conceptions of Romanticism as a literary attempt to overcome “alienation”, “isolation” and “fragmentation of life” brought about by forces of industrial capitalist production. In this attempt, William’s critique of Romanticism acquires a materialistic, historical foundation. Williams says:

Two generations of Romantic poets lived through the crucial period in which the rise of both democracy and industry was effecting qualitative changes in society: changes which by their nature were felt in a personal as well as in a general way. At this very time of political, social, and economic

change there is a radical change also in ideas of art, of the artist and of their place in society (CS 31- 32).

One thing that arrests our attention is that Williams does not employ the base -superstructure phraseology in the analysis of Romanticism. This points to the theoretical difference between Williams's Marxism and the "vulgar Marxism" current in the nineteen thirties. Williams's analysis of Romanticism goes beyond finding of correspondences between economic base and ideological superstructure. The criticism of Romanticism by Alick West and Christopher Caudwell was limited to establishing the mechanical correspondences between economic substructure and ideological superstructure and making abstract generalizations. Williams's intention in the analysis of Romanticism is not to establish the social determinants of Romantic poetry. Williams looks upon Romantic poetry as a record of the artist's "opposition on general human grounds to the kind of civilization that was being inaugurated"(CS 36). He relates Romantic poetry not just to the economic structure of the capitalist society but to the "whole way of life" characteristic of it.

Terry Eagleton in his Criticism and Ideology points out Caudwell's limitations. According to him, Caudwell's serious limitation was his insulation from the European Marxist tradition. On the other hand, Williams develops his theories in solidarity with Gramsci, Lukacs, Adorno and Goldmann. What makes Williams's theory significant and relevant in the present situation, when Marxist aesthetics takes divergent forms, is the incorporation of the theoretical strains of these writers in the formulation of his own theory. Williams's reassessment and

redefinition of Marxism in formulating a Marxist literary theory is characteristic of the contemporary trend in Marxian aesthetics. Developments in contemporary Marxist theories have resulted from attempts at redefining Marxism and from association with non Marxist thinking. This situation has precipitated an open-ended Marxist theory. Early Lukacs's engagement with Hegel, Pierre Macherey's with French structuralism and Bakhtin's with Russian Formalism gave rise to pluralistic situation in Marxist literary theory. Theories of Adorno, Goldmann and Benjamin can also be cited as examples of open-ended Marxist literary theory.

It is interesting to note that contemporary Marxist literary theory which is open-ended has traversed a long distance from the Soviet theory of Socialist realism and historical materialism in the nineteen-thirties. Central to socialist realism was the rigid mechanical and deterministic use of base-superstructure model. It set certain rigid rules for the composition of literature to serve the needs of the party and prescribed norms to criticise literature. Williams by going back to the original Marxian view shows that Socialist realism in the thirties was founded on misinterpreted Marxian concepts.

Williams is of the strong conviction that Marxism is not a settled body of theory or doctrine. Literature also is not considered as a settled body of work with general qualities and proportions. Williams looks upon Marxist tradition as an active, developing unfinished and persistently continuous body of thinking. In this context Williams says: "Marxism, in many fields, and perhaps especially in cultural theory, has experienced at once a significant revival and a related openness and flexibility of theoretical development" (ML 1). It is mainly this

acceptance of the revival, openness and flexibility in the theoretical development of Marxism that situates Williams outside orthodox Marxism, relates him to neo-Marxists and makes his contribution to British Marxist criticism unique and significant. Nowhere in his literary criticism does Williams use base superstructure model mechanically or deterministically. Theoretically, he reverses the model and adds the elements of complexity and mutual interaction. He rejects the model because “even if the economic element is determining, it determines a whole way of life, and it is to this rather than to the economic system alone, that literature has to be related” (CS 281).

The Country and the City embodies Williams’s complex attitude to Marxism. Though all the major works of Williams deny the mode of conventional literary criticism, The Country and the City is the most concrete instance where the frontier between creative and the critical is flouted. In his suggestions of new forms of co-operative effort to overcome division of labour, we can find his challenge to classical Marxism and also his attempts at reinterpreting it. The focus of The Country and the City is the contrast in feeling and thought, between the country and the city. Williams historically proves the existence of such a contrast in the history of literature beginning from classical times. He observes that the sense of loss of past is an historical continuity in literature and questions the sentimental value in that structure of feeling. It is pointed out that the echoes of the rural disturbance of Italy are seen even in the Eclogues of Virgil.

The Country and the City establishes that the golden age of the past is non-existent and that such a concept distorts the actual past. Like the difference

between mass culture and minority culture, the contrast between country and city is a capitalist division. Williams suggests that the division is internationally created by Capitalism to protect and justify the minority ownership of the means of production. The arguments in The Country and the City demolish the Romantic idealization of the past and reinterpret classical Marxism, there by situating his theory outside orthodox Marxism. By quoting extensively from Marx's 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Williams argues that base superstructure formula is hardly a starting point for any cultural theory. It is part of an exposition of historical materialist method in the understanding of illegal relations and forms of state. Further quoting from The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon (1851-2), Williams argues that three senses of superstructure emerge from Marx's writings: (a) legal and political forms which express existing real relations of production, (b) forms of consciousness which express a particular class view of the world and (c) a process in which over a whole range of activities, men become conscious of a fundamental economic conflict and fight it out. These three senses refer to institutions and forms of consciousness and political and cultural practices.

Williams points out the contradiction in the interpretation of base-superstructure formula in orthodox Marxist literary criticism and emphasizes the need to redefine it. He says that the three areas of institutions, forms of consciousness and political and cultural practices are related and must be interrelated. Williams argues that the contradiction in orthodox Marxism arises out of a misreading which takes Marx's use of base- superstructure model to be

conceptual, while Marx's use was metaphorical, argues Williams. Marx's original use of the words was relational, but in the transition from Marx to Marxism the words indicated relatively enclosed areas of activity. Marx's original criticism had been directed against separation of areas of thought and activity and against the evacuation of real human activities by the imposition of abstract categories. Williams rejects the ideas of anti-Marxists who find Marxism as a reductive and determinist kind of theory. The anti Marxists oppose Marxist cultural theory on the ground that it allows no real and significant cultural activity and that it reduces art as a direct or indirect expression of some preceding and controlling economic content. Williams argues that this objection from anti-Marxist was occasioned by a common form of Marxism which Williams wants to correct and redefine.

Williams suggests certain amendments to the concepts of base and superstructure. He denies the practice of looking at base as an object in uniform and static ways. But he argues that base is an important concept to be examined to understand the realities of culture. He is of the opinion that common propositions like base as the real social existence of man or base as the real relations of production corresponding to a state of development of the material productive forces do not represent the exact meaning of the term as used by Marx. Williams interprets base as a process instead of base as a state. Marxism as a philosophical and political doctrine is rejected by Williams. He emphasizes the need to understand Marxism historically. As orthodox Marxism is against these emphases, it gives rise to abstract objectivity. According to Williams this abstract

objectivity is the basis of what became widely known in Marxism, as “economism”. As a philosophical and political doctrine it is worthless, but it has in turn to be understood historically.

Williams argues against the reflection theory of art grounded on the base superstructure formula. Instead of the reflection theory he pleads for a new materialist theory. The common use of base-superstructure formula, with specialized and limited interpretations of productive forces and the process of determination, gives rise to a theory of art and thought. According to Williams, in the reflection theory “the making of art was incorporated into a static, objectivist doctrine, within which ‘reality’, ‘the real world’, ‘the base’ could be separately known, by the criteria of scientific truth, and their reflections in art then judged by their conformity or lack of conformity with them: in fact with their positivist versions”(ML 96). Williams denies the incorporation of art into a static objectivist doctrine, with which “reality” or the “base” could be separately known.

Williams’s Marxism has many similarities and contrasts with Lukacs’s Marxism. The theoretical position adopted by Lukacs is neither that of the orthodox Marxists nor that of the neo Marxists. Williams shares with Lukacs the view that literary theory is inseparable from history in general. Lukacs insisted that both literary theory and history must be brought to bear on a given work in order to reveal its complete significance. Studies in European Realism and The Historical Novel make use of this theory. Though Williams follows Lukac’s theory in The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence and The Modern Tragedy, he discards the evaluative basis of Lukacs’s theory. Lukacs applied his theory in a

reductive way to works he did not consider realistic. Both Williams and Lukacs reject the view that there is simple deterministic relation between literature and socio economic reality. Though Williams did not share with Lukacs the belief in pre-existent social reality with which the literary model can be compared, he considered Lukacs's insistence on social reality as a dynamic process, a great advance in Marxian aesthetics. Williams says that Lukacs's concept of "typification" reflects social reality as a dynamic process.

Williams uses Goldmann's structuralist theory to overcome the pitfalls in the theory of Lukacs. Williams shares with Goldmann the basic assumption that literary works arise out of social consciousness. Goldmann introduced the concepts of mental structure and the structure of a literary work to explain the socio political connections of a literary work. Goldmann's genetic structuralism, which owes its debt to the psychologist, Jean Piaget, is different from ahistorical structuralism. According to Goldmann, a historical structuralism is the last of the bourgeois ideologies. Williams accepts Goldmann's structuralist Marxian theory or the genetic model as it tries to solve the limitations of reflection and mediation theories of art to explain the relation between art and social life. Goldmann's concept of structure involves patterns of ideas and concepts and not linguistic structures. Goldmann defined "world views" as an ensemble of mental categories which tended towards coherent structures and which were proper to certain privileged social groups whose thought, feeling and behaviour were oriented towards an overall organization of inter human relations and relation between men and nature. Goldmann saw the realization of the "mental categories" of the social

group in art works. But this realization is not achieved through reflection or meditation but through creating an imaginary plane, a universe whose content may differ from that of the collective consciousness. But the structure of the imaginative creation would be homologous with the structure of the social group.

Williams observes that Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" solves the inadequacies in the theories of Lukacs, Goldmann and the Frankfurt school. Williams finds Gramsci's concept of hegemony more authentic and useful in defining the relation between art and society. He defines hegemony as a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living. It is a lived system of meanings and expectations, over the whole of living. "It is a lived system of meanings and values constituting - which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming"(ML 110). Williams's theory of totality and total culture is built on the Gramscian concept. Williams accepts Gramsci's concept as a great contribution to Marxian aesthetics. He finds value in the concept as it

supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived as such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the substance and limit of common sense for most people under its way, that it corresponds to the reality or social experience very much

more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure (PMC 37).

Williams vehemently attacks the neglect of the basic physical human condition, emotional conditions and situation in classical Marxism. Problems of sexuality are also pointed out as serious omissions in classical Marxism. Hence Williams lays emphasis on the need to go beyond historical materialism, which accepts Marxism as a dogma. A materialism which historically and critically analyses and appropriates the theories of Freud and Lacan is recommended by Williams. Williams shows a Marxian orientation in his critique of Naturalism. Naturalism as accurate or life - like reproduction is looked upon as a bourgeois tendency as it gives preference to practical and recognizable everyday world. Though the technique of “ naturalism” as such cannot be objected to, when it is extended to art, it is fused with the bourgeois ideology. The historical naturalist drama is to be studied in terms of the relation between naturalism as a method and naturalist world views and structures of feeling.

Williams points out another defect of “classical Marxism”. “Classical Marxism” failed to develop the question of human language. Williams believes that a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world. Marxism, instead of making its own theory of language, had incorporated the concepts of language in other antagonistic systems of thought. Such a synthesis of a concept of language from antagonistic systems of thought with Marxist propositions will radically limit its social propositions. Williams says:

The key moments which should be of interest to Marxism in the development of thinking about language, are first, the emphasis on language as activity and, second, the emphasis on the history of language (ML 21).

In Writing and Society Williams makes a thorough examination of English prose from the early eighteenth century to the twentieth century and shows how the change in style of English prose is deeply connected to the changing society. He considers the prose of Ulysses and To the Lighthouse as convincing prose of a particular phase of consciousness.

Language, according to Williams, is historical and it is practical consciousness. By making language historical and practical, Williams attributes a materialist foundation for language. Williams develops his theory of language in dialogue with the Marxist thinkers Voloshinov and Rossi-Landi. Alan O' Connor establishes the connection between the linguistic theory of Williams and that of Rossi-Landi, the Italian linguist and Marxist thinker:

The general emphasis in Rossi-Landi is that speech is a practical activity and not separate from work. His aim is to demonstrate the practical nomology between linguistic production and material production. It is not possible to separate work and speech because spoken communication is an intergral part of work activity and training for work. This is a foundation which Williams and Rossi-Landi share (O' Connor 110).

From Voloshinov, Williams receives the notion of language as social practice and an historical institution. This is the theoretical foundation of his enquiry into the dramatic dialogue and monologue in Shakespeare in Writing in Society and the language of the Avant-Garde in The Politics of Modernism.

Williams has made substantial contributions to historical linguistics. Synchronic and diachronic enquiry into the changes and meanings of words forms a major part of his work. In fact, almost all his major works begin with such an enquiry. Culture and Society begins with an investigation into changes and differences in the meaning of “culture”. Modern Tragedy explores into the different meanings of tragedy. Williams here follows the historical changes in the meaning of tragedy and substantiates that the term “tragedy” is used with diverse emphasis in different traditions. The Greek tragedy sums up suffering individuals as the tragic hero. ‘Fate’, ‘Necessity’ and ‘Nature of the Gods’ are the main issues in them. It embodies a culture marked by an extraordinary net-work of beliefs connected to institutions, practices and feelings. The action of most of the Greek tragedies centred around the history of particular ruling families. Medieval English tragedies depict stories of change from prosperity to adversity. Williams traces a continuity from the Greek tragedy in the contemporary ideas of tragedy and criticises them for the gap between tragic theory and tragic experience.

Key Words is an investigation of the social determination of the meaning of words. Williams examines how some of the words like class, culture, society, individual, ideology etc.. which are of cultural and social importance in the contemporary world, have been originated and transformed to current meaning and

significance. He explains that Key Words is neither a dictionary nor a glossary of a particular academic project. It is the record of an inquiry into a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussion. The emphasis of Key Words is not only on the historical origin and development of words of social and cultural importance but also on their present meanings, implications and relationships.

Williams's theory of commitment also places him in the sphere of contemporary Marxist work. His final proposition is a "commitment to examining our most settled commitments"(WICS 260) . To arrive at this radical position Williams used the original views of Marx, Engels and Lenin as a springboard from them he moves to the ideas of Brecht and Sartre. Marxist propositions of base and superstructure or the idea of socially constituted consciousness implies that writing, like other practices, is in an important sense always aligned. This means that writing explicitly or implicitly expresses specifically selected experience from a specific point of view. The specific point of view does not have to be detachable from the older notion of message. It also does not have to be political and social in the narrowest sense. This is no more than the recognition of specific men in specific relations to specific situations and experiences. Williams identifies this position as alignment rather than commitment. He says that all writing is aligned in this way. Since all writing is aligned in this way, the demand for commitment is meaningless.

Williams argues for a commitment to social reality. He discovers an element of abstraction in Sartre's linking of commitment and freedom. To Sartre,

a book is not a means for any end; the end to which it offers itself is the readers' freedom. He emphasizes the relation between the writer and reader in terms of freedom: "Thus the author writes in order to address himself to the freedom of the readers, and he requires it in order to make his work exist" (Sartre 36). Sartre points out that each book is a recovery of the totality of being. There is theoretical agreement between Sartre and Williams on the question of human totality and the writer's function in society. But Williams wants to do away with any such abstraction and defines commitment in materialistic terms. Style, form and content of a work are not to be considered abstractly but as expressions of writer's social relations.

Williams develops his Marxist theories in dialogue with contemporary trends in literary theory. Cultural materialism, as the analysis of all forms of signification, finds new points of contact with recent literary theories. Williams's emphasis on literature as notation and text as system of signs make his theories closer to structuralism and semiotics. But Williams's theoretical orientation is to semiotics rather than to structuralism. The following passage proves Williams's interest in new theories:

Thus instead of seeing literary works as produced by the systems of signs, which has been the central emphasis of the most orthodox structuralism, this later semiotics has on the contrary emphasised that productive systems have themselves always to be constituted and reconstituted, and that because of this there is a perpetual battle about the fixed

character of the sign and about the systems which we ordinarily bring to production and interpretation. One effect of this shift is a new sense of 'deconstruction', not the technical analysis of an internal organization to show where all the parts, the components, have come from, but a much more open and active process which is continually taking examples apart, as a way of taking their systems apart (WS 34).

Williams welcomes deconstruction as it looks for the system as a mode of formation. He considers deconstruction a radical form of semiotics and finds in it more value than structuralism. It is here that Williams's theoretical position requires comparison with the theories of Terry Eagleton, the most significant and prolific figure in contemporary British literary criticism.

Eagleton's Marxist criticism emerges out of the tremendous influence of the philosophical writings of Althusser. Of the major European thinkers of the present century, Althusser is one to whom Williams has shown least predilection. Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology, is an outcome of the Althusserian influence on Eagleton. Eagleton in Criticism and Ideology rightly points out the lack of intensity and philosophical shallowness of Williams's writings. But he acknowledges Williams's pioneering role in British literary criticism.

There is an important point of contrast between Williams and Eagleton on the concept of commitment. While Williams emphasizes "a commitment to examining our most settled commitments". Eagleton insists on commitment to a

traditional conception of the political role and vacation for the Marxist critic. Eagleton says: “The primary task of the Marxist critic is to actively participate in and direct the cultural emancipation of the masses” (TRC 97). With reference to the theory of commitment Williams’s intention was to demolish the element of abstraction in the meaning of “commitment” and give it a materialistic foundation.

One interesting thing to be noted here is that there is a convergence of the theories of Williams and Eagleton in the latest works of Eagleton. Eagleton’s Literary Theory and Significance of Theory are attempts to synthesize structuralist and post -structuralist theories with Marxist aesthetics. Eagleton says:

Marxist aesthetics must discourteously refuse to occupy its modest niche within the expansive range of ‘approaches’ to art... The intention of Marxist criticism is not to dismiss the insights of say, symbolic, psychoanalytic or even straight empiricist criticism, but to establish a hierarchy among these alternative methods and in so doing to constitute itself as that hierarchy’s determining base.... Marxist criticism, then, has little in common with what is conventionally known as the ‘social’ approach to literature (CAES 94).

Here Eagleton goes a long way from his earlier conception of Marxist criticism with which he judges Williams’s works in Criticism and Ideology. His conclusion is that the term sociologist of literature is more suitable than Marxist critic to Williams.

Eagleton approves the post-structuralist theoretical pluralism in Williams in his later work The Function of Criticism. Williams's recognition of structuralism and semiotics, Timpanaro's psychoanalysis, and also Williams's criticism of classical Marxism for neglecting the importance of language and emotional condition of man, show the openness of his theories. It is this openness that makes Eagleton place Williams in the most dominant European tradition of Marxist criticism.

Williams's critique of modernism significantly contributes to situating him in the dominant European tradition of Marxist aesthetics. Modernism had been a lifelong fascination for Williams. In Reading and Criticism he took up modernist writings for close analysis. His interest in modernism persisted till the end of his career. In the final stages of writing, Williams was increasingly preoccupied with the relationship between revolutionary politics and modernist art. The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists (1989) is concerned with his thoughts on this relationship. A closer study of his responses to modernism would reveal that he had a theory of modernism evolved through the historical analysis of modernist writings. He accepts modernism as a historical phenomenon and advances a theory to understand it.

Williams's evaluation of modernist writings invites comparison with the criticism of modernism, by Lukacs, Brecht, Sartre, Adorno and Benjamin. Modernism here refers to the style and sensibility associated with the various movements beginning from symbolism and impressionism. Thus, modernism, as it is used here, is distinguished from contemporary which bears a neutral

reference. Ever since its beginning, modernism has been ideologically opposed by orthodox Marxist critics. They rejected not only the ideology that informed modernism, but interpreted modernist writings in such a way that they branded it as decadent. Lukacs's "The Ideology of Modernism" (1957) is one of the most well known Marxist rejections of modernism. Ideology of Modernism forms Lukacs's powerful attack on the philosophical foundation of modernism from a rigid Marxian angle. Brecht, though a Marxist critic, developed his own perspective of modernism which differed fundamentally from the Lukacsian theory. He, in contrast to Lukacs, offered a Marxist theory accommodating modernism with Marxism.

The treatment of modernism by neo-Marxians like Adorne and Benjamin is different from that of Lukacs and Brecht. But they themselves confronted the issues related to modernism, though both of them sought to interpret the social meaning of modernist writings with the help of Marxism. They agreed with Brecht in his attack on Lukacsian realism. Benjamin is more indebted to Brecht, than Adorno in his exploration of the emancipatory uses of modernist techniques. Adorno and Benjamin instead of an outright rejection of modernism accepted the works of the prominent modern writers as the greatest achievements of the twentieth century. Benjamin's recognition of Proust and Adorno's defence of the modern novel can be cited as examples for this. Anti- Marxist critics, mainly the New Critics, on the other hand, restricted themselves to the exploration of the internal structure of modernism.

New Criticism was committed to modernist ideology and it took up as its mission the glorification of modernism. Williams in his study of modernist writings tries to tackle the very obvious limitations of an anti-Marxist study of modernism and attempts to accommodate modernism with Marxism thereby making the two ideologically opposing intellectual streams compatible. Though he is more influenced by Brecht, Sartre, Adorno and Benjamin in his evaluation of modernism, his critique of modernism, his points of contact and departures with Lukacs throw more light on his critique of modernism.

Williams's early works offer an internal or formal analysis of modernist writings in the New Critical fashion. In his early period Williams accepted modernism as a major form of contemporary writing. There is an explicit recognition of modern drama when Williams says that without modern drama "we would all lack a dimension, and to study and understand it is then a major critical challenge"(DIB 11). In Drama from Ibsen to Eliot Williams's central concern is with dramatic experiments of modern dramatists. He analyses the important plays of the major dramatists from Ibsen to Eliot in relation to the developments in naturalism, expressionism and symbolism. The focus of Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, a later version of Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, is also the expressionism in form by modern dramatists. He examines individual plays in the context of dramatic history which leads to the formulation of his dramatic theory.

According to Williams, a critical understanding of naturalism, dramatic expressionism and related movements is a must for understanding modern literature. He analyses the important dramatic movements of the period and tries

to place each dramatist in the history of dramatic literature. Expressionism, according to Williams, surpasses naturalism in its capacity for consciousness and it is this that indicates its lasting importance. Williams interprets John Osborne's Look Back in Anger in terms of the reintroduction of naturalism. He says:

A general discussion of Look Back in Anger is not difficult; it has indeed been widely made. Its details of talk and atmosphere, and through these its expression of an intense feeling - a frustrated anger, a prolonged waiting, which must be broken, at any cost, by a demonstration, should have an authentic power. It is that traditional room of the naturalist theatre: the room as trap, with the sounds and messages of a determining and frustrating world coming in from outside, the people staring from a window, looking on and raging at their world (DIB 139).

The Long Revolution and Writing in Society show Williams's interest in the innovations in technique and language brought about by modern novelists. In The Long Revolution, Williams appreciates Joyce's experiments with fictional method. Portrait of the Artist is approved as a remarkable achievement in fictional method. Similarly, Ulysses is recognized for its remarkable perfection in fictional form. In Writing in Society, Williams is engaged in demonstrating how radically Joyce and Lawrence and Forster differ in a single generation and yet find novels a natural medium.

Williams's judgement on Virginia Woolf's use of language in To the Lighthouse is remarkable. Williams says that the facts of an observable world and of common experience have been properly subordinated to an imaginative flow and recreation. Woolf's language evokes a particular relation to objects and people. Williams says that Joyce's use of language similarly describes the relation between a writer and his world. One of the most striking observations Williams makes is that there is the presence of an ordinary language in Ulysses, heard more clearly than anywhere in the realist novel before it.

In later years Williams's interest shifted from the modernist experimentation in form and language to the content of modernism. His later works sought to analyse modernism in its material context. But Williams neither glorified modernism in the New Critical way nor made an outright rejection of it in the orthodox Marxian tradition.

Williams formulated his theory of modernism under the influence of Lukacs and neo-Marxians, like Adorno and Benjamin. In order to bring to light Williams's theory of modernism, one should examine his evaluation of modernist writers in relation to Lukacs and Adorno and Benjamin. Lukacs's debate on modernism develops from his theory that modernism is anti-realism. Lukacs views modernism as bourgeois realism. Concern with formal criteria, questions of style and literary technique are the concerns of the bourgeois-modernist critic, according to Lukacs. The bourgeois-modernist critic presents a false polarization by exaggerating the importance of stylistic differences. The opposing principles

actually underlying and determining contrasting styles are concealed in the false polarization.

Williams praises Ulysses for its technical perfection, whereas Lukacs alleges that technique in Ulysses is something absolute and is part and parcel of the aesthetic ambition informing Ulysses. Joyce's technical innovation is only part of his artistic ambition and the perpetually oscillating patterns of sense and memory -data give rise to a static epic structure. In Lukacs's view, this reflects a belief in a static character of events. Though Williams points out an "unbalance" in Joyce's Portrait of the Artist and Ulysses, he recognizes Joyce as the most celebrated twentieth-century novelist on the basis of his remarkable achievement in fictional method. This recognition of Joyce's stylistic experiments by Williams goes against Lukacs's theory that the ontological being of the work of art cannot be distinguished from its social and historical environment. But Williams and Lukacs agree on the "unbalance" in the modern novel. Lukacs distinguishes the solitariness of the social novel from the asocial solitariness of the modern novel. He is of the opinion that in the realist novel, solitariness is a specific social fact, not a universal human condition as in contemporary novel.

Williams argues that the change from the realist tradition to the modern novel corresponds to an altered reality. This recognition of the altered reality by Williams is the centre of the theoretical difference between Lukacs and Williams. The realist novel, according to Williams, presents a genuine community of persons linked not only by one kind of relationship, but by many, interlocking kinds. It draws its strength from the interaction among personal, family and working -class

relationships. But links between characters in most contemporary novels are relatively single, temporary and discontinuous. Williams discovers the cause of this limitation of modern novels in the structural change in society. Williams's treatment of modern novel and the way he connects it to contemporary society can be compared to Adorno's approach to modern novel. Adorno also justifies the experiments with form by Proust, Joyce and Beckett. He rejects the classical concepts of organic wholeness and romantic subjectivity and supports the fragmentary, transient and relativist nature of truth emphasized by modernist movements. He argues that traditional descriptive narrative in the nineteenth century realism is historically inappropriate. He says that techniques of Proust and Joyce are necessary to express the contemporary structure of feeling. Kafka and Beckett are considered as great writers by both Adorno and Williams.

Williams's later works show that he preferred to study modernism from a Marxian perspective. His theories were free from the rigidities of orthodox Marxism. This once again situates Williams in the realm of contemporary Marxian aesthetics. Williams does not make an outright rejection of modernism along the lines of Lukacs. He accepted modernism as a cultural production and sought to examine its social and historical situations and formations. From the point of view of "cultural materialism" modernism is not the general theme of response to the city and its modernity. But modernism lies in the new and specific location of the artists and intellectuals of this movement within the changing cultural milieu of the metropolis. In its complexity and miscellany, the metropolis had a culture different from traditional cultures. Open, complex and mobile

society enabled the formation of small groups of divergence or dissent. The new metropolis in the course of its capitalist and imperialist development attracted a ruined population from a variety of social and cultural regions. Such groups formed new kinds of audience. The key cultural factor of the modernist shift is the character of the metropolis. This is how Williams traces the cultural-material origin of modernism.

Williams observes that the innovations in theme and form in modernism are directly connected with the fact of immigration to the metropolis. At the thematic level, the fact of immigration underlies the elements of strangeness, distances and alienation. The immigrants broke away from their national or provisional cultures. The language was not customary and naturalized. Williams states this in his work The Politics of Modernism : Against the New Conformists. Williams's works, like those of Adorno and Benjamin, reveal a selective embracing of modernism. It is not far away from the truth to say that the first major British attempt at a theory of modernism came from Williams. In this regard he remains indebted to the inspiration and influence of Lukacs and neo-Marxists.

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